

ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 3 SEPTEMBER 2019 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

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

Also Present:

58 **Apologies**

There were no apologies.

59 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Resolved:

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 June 2019 were approved.

60 **Declarations of Interest**

There we no declarations of interest.

61 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

62 **Public Participation**

The Chairman explained the rules of public participation and invited Lou Barry to read her statement on Becky Addy Woodland.

Cllr Bridget Wayman thanked Lou Barry for her statement and stated that the matter would be taken up with Richard Broadhead, Head of Rights of Way and Countryside.

The Chair then invited Elizabeth Roberts to ask her supplementary question. Ms Roberts asked why emergency powers were not in place for all council plans and departments, how the authority proposed to deal with predicted food shortages and how it would share its disaster plans.

The Chair then invited Bill Jarvis, representing Extinction Rebellion Wiltshire, to ask his questions that addressed the lack of press communications from the authority and representation of the Task Group.

Cllr Richard Clewer stated that Cabinet meetings were the most appropriate place to respond to questions on Climate Change; as Cabinet is the decision-making body and there is no limit of the number of questions that could be asked at meetings. Cllr Clewer highlighted that scrutiny was not the lead in this area and thus, often needed to ask the Cabinet Member to respond to questions that did not specifically relate to the Task Group's work.

Cllr Graham Wright emphasised the 'one team' approach to managing climate change and welcomed the public engagement.

The Chair then invited Jane Laurie to ask a supplementary question on a baseline survey and the parameters of such a survey.

Officers replied by saying that academic rigor was essential and University partners were being engaged to support this work.

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

Cllr Graham Wright updated the committee on the Homelessness Strategy Task Group, as well as the Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group.

Cllr Graham Wright expressed confidence in the positive outcomes that flow from public engagement when it's combined with a nationally respected scrutiny process. The range of issues that the Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group would address were outlined; renewable energy generation, energy use and efficiency, planning, transport, air quality, waste, land use, business and industry.

Public communications, the pace of policy formation and rate of change were discussed. The planned Global Warming and Climate Emergency section of the council's website was described as being a means of improving communications and public engagement.

Resolved:

- 1. The committee noted the update on task group activity provided.**

- 2. The committee endorsed the proposed terms of reference of the Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group.**
- 3. The committee noted that as Cllr Allison Bucknell has taken up a position within the council's Executive, she is no longer a member of the Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group.**

64 Homelessness Strategy Task Group

Cllr Graham Wright updated the committee on the work of the Homelessness Strategy Task Group. The headline findings were; the centrality of rent arrears to evictions, the lack of one-bedroom homes, rurality and access to services and the labour market.

The Rough Sleeper Outreach Team had been found to have helped reduce rough sleeping by 52% and data from housing, benefits and council tax sources could, within legal limitations, be used to improve preventative processes.

The debate that followed addressed the needs of traveller communities, care leavers, people with SEND, the engagement of private landlords and housing associations, data protection limitations on data sharing and the need for consent, the complexity and compound nature of multiple needs that often lie underneath homelessness and the necessity of preventative approaches.

Cllr Oldrieve proposed amending Recommendation 5 to read 'to establish a "prevention partnership"', as opposed to 'to consider establishing a "prevention partnership"'. This was accepted by the Committee.

Resolved:

The Environment Select Committee endorsed the following recommendations of the Task Group.

That the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts, Tourism, Housing and Environment implements the following recommendations:

- 1. The Environment Select Committee welcomed the positive and proactive engagement from the Executive throughout this important review.**
- 2. In order to ensure that intervention takes place at the earliest possible stage and that vulnerable clients have the best chance of maintaining appropriate accommodation, to consider implementing a "Passport to Housing" scheme, whereby the following are undertaken:**
 - a) Internal Data Matching: those on welfare benefits, those who have Council Tax arrears and rent arrears have their details centralised. This information to then be discussed, so that all**

appropriate Council departments are aware of the individuals/households most at risk of homelessness; leading to a process of earlier intervention

- b) Wiltshire Council's Departments, Wiltshire's main Social Housing providers, private landlords and the third sector forge a partnership working arrangement, so that housing stock is better co-ordinated and different agencies become more aware and responsive to the needs of Wiltshire's tenants.
3. The council to consider all the ways of encouraging and supporting private landlords to rent their properties to those in receipt of welfare benefits and wider use of the 'Discretionary Housing Payment', in order to increase the housing options available to this group and reduce their vulnerability to homelessness.
4. In order to ensure that Wiltshire Council can continue its positive work reducing homelessness in the county, to prioritise sustaining both the Emergency Accommodation provision (in each town where need has been proven) and Rough Sleeper Outreach Team for a significant period of time through, for example:
 - a) Regularly recording data that evidences the need for, and impact of, the Emergency Accommodation provision and the Rough Sleeper Outreach Team
 - b) Continually seeking funding opportunities to help maintain these services.
5. In light of the Army Rebasing 2020 Scheme and to help manage the workload of Housing Options South, to establish a "prevention partnership" network with the Ministry of Defence and appropriate partners, which would enhance the housing support offered to those leaving the armed forces.
6. For the Council's homelessness webpages to be better publicised and more easily accessible from the Council's homepage, so that those who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, can more easily remotely access the support and advice that they need.
7. For the Environment Select Committee to consider a report in 12 months' time, updating on how the Executive have implemented the recommendations set out above. *(N.B. This report would only relate to recommendations that the Executive accepted, as detailed in the 'Executive Response to the Homelessness Strategy Task Group's final report' – due to be received on 5 November 2019).*

65 **Housing Aids and Adaptations**

Cllr Richard Clewer outlined the report to committee on adapting homes to tenants needs through housing aids and adaptation. Issues highlighted were long waits, the need to inspire housing associations to address aids and adaptation and the use of scrutiny as a method of policy development rather than of policy review. Housing aids and adaptation was an area that would benefit from a Task Group.

The debate that followed discussed the delays to housing disabled households in social housing and the impact of this on health and social care costs, the need for better customer consultation, awareness of grant funding, difficulty in scaling up person centred adaptation and the role of planning in improving private housing stock.

Resolved:

That the Environment Select Committee establish a Task Group, to review the Council's approach to meeting the needs of households who require adapted housing

66 **Waste Management Strategy**

Cllr Bridget Wayman introduced the Waste Management Strategy item.

The debate that followed clarified the regulatory framework that governs the overseas sites used by Wiltshire Council, as well as how food waste could be collected in Wiltshire – following the Government's consultation proposal on food waste collection. By way of background information, Members suggested that future reports could include an update of how the service area had performed against the action plan for the previous year.

Resolved:

The Environment Select Committee supports the report and appendices of the Household Waste Management Strategy, subject to future reports including an update on progress made against the action plan in the previous years, and encourages the Executive to work towards providing a food waste collection service for the county.

67 **Rapid Scrutiny: Plastic Waste In Wiltshire's Roads - Executive response**

Cllr Bridget Wayman introduced her 'Executive Response' to the Rapid Scrutiny's final report and recommendations. She highlighted that she felt that Recommendation Four's suggestion of using the Highways Annual Report to publish updates on use of plastic in roads to committee would be better served through ad-hoc reporting to Committee on findings from the current trials.

The debate that followed addressed work in Cumbria, the risk of micro-plastic pollution, lack of knowledge of the material and its use in roads.

Resolved:

The Committee noted the executive response to the Final Report – Rapid Scrutiny on using plastic waste as part of the council's road maintenance programme.

68 **Forward Work Programme**

The Chair updated Committee that the Public Transport Review item had been removed from the Forward Work Programme, as it had been agreed in consultation with the Vice-Chairman that OS would not add value by looking at this matter. Additionally, the 'Executive Response' to the Late-Night Taxi Fares Task Group's final report had been removed; as the Licensing Committee had now taken ownership of this matter.

69 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

70 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was to be 5 November 2019, with a later start time of 2pm.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.20 pm)

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