

ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 18 FEBRUARY 2014 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Rosemary Brown, Cllr Brian Dalton, Cllr Dennis Drewett, Cllr Peter Edge (Vice Chairman), Cllr Peter Evans, Cllr Mollie Groom, Cllr Alan Hill (Chairman), Cllr Magnus Macdonald, Cllr Ian McLennan, Cllr Horace Prickett and Cllr Bridget Wayman

Also Present:

Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Bob Jones MBE, Cllr Simon Killane, Cllr Jeff Osborn, Cllr John Thomson, Cllr Anthony Trotman and Cllr Philip Whitehead

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Green.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 10 December 2013 were presented for consideration. It was,

Resolved

To APPROVE as a true and correct record and sign the minutes.

3 Declarations of Interest

4 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman welcomed Emma Dove, Scrutiny Officer and Eleanor Slack, Democratic Services Officer. They would both be supporting the Committee in the future.

5 Public Participation

The rules on public participation were noted.

6 **Final Report of the joint Air Quality Task Group**

The Environment Select Committee had a long-standing interest in the development of the Council's Air Quality Strategy and following the receipt of a report which suggested a more holistic approach should be taken, it was suggested that the subject should also be considered by the Health Select Committee.

The joint Air Quality Task Group was formed in August 2012 to review and scrutinise the implementation of the Air Quality strategic objectives and action plan in addition to the effectiveness of Council Services working together holistically to ensure that respective service contributions were embedded within service delivery plans.

Cllr Peter Evans, Chairman of the Task Group, presented the final report of the Task Group. The Task Group was reassured that key services across the Council (Public Protection, Development, Transport and the ECO team) were working together to ensure that respective service contributions were embedded within service delivery plans and that they were effective in supporting the improvement of air quality across Wiltshire. Cllr Evans therefore asked the Committee to endorse the report's recommendations.

A discussion followed, where it was noted that Wiltshire had three particulate monitors. New research was mentioned which suggested a correlation between particulate pollution and nitrogen dioxide pollution, both were connected with car emissions. Some members felt that in light of new Air Quality Strategy expected later in the year that a new Task Group could be set up, but this would be a decision for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

Resolved

That the Committee:

- 1) Endorse the recommendations in paragraph 26 and refer the report to the relevant Cabinet members for response.**
- 2) Stand down the Task Group until new policy necessitated its reinstatement.**

7 **Update on Highways and Streetscene Contract (BBLP) rapid scrutiny**

At its meeting on 5 November 2013, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee agreed to a number of actions in respect of the Balfour Beatty Highways and Streetscene Contract (BBLP) following a request for its consideration by Cllr Jeff Osborn. They were that:

- A rapid scrutiny exercise would be conducted on the content of the report (from the Cabinet member) to enable greater clarity on the concerns raised.
- A progress report would be presented to the Environment Select Committee after the winter, addressing operational performance
- Environment Select Committee to conduct a full scrutiny exercise in June 2014 after the first full operational year of the contract.

Cllr Jeff Osborn, Chairman of Highways and Streetscene Contract Rapid Scrutiny updated the Committee on the progress of the Rapid Scrutiny Exercise. He confirmed that the group were due to meet in April to discuss matters outstanding from the earlier rapid scrutiny meeting. The Committee thanked Cllr Jeff Osborn for his well presented scrutiny exercise and report.

Cllr Thomson praised the work of Balfour Beatty and Council officers in dealing with the recent flooding issues. Council Officers had worked in partnership with the Fire Service and the Army to support those affected by the floods. The need to learn from the extreme weather events was noted and the need to consider implementing snow and water plans in the future was discussed. The Local Highways and Street Scene performance figures had changed, but had not yet been formally updated.

Members were informed that grass cutting plans, including timetables, were currently being distributed and they would all receive a copy shortly. Parish Councils had been informed that some areas of amenity grass would not be cut due to poor weather conditions.

The Committee also praised the leadership of Carlton Brand and the Corporate Directors in responding to the extreme weather.

Resolved

That the Committee note the report.

8 Response to Waste Task Group

The Cabinet received the report of the Waste Task Group at their meeting on 21 November 2013. The Task Group had scrutinised the high level service specification for the new waste contracts, the criteria to be used to develop the quality element of the tender evaluation models and the proposed re-modelling of waste collection and recycling rounds. The Task Group was pleased to note that their report had been taken into account in the drafting of the Executive report presented to Cabinet.

On behalf of the Chairman of the Task Group who was unable to be present, Cllr Horace Prickett, another member of the Task Group, gave an update on its work. The Task Group was currently scrutinising the communications plan developed to inform residents about changes to their waste collections.

The Task Group expressed concern that they had not had the opportunity to scrutinise the affordable plan for dealing with Wiltshire's waste in the future, for which contracts had been put out to tender. Concern was also expressed regarding the manner in which the proximity principle was addressed in the plan.

It was confirmed that Dr Peter Alberry would deliver his presentation at the same event as those invited to tender for the contracts. The financial data in the presentation would be revised.

In the discussion that followed, it was confirmed that a meeting had occurred between Dr Carlton Brand (Corporate Director), Cllr Alan Hill (Chairman of the Committee) and Tracy Carter (Associate Director Waste and Environment). As a result of this meeting it was confirmed that a report would be presented on the affordable plan when the tendering response was received. Concerns regarding communication during times of flooding were raised, particularly the need to rely on landlines to report flooding or fallen trees due to patchy mobile phone signal or lack of internet access. The need for the Task Group to continue their work was discussed, particularly with regard to scrutinizing the Affordable Plan.

Resolved

That the Committee note the update.

9 Response to CIL Task Group

The final report of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Task Group was presented at the Cabinet meeting of 17 December 2013. It recommended that the Council should adopt several rates on their charging schedule for CIL, based on the viability of those rates within specific settlement categories. They also advised that student housing should be included in the residential rates as it was considered a lucrative market and could withstand the higher charges.

The Task Group had completed its work in relation to its remit, but the Cabinet member welcomed the continuation of the CIL Task Group in the light of recent legislation and emerging Government guidance.

Cllr Tony Trotman, Chairman of the Task Group updated the Committee. CIL consultation papers had been circulated to Town and Parish Councils, the deadline for which was 24 February. Committee members were encouraged to circulate the consultation papers to members of the public for individual responses. Although the original remit of the Task Group had been fulfilled, the need for its continued existence was discussed. This would allow the Task Group to react to potential changes to the CIL charging schedules as well as the information arising from the consultation.

In the discussion that followed, the Committee noted the need for the Task Group to remain extant. Concern was expressed regarding the short timeframe of the consultation and it was suggested that local neighbourhood planning groups and Parish Clerks should be contacted to encourage consultation feedback.

The Committee thanked the Task Group for their hard work and expressed regret that the Cabinet had not taken on their advice regarding the CIL charging bands.

Resolved:

That the Committee note the update.

10 **Forward Work Programme**

It was confirmed that the Management Committee would have to be consulted regarding setting up new Task Groups.

Members were informed that the Committee would be receiving a report on the flood plan and lessons to be learnt from the recent conditions.

11 **Task Group Update**

The Committee noted previous discussions on the work of the existing Task Groups, and work to organize the initial meetings of other agreed Task Groups.

12 **Urgent Items**

The Committee discussed the recent increased popularity of property extensions and the possibility that such extensions could result in properties entering a higher Council Tax band. The Wiltshire Council Housing Assessment team had confirmed that assessments which could result in a property moving into a higher band were not carried out until the property was sold. As a result there could be a gap of several years between a property being extended and its subsequent move into the appropriate Council Tax band. The Committee noted that this delay could result in lost revenue for the Council.

The Committee discussed the potential of engaging in property assessments at an earlier stage with the view to exploiting this potential revenue stream. The Committee was informed that valuation of properties for Council Tax purposes was undertaken by the Valuation Office Agency; the Council could not undertake such valuations. Members also discussed the possibility of asking the national valuation service to engage in their service at an earlier point.

Some members also highlighted ongoing consultations with First Bus service, which was due to close on 16 March and could be accessed at www.firstgroup/faire/faresforall. This was a similar exercise to the consultation

that had already occurred in Bristol and had resulted in significant fare reductions.

In the discussion that followed, the Committee discussed the possibility of circulating a briefing note to members whose local area was served by First buses. Members also discussed the advantages of competitive bus routes where more than one company was running a service. This competition could remove Wiltshire Council's obligation to provide a subsidy. The Children's Select Committee was currently undertaking an exercise regarding children's services which would examine the relationship between Local Authorities and schools and the education of 16 to 19 year olds included the impact transport options had on their decisions over which courses to study. The Committee agreed that the transport topic warranted further investigation and it would consider this again in 4 – 6 months. This would enable it to use the evidence gathered from the Children's Services Task Group.

13 **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting would take place on 15 April 2014 in the Kennet Room, County Hall.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 - 11.45 am)

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