

People and Communities Committee

Wednesday, 22nd March, 2023

SPECIAL HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murray (Chairperson);
Councillors Bower, Bunting, Canavan,
M. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, de Faoite,
Flynn, Garrett, Magee, Maghie,
McMullan and O'Hara.

Also In attendance: Councillor Long.

In attendance: Mrs. C. Matthews, Director of Resources and Fleet;
Mr. J. McConnell, City Services Manager, Resources
and Fleet; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were recorded.

Introduction and Welcome

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Sergeant Bannerman, representing the PSNI, and thanked her for taking the time to attend. He advised that unfortunately representatives from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), who had also been invited to participate in the meeting, had declined the invitation.

The Members discussed the lack of representation from the DfI and expressed their disappointment and frustration at the decision not to send a representative. A Member stated that, in order to try and address many of the issues a joined-up approach with the Council, PSNI and DfI was required.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to forward a letter to the DfI Permanent Secretary expressing its disappointment at her decision not to nominate a representative to attend the Committee meeting.

Bin Collection Statistics

With the aid of PowerPoint, the Director of Resources and Fleet provided a comprehensive breakdown of the high-level statistics in terms of the percentage of the bins that were collected on a first collection basis, along with an analysis of the reasons for non-collection of missed bins. This highlighted that 76.1% of missed bins could be attributed to streets being blocked by parked vehicles.

The Director also drew the Members' attention to pictures of badly parked vehicles on numerous streets throughout the city that had been submitted via the Report It App.

A Member referred to the usefulness of the Report It App, stating that on occasions blocked streets that he was aware had been reported did not appear on the daily list circulated to the Members.

The City Services Manager stated that the introduction of the App had in general been successful but highlighted that it relied totally on the user's technical ability to upload the pictures and document the issues. He further advised that the App was an interim measure as it was planned that procurement of new mapping software would be being progressed towards the end of the year, given that it would take time to programme and educate the users it was hoped that this would 'go live' at some stage during 2024. This would enable live time data and would do away with the element of human error, it would also have dynamic routing that would pinpoint problem areas to enable re-routing and collection at a different time.

The Chairperson referred to the cost to the Council of missed bins collections. The Director undertook to look at the statistics for this further and to discuss this directly with him.

Noted.

Council Activity and External Partners

The Director highlighted of the following initiatives that the Council currently undertook to try and address missed bin collections:

- Site specific work with bin crews, Elected Members and Dfl to try and resolve access issues. Over the last year there had been 35 site visits involving Dfl;
- Building up a data driven approach to restricted access using the Report It App to identify key areas of focus;
- one 18 tonne vehicle dedicated to collections in streets with restricted access. Noted that this approach had a 96.5% first time success rate and that a detailed study had been commissioned to identify the opportunity for additional restricted access vehicles. This would review street and households by waste stream, the likely success rate and the costs and benefits of proposals. The report on this data was due in May and would be presented to the Committee; and

- Benchmarking what other cities did and if there were any innovative ideas for collecting from restricted access streets that could compliment narrow vehicles or provide other alternative solutions including common collection points.

At this stage in the proceedings Sergeant Bannerman addressed the Committee and provided an overview on the enforcement powers under the 2016 Traffic Management Order from the perspective of both the PSNI and DfI. She advised that figures for the period September to November 2022 showed the following fixed fine penalties had been issued per geographical area - 76 tickets in South, 25 in East, 11 in West and 4 in North.

Members discussed the variances across the areas, the PSNI representative explained that, whilst enforcement and fixed penalty notices did have a role to play in some circumstances, a blanket approach to enforcement was not appropriate for all areas across the city. She stated that certain areas, due to the dangers, of bad parking required a more targeted approach than others to try and address the problems.

The PSNI representative continued that enforcement was not the preferred option, she advised that the PSNI and the DfI were keen to try and educate road users and with this in mind had carried out several joint initiatives with the DfI. She detailed that these initiatives had included increased social media posts across the various platforms and leaflets being placed on vehicles explaining the result of badly parking their vehicles on other users. She showed examples of the leaflets and undertook to forward copies of the leaflets for circulation to the Members.

Detailed discussion ensued during which the following issues were discussed/highlighted:

- the possibility of using an App, texts or e-mails to alert people of missed collections and changes to collection times;
- noted that clarity was being sought from Legal Services in respect of people leaving bins in an obstructive manner and who was liable in the event of an accident;
- the distribution of green bags;
- the need for potentially additional 18 tonne vehicles to be added to the fleet;
- the need for people to return bins to their properties following collection as the bins were causing obstructions at collection points. Consideration of whether a fourth crew member was required in more areas to pull the bins out and return them. Officers agreed to consider this as part of the ongoing consultancy work;
- noted that unfortunately car ownership was increasing rather than decreasing and that proper infrastructure was required to try and encourage people to use other modes of transport;

- noted that the Neighbourhood Teams would know the specific problems in their own geographical areas and should be involved when considering potential approaches;
- noted the need for a more digital based reporting culture and the need to share information across the various stakeholders in Real Time;
- discussed the problems with unadopted roads, laneways and alleyways; and
- discussed the desire to see a glass recycling scheme similar to that of North Down and Ards Council.

The Chairperson suggested that a pilot could be undertaken which would take five of the most routinely missed streets for each area and that a focused campaign could be undertaken in each of these areas to try and target the ongoing issues. The outworking of the pilot could then be adapted for other areas as it was noted that a blanket approach did not fit all areas.

Officers agreed that this would be a useful exercise and agreed to bring a report back identifying the proposed areas for the target. The Director highlighted that to progress this pilot would require the participation of both the PSNI and DfI.

It was also agreed that officers would seek clarification from DfI on its enforcement data over the previous twelve-month period.

The Chairperson thanked the Sergeant Bannerman and the Members for their input and the meeting ended.

Chairperson