

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	17 January 2023
Subject:	Depot Services Working Group Update
Report of:	Waste Contracts Manager
Head of Service/Director:	Head of Community Services
Lead Member:	Lead Member for Clean & Green Environment
Number of Appendices:	2

Executive Summary:

In July 2019, this Committee agreed to establish the Depot Services Work Group in order to facilitate a better understanding of the operational, financial and governance aspects of Ubico and its partnership relationship with the Council. The Terms of Reference for the Working Group (Appendix 1) require a report be taken to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a biannual basis to update Members on the work undertaken. The last update was received by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April 2022 at which time Members agreed that the Working Group should continue until the end of the current Ubico contract in March 2027. Since that time, the Group has met on three occasions and this report provides the Committee with an update on progress so far this year.

Recommendation:

To CONSIDER the progress of the Depot Services Working Group.

Financial Implications:

None arising directly as a result of this report.

Legal Implications:

None arising directly as a result of this report.

Environmental and Sustainability Implications:

None arising directly as a result of this report.

Resource Implications (including impact on equalities):

None arising directly as a result of this report.

Safeguarding Implications:

None arising directly as a result of this report.

Impact on the Customer:

None arising directly as a result of this report.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/ BACKGROUND

- 1.1** At its meeting on 23 July 2019, this Committee agreed the establishment of the Depot Services Working Group. The reason for establishing the Working Group was set out in a report to this Committee and, in part, included the fact that Members have, at times, expressed frustration about a perceived lack of control and transparency with Ubico. It was considered important that Councillors understand how Ubico operates and the relationship between the Council and the company.
- 1.2** The stated aim of the Working Group was to receive reports and information pertinent to the operation and strategic direction of waste and recycling, street cleansing and grounds maintenance services.
- 1.3** The Terms of Reference for the Working Group (Appendix 1) require a report be taken to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a biannual basis to update Members on the work undertaken. The last update was received by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April 2022 at which time Members agreed that the Working Group should continue for at least for the remaining duration of the Ubico contract up to March 2027. Since that time, the Group has met on three occasions and this report provides the Committee with an update on progress so far this year.

2.0 WORKING GROUP CONSIDERATIONS

Meeting 1 – July 2022

- 2.1** At its first meeting of the municipal year in August, the Working Group considered its Work Programme for the year (Appendix 2).
- 2.2** The Accountancy Officer presented budget figures for the full 2021/22 position. This was a small overspend based on the original budget, but a c.£20k underspend with driver market supplements taken into account.
- 2.3** Updates were provided on the trade waste, grounds maintenance and street cleansing projects, which have been key pieces of work or 2022/23.

Meeting 2 – October 2022

- 2.4** The Accountancy Officer gave an overview of the budget, highlighting a £240k overspend largely due to increased diesel costs, as well as increased running costs at Swindon Road Depot.
- 2.5** Members received a briefing on the progress of the trade waste project, with customers starting to sign up to the recycling service trial. Improvements being made to the Customer Relationship Management system were presented.
- 2.6** A 100% score in a fleet audit on the Tewkesbury contract was shared with Members as this was the first time any Ubico contract had achieved a perfect score.
- 2.7** Members received a briefing on the efforts made by Officers to discuss with Gloucestershire County Council alternative arrangements for grass cut by Tewkesbury Borough Council on behalf of Gloucestershire County Council. Negotiations with Gloucestershire County Council had not been productive and there was discussion about the potential ways forward. Members were keen for a further effort to be made at a Senior Officer level to negotiate with Gloucestershire County Council.

Meeting 3 – December 2022

- 2.8** The Accountancy Officer gave an overview of the budget position, including increased diesel costs being the main contributor to a £226k forecast overspend. Further budgetary pressure from the staff pay award was highlighted but had not fed into the budget figures as it had only been recently confirmed.
- 2.9** Members received a presentation from the Ubico Head of Operations on in-cab technology. This included the benefits of sharing data in real time and the efficiency savings of moving away from manual processes. The timeframe for implementation was shared, with services coming online throughout 2023/24.
- 2.10** An update was provided on the progress of the fleet procurement for waste and streets vehicles. The costs, considerations and proposed direction of travel were highlighted, with a goal of as many larger vehicles as possible utilising Hydrotreated vegetable oil as a fuel source and as many smaller vehicles as possible being electric.
- 2.11** An update was provided on discussions with Gloucestershire County Council on grass cutting. While increased revenue spend by Gloucestershire County Council has been ruled out, a solution might be found in capital spend to fund cut and collect equipment, which will allow the number of cuts to be lowered to two a year. Tewkesbury Borough Council Officers are putting together a proposal to send to Gloucestershire County Council.
- 2.12** Grass cutting standards were reviewed, with a comparison of 2021 and 2022 grass cutting showing an increase from 48% to 82% of inspections meeting the required target. This large improvement has been possible due to the operational improvements made by Ubico within the grounds maintenance service.

3.0 NEXT STEPS

- 3.1** The Working Group is due to meet one further time in this municipal year in March 2023.
- 3.2** A further report will be brought to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April 2023 summarising the work undertaken during the year.

4.0 CONSULTATION

- 4.1** None

5.0 ASSOCIATED RISKS

- 5.1** None

6.0 MONITORING

- 6.1** None

7.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES/COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

7.1 None

Background Papers: Overview and Scrutiny Committee report - Depot Services Working Group Update – April 2022

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Appendices: Appendix 1 - Depot Services Working Group - Terms of Reference
Appendix 2 - Depot Services Working Group Work Programme – as agreed in July 2022.