

Environment Select Committee

MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13 JANUARY 2021 AT ONLINE.

Present:

Cllr Stuart Wheeler (Chairman), Cllr Bob Jones MBE (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Derek Brown OBE, Cllr Peter Evans, Cllr Mike Hewitt, Cllr Tony Jackson, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Ian McLennan, Cllr Brian Mathew, Cllr Nick Murry, Cllr Steve Oldrieve, Cllr Tom Rounds and Cllr Tony Trotman

Also Present:

Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Atiqul Hoque, Cllr Toby Sturgis, Cllr Bridget Wayman, Cllr Philip Whitehead and Cllr Graham Wright

1 **Apologies**

There were no apologies.

2 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Resolved:

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 4 March and 16 June 2020 were approved.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

4 **Chairman's Announcements**

Details of Key Performance Indicators and targets for 2020/21 from the Wiltshire Council Housing Board were attached to the agenda pack as requested by the Committee on 4 March 2020.

5 **Public Participation**

The Chairman explained the rules of public participation and reported that a Statements had been received from Adrian Temple-Brown and Bill Jarvis for agenda item 10, and Bill Jarvis and Christian Lange for agenda item 11.

These statements would be received at the time the Committee considered the appropriate agenda item.

6 Overview & Scrutiny during COVID-19

The Chairman explained the Council had been operating streamlined Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements and the approach Overview and Scrutiny would take during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There were no questions from the Committee.

Resolved:

To note the update from the Chairman.

7 COVID-19 update

The Chairman introduced the report from the council's Chief Executive providing a summary of activity to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus in Wiltshire since the last update to Cabinet in December. The Select Committee noted that the report provided in the Agenda pack was considered by Cabinet on 5th January 2021 and was therefore now quite out of date, particularly given the announcement of new national restrictions on 4th January 2021.

It was noted that all four of the council's select committees would receive the COVID-19 update report and, to avoid duplication, members were invited to focus their questions and debate within this select committees' remit only.

A question from Cllr Oldrieve was received, although he asked for the question to be deferred until later in the agenda as it was more appropriately considered under the Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group items.

Resolved:

To note the update.

8 Highways Annual Review of Service 2020

The Committee considered the report of the Director Highways and Environment, which provided an update on the highways service including the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Director Highways and Environment reported that the highways service and its suppliers adapted well to the challenges of Covid-19 and the associated restrictions. Changes to working practices and reprioritising of work meant that it was possible to complete a large programme of various types of maintenance and renewal on the highway network in the last year.

The Director commented on:

- Essential maintenance and improvement work continuing during the lockdown with more potholes being filled in 2020 than in the previous year.
- Major road resurfacing work, drainage repairs and bridge maintenance undertaken whilst traffic flows were reduced.
- Procurement of major new contracts for road resurfacing, surface dressing and tree maintenance were also successfully undertaken during the year.
- Good performance of the Council's existing key highway contractors during 2020.
- A summary of the Performance Management Framework attached to the report, with the number of killed and seriously injured on the county's roads remaining a major concern.
- Public satisfaction with most aspects of the highway service generally remaining close to the national average. However, public satisfaction with road maintenance and walking and cycling remaining slightly below the national average.

Cllr Bridget Wayman, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste and officers responded to a number of issues and comments from the Committee. In particular, the following issues and comments were raised:

- Changes to verge cutting introduced in order to encourage wildflowers and wildlife, with visibility splays being cut in May/June and the remainder of verges being cut in September as a trial along the A350. A successful trial would see this rolled out across the highway network.
- The trialling of new equipment to repair pot holes
- The need for increasing investment to repair pot holes and issues with funding constraints and weather patterns.
- The impact of COVID-19 on housing development sites and in particular S106 funding.
- Indicators used to measure the performance of the service and gauge continuous service improvements.
- User satisfaction surveys by MORI with outcomes being measured and benchmarked against other local authorities, with average scores being achieved across many areas..
- Encouraging an increase in the number of cyclists and the development of schemes ready to apply for government funding once available in the future.
- Key performance indicators for accidents – people killed and seriously injured and the complexity in controlling collisions through engineering, enforcement and education.
- Traffic management measures in place on the Bradford on Avon Town Bridge to facilitate social distancing during the first lockdown and their impact on vehicle emissions.
- The use of auto speed watch by Town and Parish Councils and potential for information to be shared with the Council, although the challenge for the Council is the number of queries generated by the technology when compared to speedwatch.

- The availability of cycle schemes funding from Highways England and opportunities to bid for cycle schemes in Wiltshire.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for attending the meeting and responding to comments and issues raised.

Resolved:

- 1. Welcome the Wiltshire Highways Annual Review of Service 2020 and acknowledge the considerable work being undertaken on the highway network in these difficult times;**
- 2. Thank the Council's highway contractors for the steps they have taken in ensuring that essential highway maintenance and improvements work in Wiltshire have continued safely despite Covid-19;**
- 3. Congratulate the Council's highways team, Atkins, Tarmac and Ringway on winning the Institute of Collaborative Working Public Sector award for 2020;**
- 4. Note the continuing concern that the numbers killed and seriously injured on the county's roads during 2019 were above the road safety target, and that there is a need to continue to prioritise road safety;**
- 5. Request a report on the highways service and the Performance Management Framework in a year's time.**

9 Household Waste Management Strategy Update (2020/21)

The Committee considered the report of the Director Highways and Environment, which:

1. Provided a review of relevant legislation and policy changes affecting the Household Waste Management Strategy 2017/27
2. Reported on the performance of the Waste Management Service during 2019/20;
3. Reported on progress against the 2019/20 action plan for the Waste Management Service; and
4. Proposed an action plan for the Waste Management Service for 2020/21

Cllr Bridget Wayman, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste congratulated the Waste Management Service and contractor for their resilience in maintaining all waste collection services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Cllr Wayman reminded the Committee that the Waste Services job was made especially difficult with the introduction of a new recycling service at the start of

the first national lockdown. It was noted that any issues with the new service were resolved quickly.

The Director Highways and Environment reported that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), produced a Resources and Waste Strategy in 2018, from which a number of consultations took place. The consultations, target dates and potential impacts to Wiltshire were detailed in the report. Consultation were subsequently delayed due to COVID-19 and as a consequence of the delays there were no reasons to recommend changes to the vision and priorities outlined in the Strategy. It was noted that the section of the draft Household Waste Management Strategy that deals with national policy and legislation has however been updated to reflect the latest government position.

Cllr Jackson had submitted a number of questions in relation to fly tipping, Fixed Penalty Notices and recycling containers in supermarket car parks, prior to the meeting and these received responses at the meeting.

Cllr Wayman, and officers responded to a number of issues and comments from the Committee. In particular, the following issues and comments were raised:

- The number of covert cameras introduced to combat fly-tipping in the county.
- Proposals for weekly collections of food waste and the impact of national policy on local collections
- The impact of COVID-19 on the new recycling collection scheme and Household Recycling Centre's booking system
- The potential for free green waste collections and impact on the amount of recycling and visits to the Household Recycling Centre's
- The percentage of items collected in recycling bins being recycled

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for attending the meeting and responding to comments and issues raised.

Resolved:

To note the update.

10 **Executive Response: Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group**

The Committee considered the report of Cllr Richard Clewer, Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Arts, Heritage and Tourism and Cllr Bridget Wayman, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste responding to the findings and recommendations of the Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group report part one which covered energy, transport and air quality.

The Committee also received statements from Adrian Temple-Brown and Bill Jarvis, Wiltshire Climate Alliance, in relation to the Task Group Report and Executive response.

The Committee noted that due to the streamlined Overview and Scrutiny (OS) arrangements operating since April 2020, the first report of the Global Warming and Climate Change Task Group was endorsed by the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee on [29 September 2020](#).

Cllr Clewer spoke in detail about the responses provided in the report, in particular he commented and raised issues about the following areas:

- Existing council housing
- New council housing
- Development by the council's wholly-owned companies
- Private housing
- Renewable energy generation
- Community-led energy generation
- Electric and hydrogen vehicles
- Public transport
- Active travel; and
- Air quality

Cllr Murry, Member of the Task Group congratulated the Council for the considerable amount of work undertaken to reduce its own emissions, however, he suggested that a number of questions were left unanswered and the Task Group should be given the opportunity to ask further questions of the executive and these to be considered further by the Committee at a future meeting.

Cllr Clewer reminded the Committee that the Councils direction of travel and future delivery of proposals to tackle global warming and the climate emergency would have to take into account and conform with government policy.

Resolved:

- 1. To note the response**
- 2. That the Executive response be referred back to the Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group for additional discussion and comment, with further consideration by this Committee at a future meeting.**

11 Report Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group (Part Two)

The Committee considered the report of Cllr Graham Wright, Chairman of the Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group which presented the Task Groups findings and recommendations in relation to its planning workstream for endorsement by the Committee and referral to the relevant Cabinet Members for response.

The Committee received statements from Bill Jarvis, Wiltshire Climate Alliance, and Christian Lange, Member of the Steering Group Wiltshire Climate Alliance

in relation to the Task Group Report and Executive response. In addition, the Committee were informed of a number of other representations on this matter that arrived after the deadline from:

- Kerry Linde - resident
- Cate Watson – Chair Royal Wootton Bassett Environmental Group
- Margaret Green – resident
- Gemma Grimes - resident
- Amy Davis – resident
- Richard Ecclestone – resident
- Myla Watts – resident
- Dave Knight - Royal Wootton Bassett Environment Group
- Stan Woods – Sustainable Calne
- Shirley McCarthy – Convener, Melksham Energy Group

Cllr Wright reported on the work of the Task Group, in particular he commented on the focus of the Task Group and its initial conclusions in relation to planning, which were all evidence based. These included conclusions on the following areas of planning:

- Spatial planning
- Climate change
- Net zero carbon planning policies
- Planning policy and minimisation of carbon emissions
- Planning strategically
- Investing in nature

The Committee thanked the Task Group and officers for their work in producing the report and ongoing work. They also thanked the organisations and public for their involvement and contributions to the work of the Task Group. The following comments and issues were raised during the discussions on the report:

- Concern about lack of public awareness of the work being undertaken by the Council in relation to the reduction in carbon emissions across council services
- The availability of the draft Climate Strategy
- Administration of the Green Homes Grant Scheme and delivery of home retrofit by builders and tradespersons under the Scheme
- Upgrading of heating systems at Warminster Sports Centre
- The suitability of Council land to accommodate wind turbines in Wiltshire

Cllr Oldrieve suggested that the recommendations of the Committee be enhanced by the addition of the draft Climate Strategy being made available during the first quarter of 2021. This proposal did not receive majority support of the Committee.

Resolved:

To endorse the report of the Task Group and refer it to the Cabinet Members for Spatial Planning, Development Management and Property and the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts & Tourism, Housing and Communities.

12 **Forward Work Programme**

The committee considered its forward work programme.

Resolved:

To note the forward work programme.

13 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

14 **Date of Next Meeting**

To confirm the date of the next meeting as **3 March 2021**.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 1.00 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Stuart Figini of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 718221, e-mail stuart.figini@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115