

ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8 JANUARY 2019 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Bob Jones MBE (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair), Cllr Peter Evans, Cllr Peter Fuller, Cllr Tom Rounds, Cllr Tony Jackson, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Ian McLennan, Cllr Steve Oldrieve, Cllr Sue Evans (Substitute) and Cllr Brian Mathew (Substitute)

Also Present:

Cllr Brian Dalton

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Matthew Dean, Cllr Derek Brown, Cllr Mike Hewitt and Cllr Nick Murry, Cllr Clare Cape.

Cllr Clare Cape was substituted by Cllr Brian Mathew
Cllr Derek Brown was substituted by Cllr Sue Evans.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th November 2018 were approved as an accurate record.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman made the following announcements:

1. Committee Seating Plan

Attention was drawn to the new seating plan for the Committee

2. Recent Learning & Development Workshop for OS Members

The Chairman agreed that details about the recent 'Effective Overview and Scrutiny meetings' workshop, held in October 2018 should be circulated to members of this Committee.

5 **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

6 **Resident Engagement Plan**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Housing and Commercial Development, which provided an updated Resident Engagement plan 2019-2022 and Action Plan, previously agreed by the Housing Board, and sought guidance about the future direction of Resident Engagement within the Council's Housing Services.

Cllr Richard Clewer, Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Arts, Heritage and Tourism introduced the report and explained that the new Resident Engagement Plan would assist the service in ensuring it can deliver the high quality flexible services that are supported in the Business Plan. It will also assist in ensuring the Council act in accordance with the Regulatory Standards and will assist in the retention of the Tenant Participation Advisory Service Accreditation; as well as assisting the service in exceeding residents' expectations.

The Committee noted that there is increasing evidence that having resident engagement arrangements has had a positive impact on the quality of service provision to residents and their families. The current resident engagement arrangements concluded in 2018 and an updated Resident Engagement Plan and Action Plan would ensure that services provided to residents met their expectations, that the Council actions are in accordance with obligations including legal and regulatory obligations, and complement the Council's Business Plan.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Arts, Heritage and Tourism and Director of Housing and Commercial Development responded to a number of issues and comments from the Committee. In particular, the following issues and comments were raised:

- Future Council proposals for the establishment of a Local Housing Company and Local Development Company to meet upcoming social housing demand and confirmation that there were no plans to transfer existing social housing to this new organisation.
- Issues connected with housing estates containing a mixture of social and private home ownership and potential conflict with vehicles parking on the estates roads and the potential to limit access necessary for Council refuse vehicles to collect waste.
- Increasing engagement with residents and taking into account their views.

- Amendment of Plan Objective 2.1 – All services reviewed and redesigned with customers and better value for money achieved - taking into account the removal of the Housing Revenue Account cap.
- Encouraging people with valid email addresses to receive 100% digital correspondence as an option.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Arts, Heritage and Tourism and officers for attending the meeting and providing responses to the issues raised.

Resolved:

- 1. To endorse the Resident Engagement Plan 2019-2022 and Action Plan, previously agreed by the Housing Board, subject to paragraph 2.1 of the Plan to be amended to reflect the lifting of the cap on the Housing Revenue Account.**
- 2. To receive ad-hoc updates (as opposed to an annual update) with regard to the progress in achieving targets within the Resident Engagement plan 2019-2022.**

7 Housing Board - Annual Report

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Housing and Commercial Development, which provided the Committee with an opportunity to comment on the activities of the Council's Housing Board between December 2017 and November 2018, prior to the Annual Report being considered by the Cabinet on 26th March 2019.

Cllr Richard Clewer, Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Arts, Heritage and Tourism explained that throughout the period of the Annual report, the Board has engaged in a range of activities to shape the service offered to residents and their families, increased service quality via appropriate monitoring mechanisms, encourage resident engagement and protected the reputation of the council as a landlord by ensuring a robust Business Plan is implemented. The Committee noted that much work had been undertaken in relation to garage sites and how they would be utilised going forward, also the positive outcomes of the 7 year repairs and maintenance rolling programme.

The report set out the areas focused on by the Board during the year, with the primary focus of the Board being (i) the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan; and (ii) the Asset Management Strategy (AMS).

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Arts, Heritage and Tourism responded to a number of issues and comments from the Committee, in particular, the following issues and comments were raised:

- Attendance by Councillors and the public at Board meetings and the meeting locations.
- Existing garage stock and the need to continually review the needs of tenants and the wider need of providing more social housing in areas where garages have degraded to such an extent, due to lack of use, that they become a liability rather than an asset.
- Consideration of the future demand for garage sites undertaken by the Housing Board.
- The lead officer for monitoring the Housing Priorities and Workplan would be the Director – Housing and Commercial Development, following the recent departure of the Head of Housing – Strategy and Assets.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Arts, Heritage and Tourism and officers for attending the meeting and providing responses to the issues raised.

Resolved: To endorse the Housing Board Annual Report.

8 Late Night Taxi Fares

The Committee considered the report of the Late-Night Taxi Fares Task Group, which presented the findings and recommendations of the Task Group for endorsement and referral to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social care, Public Health and Public Protection.

Cllr Graham Payne, Chairman of the Late-Night Taxi Fares Task Group introduced the final report of the Task Group. He thanked all those involved in the Task Group, including the Scrutiny Lead, Task group members, Council officers and witnesses. He explained that the Task Group met with 6 witnesses from the Salisbury area including the late night economy, Managing Director of a Salisbury-based taxi company and a representative of the taxi trade in the Salisbury area. In addition, the Task Group also met with taxi trade representatives from other parts of the county.

In particular, Cllr Payne reported on the following issues:

- The set-up of the Task Group, the number of occasions the Task Group met and how they undertook the Review.
- The loss of trade to other locations following the introduction of revised tariffs in 2014.
- Tariff 2 and upwards being out of kilter with other Local Authorities, including Tariff 5 being significantly higher.
- The number of taxi's operating in Salisbury.
- The need to continue to raise standards across the trade, including the possibility of introduction BTEC qualification for Hackney Carriage drivers.
- Lack of the availability of disabled Hackney Carriages.
- Evidence received of safeguarding issues for drivers and passengers.

- In addition to the recommendations in the Task Group report, to request officers undertake an appraisal of the current Council Tariffs compared to regional averages.

In response to questions about benchmarking Council fares against Uber fares, Cllr Payne reported that the task Group report concluded that this matter should be considered in the longer term.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Public Protection, thanked the Task Group and Scrutiny Lead. He welcomed the report, and explained that he would follow up the issues raised and recommendations of the Task Group with officers and the Licensing Committee, as appropriate. He would also provide regular updates to the Environment Select Committee.

The Chairman thanked the Chairman of the Task Group and officers for attending the meeting and providing responses to the issues raised.

Resolved: To endorse that the Task Group recommends that the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Public Protection:

- 1. Takes into account the evidence presented, considers and consults on whether the current maximum late-night taxi tariffs are appropriate across the county – including in Salisbury – and to consider:**
 - a. removing tariffs 3 and 5 altogether (currently 2.30-5.59am), and**
 - b. operating tariff 2 between 12.00-5.59am rather than between 10.30pm-2.29am.**
- 2. Reviews the significant difference between the current maximum tariffs for 5- and 8-seater taxis (particularly when compared with equivalent differences in other areas) and considers if these are justified by any additional costs associated with operating larger vehicles.**
- 3. In addition to expanding the council's existing 'Fit and Proper Person' requirements regarding taxis, which the task group supports, considers introducing a requirement that all drivers pass a BTEC qualification in the Role of the Professional Taxi and Private Hire Driver in order to ensure the highest standards of service and protection for the public.**
- 4. Considers whether the introduction of CCTV in taxis as a way of safeguarding passengers and drivers is appropriate, having assessed the opportunities and risks, and the experiences of other local authorities.**

5. **Calculates the total number of taxis in Wiltshire that are suitable and available for disabled passengers (other than those generally being used under council contracts) and takes action to increase this if necessary, including, if appropriate, by amending the requirement on taxi companies within the relevant policy.**
6. **To undertake an appraisal of the current Council Hackney Carriage Tariffs in comparison to other Local Authorities and regional averages.**
7. **To receive regular updates on actions taken in relation to the above recommendations.**

9 **Waste Contracts Task Group - Final Report**

The Committee considered the final report of the Waste Contracts Task Group, which presented the findings and recommendations of the Task Group for endorsement and referral to the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste.

Cllr Sven Hocking, Chairman of the Waste Contracts Task Group introduced the final report of the Task Group. He thanked all those involved in the Task Group, including the Senior Scrutiny Officer, Task Group members, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste, Director of Waste and Environment and officers. He commented on the marketing and communication plan in relation to the changes to household waste collections, introduction of a re-use area at all Wiltshire Household Recycling Centres, communication with residents, the need to market recycling, the steps involved in making prosecution and Fixed Penalty Notices for fly tipping and the Wiltshire App.

Cllr Hocking, the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste and the Director of Waste and Environment responded to a number of comments and issues on the following:

- The Wiltshire App update being part of the digital programme.
- Fly tipping and the need to seek evidence to enable prosecutions.
- The need to reconvene the Task Group at a future time to consider waste contracts.
- Awareness campaign on the type of materials allowed to be recycled.
- The use of plastics in road building.

The Chairman thanked the Chairman of the Task Group, Cabinet member and officers for attending the meeting and providing responses to the issues raised.

Resolved: To endorse the following recommendations of the Task Group and refer them to the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste for consideration and implementation:

- 1. In order to support the delivery of the Business Plan 2017-27 objective(s) of high recycling rates and reducing litter, the Council to:**
 - a. Regularly communicate the duties and responsibilities of businesses for disposing of their commercial waste, through a variety of means, such as:**
 - i. Leaflet drop-offs to businesses**
 - ii. Social media channels**
 - iii. Parish/Town Council Newsletters**
 - iv. Regularly maintaining and updating the Council's commercial waste webpages**
 - b. Create a 'Commercial Waste Directory' for Wiltshire, which details which individuals/organisations can collect and recycle commercial waste for Wiltshire's businesses. This Directory to also be regularly publicised through the above channels listed in I to IV.**
 - c. For a 'Re-Use' section to be introduced at all Wiltshire's HRCs and, at the HRCs where it already exists, for this section to become operational. This facility to be widely and regularly publicised, so that residents are aware of it and can begin to take advantage of it.**
 - d. Regularly communicate to residents, as well as town and parish councils the need for and importance of segregating recycling materials, in order to continue to ensure that the quality of Wiltshire's recycle remains at a high level. Such communication to be facilitated through the above channels listed in I to IV.**
- 2. Utilise fixed penalty notices (FPNs) instead of warning letters and report back to the Environment Select Committee after a 12 month period, including the amount of FPNs issued in comparison to warning letters and the effect that this has had on fly-tipping/reducing litter in Wiltshire.**
- 3. Formulate a public relations campaign which seeks to encourage residents to come forward with evidence and information, if they see waste being fly-tipped.**
- 4. Amend the MyWiltshire App, so that reporting of fly-tipping/waste incidents becomes a simpler and more user-friendly process.**
- 5. The Environment Select Committee to reconvene a Waste Contracts Task Group to consider 'The implementation and performance of**

the council's waste contracts for collecting and managing waste and recyclables' when Lots 1, 3, 4 and 5 become fully operational.

- 6. To ask the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste to report further on a public relations campaign seeking evidence of fly tipping.**

10 **Ragwort**

The Committee considered a briefing note of the Head of Public Protection, which provided an update on the council's policies surrounding ragwort, as requested by Cllr Hewitt at the Committee's meeting in September 2018.

In addition to the information provided in the briefing note about the effect of ragwort on livestock, Cllr Lay raised a concern about dog fouling in the countryside and its effect on livestock. The Chairman asked the Committee if this was an issue they would like to be added to the Forward Work Programme.

Resolved: To note:

- 1. The contents of the briefing note and the responsibility of the land occupier for monitoring and controlling the growth and spread of ragwort**
- 2. The Council's role in monitoring and controlling the growth and spread of ragwort in Wiltshire**
- 3. That the briefing note be circulated to all Members of the Council.**
- 4. That an item on dog fouling in the countryside and its impact on livestock, be included in the Committee's next Forward Work Programme.**

11 **Salisbury Recovery Operation**

The Committee received a presentation from Cllr Pauline Church, Cabinet member for Economic Development and South Wiltshire Recovery, about the work being undertaken to revitalise the economy in Salisbury and how funding from the Government has been allocated.

Cllr Church reported that, as at mid November 2018, footfall in Salisbury was down 16.3% compared with 2017. It was suggested that part of the reduction was due to an increase in online sales for Black Friday and possibly the airing of the BBC Panorama programme about the Salisbury poisonings. In particular, Cllr Church commented on the following issues during the presentation:

- South Wiltshire recovery income and expenditure from various streams totalling £5,335.491.
- A breakdown of the funding from Wiltshire Council reserves.
- A breakdown of the funding from Central Government.
- South Wiltshire moving forward, including the long term economic recovery plan, initiatives and governance.

Cllr Church, in responding to comments from the Committee, explained that (i) there were no timescales for the recovery operation. The process had seen many different stakeholders coming together to work for the good of the city, and this should be a blueprint for towns and cities across the county; (ii) The £500,000 awarded to Visit Wiltshire from Central Government was for advertising Wiltshire overseas; (iii) The benefits of contributing £1.5m from Council reserves to the operation would probably not be financial, although the Government were well aware of the financial challenges faced by the Council. Wiltshire would receive a higher focus by the Government; (iv) The increasing use of Park and Ride in Salisbury and the need to promote this form of transport in the long term; and (v) Path linkages to the town centre from West Harnham.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for the very informative presentation.

Resolved: That the presentation be noted and that the Committee receive an update on the latest position in 6 months.

12 **Strategic Depot Review**

The Committee received a verbal update from the Director of Housing and Commercial Development about the proposed strategic depot review.

He explained that the council continues to have a significant requirement for operational depot facilities from which to deliver its services and in a large and rural county, the cost-effective delivery of operational services basic logistics necessitates multiple facilities, based on a geographical spread. The council's depot stock is becoming increasingly dilapidated and has suffered from years of under-investment. There are a number of relatively modern and cost-effective facilities, but also an increasing number that are no longer fit for purpose with escalating costs for maintenance, compliance, and energy consumption. Members notes that the council is at risk of sanctions by the Environment Agency.

There was immediate need for action due to the significant risk of service failure in relation to the winter depots. It is proposed that the Council adopt a phased approach that delivers the short-term requirements necessary to support the delivery of services, with a longer-term strategy developed as the current uncertainties are resolved. It was noted that the final report on this matter would be considered by the Cabinet on 5th February 2019.

The Chairman thanked the Director of Housing and Commercial Development for his briefing.

Resolved: To note the briefing.

13 **Updates from task groups and representatives on programme boards**

The Committee received updates on recent activity for the following Task Groups:

- i) Homelessness Strategy Task Group; and
- ii) Rapid Scrutiny: Plastic Waste for Wiltshire's Roads

Homelessness Task Group

The Chairman referred to the Task Group's proposed and amended terms of reference and membership, and asked the Members to endorse them. Cllr Clewer provided a brief update of the work of the last Task Group meeting and indicated that their work was progressing well.

Resolved:

- 1. To endorse the revised Terms of Reference of the Homelessness Task Group, as detailed in the report.**
- 2. To endorse the membership of the Homelessness Task Group, as detailed in the report.**
- 3. To endorse Cllr Graham Wright's membership on the Homelessness Strategy Project Board as the O/S representative.**

14 **Forward Work Programme**

The Senior Scrutiny Officer introduced the Committee's Forward Work Programme, asked for confirmation about how to progress a number of items and provided updates on the following areas:

- HIAMS: Streetworks
- Waste Management Strategy

Resolved:

- 1. To note the Forward Work Programme.**
- 2. To receive a briefing note on the HIAMS: Streetworks item and remove from the Forward Work Plan.**
- 3. To confirm that an update on the Waste Management Strategy would be received by the Committee at its meeting on 23rd April 2019.**

15 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

16 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 12th March 2019.

(Duration of meeting: 2.00 - 3.45 pm)

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