

ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13 DECEMBER 2016 AT KENNET ROOM- COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JQ..

Present:

Cllr Peter Edge (Vice Chairman in the Chair), Cllr Trevor Carbin (Substitute), Cllr Brian Dalton, Cllr Dennis Drewett, Cllr Peter Evans, Cllr Jose Green, Cllr Magnus Macdonald, Cllr Ian McLennan, Cllr James Sheppard, Cllr Tony Trotman and Cllr Philip Whalley (Substitute)

Also Present:

Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Jerry Kunkler, Cllr Alan MacRae and Cllr Philip Whitehead

65 Apologies

Apologies were received from Chairman Cllr Bridget Wayman who was substituted by Cllr Philip Whalley.

Apologies were also received from Cllr Rosemary Brown who was substituted by Cllr Trevor Carbin.

Further apologies were also received from Cllr Mike Hewitt and Cllr Jacqui Lay.

66 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes from the last meeting of Tuesday 25th October 2016 were presented to the committee for consideration and they were agreed as a true and accurate account.

Resolved

Minutes were signed by the Vice Chairman Cllr Peter Edge.

67 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

68 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman informed the committee of the adoption of the Supplementary Planning Document 'Waste storage and collection: guidance for developers' was considered at the 15th November Cabinet meeting. Further questions on the document were asked to be directed towards the relevant officers.

69 **Public Participation**

There were no public speakers.

70 **Progress on Social Housing Developments**

The Committee was provided with a progress report on the council house building programme.

In September 2015, the Cabinet Capital Assets Committee approved a programme of new council house building funded with a combination of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) reserves and borrowing with other sources of capital including Right to Buy (RTB) receipts, commuted sum funding from planning gain and grant funding secured by bidding to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

The delivery of new affordable council homes across Wiltshire, including homes for older people and adapted homes, aims to meet a number of the council's priorities, objectives and outcomes outlined in the council's business plan.

The Committee was asked to note the update report.

Cllr Richard Clewer gave a verbal update on the programme. It was stated that it was proceeding on track, despite the usual setbacks expected in planning. It was also mentioned that the new Housing and Planning Act 2016 was close to being enacted and, whilst they would proceed with current strategy, they had to be open to the changes, to be brought about by the new legislation.

The Chairman invited technical questions on the report.

During questioning, it was clarified by that the strategy sought to respond to need where possible and gave the example of the ongoing development of social housing bungalows in Devises. It was also clarified that all major Housing Associations would be taking part in the Right to Buy Schemes.

A question was asked about pledges to cut social housing rental costs of 1% for 3 years. It was confirmed that this was still the policy for Wiltshire Council but that the new Housing Bill could change that.

Councillors then discussed the application of shared equity to social housing. It was noted that it has become increasingly popular and could become almost 30% of all social housing.

Resolved

To note the progress report on social housing developments.

71 **Housing Strategy – Final Draft**

The Committee was provided with a copy of the final Housing Strategy in preparation for it going to formal consultation.

The strategy has been developed in partnership with key stakeholders including Housing Associations, landlords, developers and tenants, as well as elected members, and has been approved by Cabinet Liaison to commence formal consultation.

The strategy sets out a joint vision for Wiltshire whereby everyone in Wiltshire should be able to live in a decent and safe home they can afford.

The Committee was asked to review and comment upon the 5 year Housing Strategy that sets the priorities and strategic direction for Housing for the next 5 years.

The report was introduced by Cllr Richard Clewer. He explained that it was a Housing Partnership Strategy and that it had 4 main aims of facilitating housing need, making best use of existing house stock, meeting accommodation needs and taking a lead in housing provision. He then referred to committee to the details of the report.

The Chairman invited technical questions about the strategy.

It was asked what was being done to address homelessness. Cllr Clewer explained that work was being done under the housing strategy along with other bodies to offer support. The committee discussed some of the issues regarding homelessness and barriers in offering them support.

Plans to introduce increased charges for those families in social housing owning over £31,000 were queried. Cllr Clewer said the exact details of the plan were not known at this time and that members would have to wait for the final draft of the Housing Bill for answers.

Technical questions were also asked about some of the definitions and percentages listed in the report. Cllr Clewer pointed out that the strategy was going to public consultation and that more of the details would become known at that time.

A further question was raised as to the numbers of empty homes versus those on the waiting list for affordable housing. The Housing Officer explained that Wiltshire Council did all they could to promote effective use of properties and that compared to the rest of the country, the percentages of empty homes was comparatively low.

Finally, there was some criticism of the selling off of Council owned housing, as after questioning Cllr Clewer revealed that “not enough” is made in selling a council home to build another one.

Resolved

To note the final draft of the Wiltshire Council Housing Strategy 2017-2022 along with comments from the committee raised during discussion.

To investigate the establishment of a Re-Commissioning of Housing Service Support Contracts rapid scrutiny exercise to look at the approach to procuring new services.

72 **Parking Services Update**

The Committee received a report updating members on the actions taken since the Car Parking Strategy Review in March 2015. This included details on the full implementation of charges that were approved, updates on the types of asset transfers that have occurred to local communities, the introduction of new technologies, and the predicted income shortfall following the proposed charges.

The Committee was asked to note and comment on the actions to date following the Parking Review and make any comments on the proposed approach.

Cllr Philip Whitehead introduced the report and explained that the Parking Review had reduced charges across the county. He observed that this meant that Wiltshire had gone 6-7 years without increased charges, in contrast to the rest of the country.

Cllr Whitehead spoke of identified parking issues and strategies in Chippenham. He informed the committee that there was a shortage of parking in Chippenham and that this was creating issues for the shopping centres. He explained that he had been asked to reduce charges but determined that would further exacerbate the problem, with workers taking up spaces rather than shoppers. He spoke of some initiatives being looked into such as Free parking days and other incentives. He praised the "Free after 3 pm" policy in Salisbury, stating that it had benefited the shops, and said that it was being considered for other areas.

Cllr Whitehead then sought to inform members on the plans for the introductions of new technologies. He said that he was in re-negotiations for cashless payments, via mobile phones, after explaining that excessive charges had been incurred by customers. He said that he was looking for an arrangement whereby there were no such charges on "mobile" payments. He addressed concerns that some members of the community, such as those who were vulnerable, disabled or elderly, may not be able or willing to use the cashless system. He said that they would seek to trial cashless payments in smaller car parks near to larger car parks, still operating a cash payment system, in case they are unable to pay via phone. He said that it was part of a long term strategy with the ultimate aim of making savings and efficiency.

Cllr Whitehead also informed members that the cash machines in car parks were going to need updating due to the pound coin being changed in 2017. This, he said, was to reduce fraud but it would be at a considerable cost to the Parking budget in the short term.

The chairman invited technical questions on the Parking Review.

Questions were asked regarding the application of paperless tickets to residential permits. Cllr Whitehead explained that it was similar to paperless tax disks and presented no issue being electronically managed.

A question was asked about maintenance of car parks and whether regular works would be done by Wiltshire Council. Cllr Whitehead replied by saying “there is only one budget” and that with a reduced budget they were limited on what they could do. He did, however, say that when it came to matters of safety, Wiltshire Council would be responsible for maintenance.

A member asked whether asset transfers of car parks were being considered, particularly to local Town and Parish Councils, whereby funds could still be made to Wiltshire Council. Whilst they were aware of this as an option, it was not seen as an immediate solution, or as part of the current strategy.

Finally, it was asked how much money was collected parking fines and the figure was given, by the Parking Services Officers, as between £800,000 and £1,000,000. Although, it was clarified that this was revenue and not profit, as you have to factor in running costs.

Resolved

To note the reported actions to date following the Parking Review.

73 Playing Pitch Strategy Update

A Wiltshire Council Playing Pitch Strategy is currently being developed to support the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the need for a single Wiltshire-wide open spaces standard.

Cllr Jerry Kunkler presented to the draft Wiltshire Playing Pitch Strategy to the committee and invited them to comment and give its endorsement to the draft.

Questions were asked as to why certain, less well known sports, such as touch rugby and walking football had not been included in the strategy. The Strategy Officers explained that no-contact sports, such as those listed, were included in the strategy but did not feature in the formal statistics because they are generally non-competitive sports.

It was also noted by committee members that some playing pitches and clubs had been missed out, specifically, Wilton Playing Pitch. The Officers noted these points and said that they would look at including Wilton Playing Pitch and any others brought to their attention.

A technical question was asked on the application of the strategy to when Councils are looking at applications for other leisure schemes and use of open spaces, for example development or Performing Art Centres. The Officers explained that the strategy gives guidance for applications of that nature and it gives a baseline for looking at the needs of a particular community. The Officers assured members that there was a steering group, with dedicated staff, looking

into community leisure needs and they could be contacted with any specific issues or questions.

After further questions, it was made clear that Wiltshire Council were willing to do all that they could to support sport and would work with any club that was willing and able to build their resources.

Resolved

To endorse the draft Wiltshire Playing Pitch Strategy with comments made.

For the Environment Select Committee to receive annual updates on the development of the Wiltshire Playing Pitch Strategy.

74 **Task Group Update**

Councillors from the task group were in attendance and stated that there was no formal update from the group, as it was still under consideration and work was being done to progress the priorities of the group.

Resolved

To note the task group update.

75 **Forward Work Programme**

Members noted the Forward Working Plan in the reports but there were no updates forthcoming.

Resolved

To note the forward work programme.

76 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Wednesday 22nd February 2016.

77 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 2.00 - 3.50 pm)

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ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 25 OCTOBER 2016 AT THE KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Brian Dalton, Cllr Dennis Drewett, Cllr Peter Edge (Vice Chairman), Cllr Peter Evans, Cllr Jose Green, Cllr Mike Hewitt, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Magnus Macdonald, Cllr Ian McLennan, Cllr James Sheppard, Cllr Tony Trotman and Cllr Bridget Wayman (Chairman)

Also Present:

Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Alan Hill, Cllr Julian Johnson, Cllr Alan MacRae, Cllr Jonathon Seed, Cllr Toby Sturgis and Cllr John Thomson

51 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Rosemary Brown.

Apologies were also received from Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Councillor Philip Whitehead. Councillor John Thomson, Deputy Leader of the Council, would update the Committee as appropriate.

52 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2016 were presented for consideration and it was,

Resolved:

To approve and sign as a true and correct record.

53 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

54 Chairman's Announcements

Through the Chair it was announced that discussions had been held regarding plans to revise the existing Waste Strategy. Workshops would take place for councillors from Spring 2017.

55 **Public Participation**

There were no questions or statements submitted.

56 **Highways Major Maintenance Programme - Annual Report**

In October 2013 Cabinet agreed to increase highway maintenance funding to £21 million for six years. This was subsequently included in the Council's future budget, and forms the basis of the 'Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020'. The increased investment in highways maintenance has enabled a large number of schemes to be progressed to improve the condition of the network and its infrastructure.

The previous Highways and Streetscene Contract was with Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) and started in June 2013. In July 2015 Cabinet agreed to the early termination of the contract following a review of the potential benefits for the Council. The progress on terminating the previous contract and the procurement of the new contract was regularly reported to the Environment Select Committee. Arrangements were made for the Council to take over some of the existing sub-contracts between BBLP and specialist suppliers in key service areas, including grass cutting, litter picking and major road resurfacing. A procurement exercise was undertaken for a new Wiltshire Highways Contract for the other services, which was awarded to Ringway Infrastructure Services earlier this year and started in April 2016.

Councillor John Thomson, Deputy Leader of the Council, and Peter Binley, Head of Highways Assets and Commissioning, presented a report on the annual review of the Highways Service. Details of highways maintenance in each community area were provided, along with an indicative list of maintenance schemes for 2017/18 and other statistics as detailed in the agenda. It was stated the performance of contractors had been very good since the early termination of the previous contract.

The Committee discussed the report, seeking details of the allocation of the £21 million highways investment, which included some funding from central government. Queries were raised on the proposed schemes for 2014/18, and in respect of the A350 proposals, it was stated the route was the busiest under the council's responsibility in Wiltshire, and that funding for further dualling of the route was being sought from the Local Enterprise Partnership.

The Committee was informed Area Boards would be consulted on the proposed list of maintenance to be undertaken in the next year, and it was confirmed that Community Area Transport Groups could propose additional schemes, although this would mean other schemes could not be addressed, and it would be beneficial to list the schemes by priority, though some members raised examples of high priority schemes that had been left undone across several years. Other topics raised included identifying the need for traffic signalling prior to upgrading the network, working closely with parish councils to monitor need for work, customer reporting and emphasising pedestrian and cycling improvements to reduce pressure on Highways.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved

To note the following:

- (i) Good progress has been made on implementing the ‘Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020’, and there has been a substantial improvement in road conditions in Wiltshire.**
- (ii) The performance of all of the contractors currently delivering the highways service is good, and the transition to the new highways contract with Ringway Infrastructure Services has gone smoothly.**
- (iii) The new Parish Steward Scheme has been launched. The operation of the scheme will be monitored and reported to this Committee next year.**
- (iv) The Highways Consultancy contract was awarded to Atkins in December 2012. Performance has been good and they are being awarded an 18 month extension in accordance with the provisions of the contract. Performance will continue to be monitored and will be reviewed again next year regarding a further six month extension of the contract.**
- (v) A Performance Management Framework has been developed to help monitor future performance of the highways service and support good asset management.**
- (vi) An annual review of the highway service will be undertaken and reported to this Committee next year, which will include reporting on progress on implementing the ‘Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020’, and on the introduction of the Parish Steward Scheme.**

57 Wiltshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy - Annual Report

The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 requires Wiltshire Council to act as Lead Local Flood Authority, and to develop a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS). Councillor Jonathon Seed, Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure, Libraries and Flooding, supported by Councillor Richard Clewer, Chairman of the Salisbury Operational Flood Working Group (OFWG) was in attendance to update the Committee on management of flood risk in Wiltshire.

It was emphasised that two years prior the county, particularly in Salisbury, had been at severe risk of a major event, and preparations had been put in place to improve the situation, although it was noted in some areas it would never be possible to eliminate flood occurrence completely. Details were provided of the parish emergency assistance scheme to provide emergency signage and

sandbags for communities, of grants received from the Wessex Coastal Committee and development of flood plans.

The Committee congratulated the councillors and officers for their work and discussed the annual report as detailed in the agenda, with details sought on work with the Environment Agency on modelling flooding in Wiltshire and the type of projects that were viable, with a drainage scheme list for each area to be provided by the end of the financial year

Resolved

To note that:

- i. The Operational Flood Working Groups have proved to be a successful way of managing flood risk. They are particularly effective at working with local communities, the Environment Agency and other organisations to manage flood risk in Wiltshire.**
- ii. Local communities are encouraged to prepare Flood Plans and appoint Flood Wardens, and there are currently 82 communities with Flood Plans and 177 Flood Wardens.**
- iii. The Council's Parish Emergency Assistance Scheme (PEAS) continues to provide sand bags and equipment to local town and parish councils so that they can store these locally, and deploy them as necessary. There are 97 communities taking part in the scheme.**
- iv. The Council carries out a large programme of flood alleviation and drainage projects which are managed and co-ordinated through the Operational Flood Working Groups.**

58 Highways Service - Peer Review Action Plan

In November 2016, Cabinet agreed to an independent review of the highways service through the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) Strategic Peer Review process. The review took place in February 2016 and involved interviews with focus groups of members, staff, customers and partners, and individual interviews with Cabinet Members and senior managers, as well as reviewing service strategies and operational plans.

Peter Binley, Head of Highways Assets and Commissioning, presented the report, which noted the outcome of the Peer Review had been very positive, and that an action plan had been developed, with project teams set up to take forward the improvements identified as detailed in appendix 1 of the report.

The Committee discussed the report, congratulating the service for the positive outcome of the peer review, as well as seeking details on the potential role of Community Area Transport Groups and transformation of the Winter Maintenance Service.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved

To note:

- i. **The positive results of the HMEP Peer Review earlier this year, and that progress is being made on implementing its recommendations.**
- ii. **The progress on implementing the Action Plan will be reported to a meeting of this Committee next year.**

59 **Municipal Waste Management Strategy**

Wiltshire's Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy was prepared by the Wiltshire Waste Partnership and adopted by the four district councils and the county council in 2006. This was then updated in 2012 following the formation of the Wiltshire Council unitary authority to reflect emerging legislation and changing council priorities.

Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Development Management, Strategic Housing, Operational Property and Waste, supported by Tracy Carter, Associate Director for Waste and Environment, presented a report explaining that due to legislative and policy changes the Strategy would need to be developed, and that an updated version of the current strategy had been prepared until that new draft, which would take place in 2017.

The Committee discussed the update and the effectiveness of the existing strategy. In response to queries it was confirmed the present recycling rate in the county was 47%, less below target than in the report, as the figure fluctuated from month to month, but that the new Waste Contract would introduce greater recycling range for plastics to help improve the figure. Details were also sought on encouraging people to sign up to Green Waste collection of compost green materials locally.

It was also noted that encouraging commercial operators to recycle was a challenge as there was no statutory duty for them to do so, and that potential implications arising from exiting the European Union, potentially the requirements of existing Directives, were being explored.

Resolved:

To note the contents of the updated Wiltshire Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2016.

60 **Executive Response to the Waste Task Group's Final Report**

On 13 September 2016 the Committee endorsed the final report of the Waste Service Changes Task Group and referred its recommendations to the relevant Cabinet Member, as detailed in the agenda papers. Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Development Management, Strategic Housing, Operational Property and Waste, was in attendance to present the Executive Response to the final report and its recommendations.

In relation to recommendation 4 and whether the Churchfields Depot could be included on the Regulation 123 list and funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy it was stated this was being considered, but that a priority list would be prepared in the new year. In relation to recommendation 12 regarding a communication strategy to raise public awareness of what can and cannot be disposed of and the cost of abusing the system, it was raised whether area boards were required to fund covert cameras to catch abuse. It was stated the service had no plans to purchase new cameras, but that did have access to some and officers would consider all requests. It was also confirmed that it was difficult to prosecute fly tippers as that required people to make witness statements, not merely report incidents.

At the end of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

To note the Executive Response.

61 **Task Group Update**

Updates from the Committee's Task Groups were provided as detailed in the agenda and as provided verbally at the meeting.

Resolved:

- 1) **To note the update on task group activity.**
- 2) **That Cllr Linda Packard be replaced on the Highways and Streetscene Task Group by Cllr Peter Evans.**

62 **Forward Work Programme**

The Forward Work Programme for the Committee as detailed in the agenda was received. It was noted the Wholly Owned Subsidiary proposal had still not reached a point where it could progress.

Following discussions with the Executive and Officers, it was also proposed that a Rapid Scrutiny Exercise be undertaken in respect of the Planning Service, with the focus to be confirmed at a later date.

Resolved:

To note the updated Forward Plan.

63 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 13 December 2016.

64 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 1.20 pm)

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