

ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 1 SEPTEMBER 2015 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Rosemary Brown (Substitute), Cllr Anna Cuthbert (Substitute), Cllr Dennis Drewett, Cllr Peter Edge (Vice Chairman), Cllr Peter Evans, Cllr Jose Green, Cllr Bob Jones MBE (Substitute), Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Magnus Macdonald, Cllr Ian McLennan, Cllr Tony Trotman, Cllr Bridget Wayman (Chairman) and Cllr Philip Whalley

Also Present:

Cllr Jonathon Seed, Cllr Jerry Wickham

38 Apologies

Apologies were received from:

Cllr Brian Dalton
Cllr Linda Packard
Cllr James Sheppard
Carlton Brand

Cllr Brian Dalton was substituted by Cllr Bob Jones
Cllr Linda Packard was substituted by Cllr Rosemary Brown
Cllr James Sheppard was substituted by Cllr Anna Cuthbert

39 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The durability of decal (stickers) on green waste bins was questioned with regards to minute 33a. It was requested that an update on whether they are expected to be temporary be provided to the Committee.

It was noted that the net saving in garden waste services was £1.2million in 2015, with £300,000 per annum savings as a result of revised recycling centre opening hours.

Resolved:

To confirm as a true and correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2015.

40 **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Bridget Wayman declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7 as she was a non-executive director of Selwood Housing.

41 **Chairman's Announcements**

Community Litter Picking

Information on collecting waste from community litter picking was requested by the committee at the Environment Select Committee meeting on 9 June 2015 and was circulated to members of the committee.

The Committee noted that it was hoped a more holistic approach would have been provided across Wiltshire to prevent littering. More work was expected regarding school programmes and work with fast food outlets. Information was requested regarding this.

HRC Hours

It was announced that the Associate Director for Waste and Environment had indicated that the specification tendered for would be reduced hours so that all savings made were clear. Work was also being done to address traffic management.

It was noted that charities with discretionary passes to recycling centres visited HRCs during weekend peak hours. It was recommended that these charities go directly to Amesbury Transfer Centre.

Fracking

It was announced that from the bidding round undertaken last year, the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) had received 95 licence applications to explore for onshore oil and gas covering 295 'blocks' in England, Scotland and Wales. A total of 159 blocks remained for further consideration, 4 of which related to Wiltshire.

The consultation focused on whether the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) undertaken was reasonable on the 159 sites remaining for "further consideration" and not whether these areas should be subject to hydrocarbon (oil and gas) exploration or extraction, also known as 'fracking'.

The deadline for the consultation was 29 September 2015, by which time Wiltshire Council would submit a response.

BBLP Contract

Wiltshire Council was noted as working towards a solution with Balfour Beatty. An update would be provided when available.

42 **Public Participation**

Mr Andrew Hewitt was in attendance to deliver a statement on the subject of fracking within Wiltshire.

43 **Review of On and Off-Street Parking Traffic Regulation Orders**

Parvis Khansari, Associate Director for Highways and Transport, was in attendance to introduce the report.

A public consultation on the revised Wiltshire LTP Car Parking Strategy had been carried between 27 October 2014 and 19 January 2015. A total of 5,013 people and organisations had responded to the consultation.

Cabinet had considered the outcome of the review and public consultation at their 17 March 2015 meeting.

Changes to all Traffic Regulation Orders were advertised. An associated public consultation exercise was undertaken between 25 June and 20 July 2015. Response to this was noted as being low with 26 of the 38 total responses relating to proposed changes from pay and display to a MiPermit scheme at Sheep Street car park in Devizes.

Proposed changes in parking charges from pay and display to MiPermit-only was explained as being limited currently to small car parks. This was to help judge how it will affect those who would struggle with operating in cashless payment conditions and see how it can be managed.

It was suggested by the Committee that a trial of the MiPermit-only scheme should be performed within Salisbury. A larger car park was explained as having been declined as a trial option as the reaction could not be predicted.

Implementation would take place after the process had been through scrutiny, area boards, and then a delegated decision.

The choice of Sheep Street car park was explained as being chosen due to its high usage from older people. Information was needed from those who do not often use phones for payment.

Possible traffic congestion caused by the change in the car park charging system at Sheep Street was noted.

It was asked whether problems with phone signals would be a cause for concern. Devizes was explained as being good for phone signal, and that Marlborough had been declined as a choice due to the poor phone signal in the area.

Resolved:

- 1. To request an update report to be brought to the Environment Select Committee 6 months after commencement of operation the MiPermit only trials.**
- 2. To recommend that a suitable trial car park is identified site be located and used within Salisbury.**

44 **Housing**

45 **Housing Association Resident Participation and Scrutiny**

Nicole Smith, Head of Housing, and Cllr Jonathon Seed were in attendance to introduce the item.

A briefing note had been previously circulated to members regarding the Housing Association Resident Participation and Scrutiny.

It was explained that, overall, there had been a good response from tenants, and that there had been success in getting them involved. A total of 2,500 texts had been sent out with a good response rate and Facebook had also been utilised for involvement. It was clarified that traditional methods of communication were still being used and that modern methods of communication were used to supplement this. It was noted that, following the changes to the Housing Allocation Policy, several thousand responses were returned as applicants were unknown at the address on record.

A question was asked regarding the inclusion of local councillors, and how they could become more involved. It was explained that this could be looked into.

Resolved:

- 1. To notify Overview and Scrutiny of the Environment Select Committee's intention to form a scrutiny Task Group.**
- 2. To circulate a request for Task Group membership to the Environment Select Committee members.**

46 **Housing Allocation Policy - Implementation Update**

Nicole Smith, Head of Housing, and Cllr Jonathon Seed were in attendance to introduce the item.

The purpose of the allocation policy was explained as setting a framework for Wiltshire Council and its partners for the registration, assessment and allocation of affordable homes. The allocation policy described how applicants for affordable housing were assessed to ensure that those with the greatest housing need were prioritised for the allocation of affordable housing in Wiltshire.

Wiltshire's revised allocation policy was fully implemented in February 2015 and remained a choice-based lettings scheme which covered the whole of Wiltshire.

Previously there had been 20,676 applicants on Wiltshire's housing register. It was suspected that a large number of these were now inactive or no longer relevant applications, as data had not been cleansed from the system for a number of years. It was also previously impossible to work out how those who best needed housing could be looked after.

Following the changes to the Housing Allocation Policy several thousand responses were returned as no longer at that address or unknown to letters sent out to applicants.

Between 15 and 20 complaints had been received during the reassessment of the 20,676 applications.

Regarding address information issues it was suggested that people should be informed that it is their duty to update their information after joining the housing register. It was explained that 12 months after joining the register applicants would be requested to confirm that their information is correct or update it.

Bidding was explained as not being limited to those with a local connection. Once a shortlist had been drawn those with local connections were prioritised first, followed by those in the surrounding area, and then the rest of Wiltshire.

It was explained that allocations were first extended to local connections, as this comes before bands. Children numbers within the area were also taken into consideration to reduce density.

Local connections were noted as including a permanent employee contract. Local connections were rigorously tested by assessment officers to ensure their legitimacy. An application could be processed in two weeks if information was readily available, but the process would take as long as was needed. It was suggested that the local connection be better advertised as a key factor in the consideration of an application.

The right to buy scheme was noted as reducing available housing stock. Different ways to address this were noted as needing to be looked at, it was explained that suggestions would be welcomed.

It was asked what would happen if an applicant had a strong local connection to a house available in an area, but had already been allocated a house elsewhere. Previously they would have been placed in the bronze band, which was unanimously recommended to be removed through consultation. House Swap and the Open House Market Register were named as options for this situation.

Bids were clarified as being able to be made through electronic or non-electronic means.

Two bedroom properties were noted as being harder to let, as people were unable to afford the rent. A possible solution was to offer housing lets on a shared basis. It was suggested that two bedroom flats should be taken as starter homes for families.

Resolved:

For the report to return to the Environment Select Committee in 6 months to consider the impact of the revised Housing Bill.

47 **Future Delivery Model for the Repairs, Improvements and Maintenance of Council Owned Assets**

Cllr Wayman explained that the Future Delivery Model for the Repairs, Improvements and Maintenance of Council Owned Assets report was currently unavailable.

It was explained that the report would be going to Cabinet on 17 September 2015. A rapid scrutiny task group was hoped to be performed on the report on 8 September before the report went to Cabinet.

Resolved:

To hold a rapid scrutiny exercise on 8 September 2015 to consider the future delivery model for repairs, improvements and maintenance of Council owned assets.

48 **Task Group Update**

Public Transport Review Task Group

The Chairman drew attention to the update in the agenda pack. It was explained that the task group would review the outcome of a pre-consultation exercise at its next meeting on 16 September 2015. This would include feedback from members of the task group who have attended meetings with bus operators.

The Task Group's proposed terms of reference were considered by the Committee.

Highways and Streetscene Contract (BBLP) Task Group

The Chairman drew attention to the update in the agenda pack. It was noted that the strategic direction and forward work programming for the Task Group was under development following the meeting held between the Chair of the Task Group, Corporate Director, Associate Director and Cabinet Member on 14 May 2015.

The Committee requested an update on Balfour Beatty and it was explained that an announcement was imminent and would be provided when available.

Resolved:

- 1. To note the Task Group updates.**
- 2. To approve the terms of reference for the Public Transport Review Task Group.**

49 Forward Work Programme

It was explained that issues would soon be added to the forward work programme as a result of the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

Cycle-paths and footpaths were noted as being issues of potential interest and it was suggested that this was a possible area for investigation in partnership with the Health Select Committee.

Resolved:

To note the forward work programme.

50 Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

51 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee would be held on 27 October 2015 at 10.30am in the Kennet Room, County Hall, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.40 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Fiona Rae, of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 712681, e-mail fiona.rae@wiltshire.gov.uk.

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