

**MINUTES OF THE GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT 7PM ON
WEDNESDAY 10 JANUARY 2018
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

Committee Members Present: Councillors Peach (Chairman), K Aitken, R Brown, M Cereste, A Ellis, R Ferris, J A Fox, C Harper, M Jamil, N Sandford
Parish Councillor Co-opted Member K Lievesley

Officers Present:

Andy Tatt	Head of Peterborough Highway Services
Darren Sharpe	Natural & Historic Environment Manager
James Fisher	Wildlife Officer
Richard Whelan	Water Management Engineer
Phil Hylton	Senior Strategic Planning Officer

36. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor S Nawaz and Councillor King, Councillor Jamil was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Nawaz. Apologies were also received from Parish Councillor Co-opted Member Richard Clarke.

37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

Agenda item 5. Peterborough Trees and Woodland Strategy

Councillor Sandford declared an interest in that he worked for the Woodland Trust.

38. MINUTES OF THE GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND JOINT SCRUTINY OF THE BUDGET MEETING

The minutes of the Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 1 November 2017 and the Joint Scrutiny of the Budget meeting held on 29 November 2017 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

39. CALL IN OF ANY CABINET, CABINET MEMBER OR KEY OFFICER DECISIONS

There were no requests for call-in to consider.

40. PETERBOROUGH TREES AND WOODLAND STRATEGY

The Natural and Historic Environment Manager introduced the report which provided the Committee with an opportunity to comment on the draft Trees and Woodland Strategy prior to presentation to Cabinet before presentation to Council for approval.

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Since 2012 when the trees and woodland strategy was first introduced there had been significant progress made in its delivery. The new strategy fundamentally remained the same as the existing strategy with a strong emphasis on the council's statutory duties and maintaining the tree resource around the City, whilst being mindful that the strategy needed to be delivered within the severe financial constraints that the Council was currently operating under.
- The strategy also looked to strengthen the framework of policies to maximise the benefits gained from the tree stock in terms of the ecological benefits and quality of life attributes they provided balanced against the challenges faced of having trees in an urban environment with many people living close to them.
- It was suggested that in future, as had been done previously, a cross-party working group could be set up to consider the details of the strategy in depth before it is presented to the Scrutiny committee.
- Members congratulated the officer on the draft strategy and in particular noted the policy TP3: *The removal of trees and woodlands shall be resisted, unless there are sound Health and Safety or arboriculture reasons supported within this strategy.* Members felt this was a strong policy and the overall strategy provided a sound policy framework for officers.
- Members referred to a bar chart showing the age distribution of trees on the city's tree database and noted that there were hardly any over mature trees which indicated that there had been the removal of lots of trees. Assurance was therefore sought that this was not the case. Members were informed that the strategy had been formulated to address uneven age of the tree stock across the city. The Development Corporation had conducted a mass planting of trees and at the time there had not been many mature trees in the city but existing ones had been retained and there was no intention of removing them. There has been much work done along the shelter belts with the intention of keeping and providing more mature trees. Without the proposed strategy there would be an unmanaged, overgrown shelter belt which would not create the quality trees that the City wanted to see in the future.
- Members commented that although in principle the one for one replacement plan sounded fair in reality if a 100 year old tree was replaced with a sapling it would take years to achieve the same bio-diversity benefit. Officers were asked therefore whether PCC had considered replacing one tree with 2 or 3 trees as some other Councils had committed to. Officers responded that in terms of the street scene planning and the consideration of constraints such as the location of services, there often was not the space or scope to plant any more. Within the Local Plan however under the LP29 development strategy, the number of new trees planted depended on the diameter of the one removed eg. for a tree of 75-200mm diameter one tree would be planted but for trees between 200 and 400 mm 4 trees would be planted.
- In wards that had little canopy cover the Council was planning to plant 5,000 trees which was an ambitious target that very few other Local Authorities had set.
- Members acknowledged that 30 years ago in Werrington trees had been planted in the wrong place and so were pleased to see that the new strategy addressed the siting of trees in section 9.2.5, the right tree in the right place.
- Although it was primarily urban focussed, rural locations were referenced in the strategy as that was where the majority of the older tree stock was sited.
- Hedgerows were not directly referred to in the strategy however if trees were situated within the hedgerow environment then the hedgerows would be maintained and preserved in order to protect those trees and the valuable wildlife corridor they often created.
- The Council was a significant partner of the Forest of Peterborough Project and had worked closely with the Peterborough City Environment Trust which ran the project to share data that had been collected about the canopy cover. The analysis of this data enabled them to identify where valuable links between habitats could be created.

- Work had also been done with farmers to create better linkages between habitats. Farmers preferred to collaborate on smaller areas rather than take large areas out of agricultural production and suffer the financial implications of doing so.
- There had been a long term management plan in place for the ancient woodlands in Bretton that had gone through a long and detailed consultation process with the Parish Council and other vested groups. The plan supported by the Forestry Commission, was still in place and acted as a framework for Nene Coppicing and Crafts who helped to maintain this asset.
- There was clear reference within the Local Plan as to what types of trees developers could plant and this was referenced in the Local Plan under Standard 5837 which gave a definition of what a 'suitable' or 'good quality' tree was.
- Epicormic growth removal was carried out annually as 12 months regrowth was allowed before it was cut back.
- There had been some coppicing in Bretton woodland but as the full extent of Ash dieback disease in that location was unknown, it had been scaled back as there was research that showed that young coppiced trees were very susceptible to the disease. The Council had tried to introduce trial coppicing areas to see what the results would be and in an attempt to mitigate any wholesale felling and replacement that might be needed.
- In woodland environments in particular it was a challenge to try and limit each family genus of tree but the Council had started to introduce more oak and hazel trees.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to endorse the Peterborough Trees and Woodlands Strategy to Cabinet for approval.

The Committee also requested that the Natural and Historic Environment Manager include a link and reference to the Standard 5837 in the Local Plan which references suitable trees for planting on developments.

41. PCC BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY (DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION)

The Natural and Historic Environment Manager accompanied by the Wildlife Officer introduced the report detailing the new refreshed biodiversity strategy and its approach to discharging the Council's biodiversity duty.

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- The Strategy was an update of the current strategy which had been approved in 2010. Although the new strategy had the same vision and approach its development had given officers the opportunity to review actions and to present the strategy in a more straightforward and user friendly way.
- The key areas that the strategy looked at were biodiversity in regard to planning and green infrastructure and the biodiversity on public authority managed land and buildings and on protected sites.
- There were no additional financial implications to this new strategy.
- There were currently eight areas that were on a reduced mowing regime and officers were looking to review and expand that number.
- Officers were also looking to increase the work done with other nature groups such as frog life to improve biodiversity by the more positive management of some of the neglected ponds and corners of wildlife habitat.

- Members agreed with the policies and actions outlined in the strategy but expressed concern about the lack of progress made against targets and wanted to receive more frequent updates.
- Although there had been a small increase in the use of pesticides, up by 4%, there had also been an increase in the amount of land managed by the Council so the increase was in fact negligible.
- Officers welcomed the suggestion of greater citizen science involvement and highlighted that they already worked closely with Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Specialist Group and others such as Peterborough Conservation Volunteers and residents associations to support their greater involvement in the management of Council-managed wildlife sites and informal green-spaces.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to endorse the PCC Biodiversity Strategy (Draft for Consultation) to Cabinet for approval.

The Committee also requested that the Natural and Historic Environment Manager provide a briefing note on the progress of the strategy to the Committee in six months' time.

42. PETERBOROUGH GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND BIODIVERSITY SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD)

The report was introduced by the Wildlife Officer and presented the new Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity SPD. This document had been prepared to support the emerging Local Plan and explained how the relevant policies in the Local Plan should be implemented, and would act as a "one stop shop" source of information and advice to developers, planning officers, environmental organisations and community groups

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- The document provided guidance on green infrastructure and biodiversity issues for developers and expanded on the policies set out in the Local Plan, in particular LP22; *the green infrastructure network* and LP28; *the biodiversity and geological conservation policy*
- The new SPD document replaced the 2007 Green Grid Strategy and brought together a number of biodiversity documents as well as taking into account legislation updates. The natural environment white paper had been taken into account and there had been a greater emphasis on habitat connectivity.
- An updated list of green infrastructure priority projects was included in the document and the most beneficial and deliverable projects for the city had been identified.
- It was the council's intention to use developer contributions and external grants wherever possible to deliver these projects so there would be no additional cost implications to this new document.
- Members commented that as Great Klein had been taken out of the Local Plan there was no longer an imminent development threat to John Clare country. Additionally, the John Clare section should reference the Council's partnership work with Parish councils and the Land Dyke Trust.
- Officers acknowledged that the development and enhancement of biodiversity within the urban area should be made more explicit in the report and would revise Figure 2 on page 15 of the report. Their intention was to increase biodiversity wherever they could and were keen to ensure that projects in the urban area were picked up.

- Members were concerned that the five key focus areas that had been identified did not include the urban areas where 90% of the population of Peterborough lived and Councillor Sandford recommended that the document be referred back to officers for revision.
- A vote was taken with 4 Councillors voting for and 6 Councillors voting against the recommendation and as such the vote was defeated and the document was endorsed to go to Cabinet for approval.
- Councillor Sandford wished for his objection to the approval of the document without revision be noted.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to endorse the Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to Cabinet for approval.

The Committee also requested that the following points be taken into account within the SPD:

- The biodiversity value of birds and plant species to be listed.
- Mention within the John Clare page that Great Kline had now disappeared.
- Make clearer within the strategy what the Lawton Review is and its principles.
- The John Clare page should include working with Parish Councillors and the Land Dyke Trust.
- Be more explicit with regard to the importance of urban areas and amend the map to ensure it is referenced more clearly.

43. PETERBOROUGH FLOOD AND WATER MANAGEMENT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD)

The Water Management Engineer introduced the updated Flood and Water SPD report which had been prepared to support the emerging Local Plan and which took into account changes to the Flood and Water Act and National Planning Practice Guidance.

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- The new document took into account the legislation relating to flood and water management that had come into force since 2012 when the existing SPD had been adopted as part of the Planning Policy Framework.
- There had been a ministerial statement from the Department of Local Communities and Government (DCLG) which required the application of sustainable drainage in new developments to be incorporated into all major planning applications.
- The new document was developed to encourage developers to engage more with the Council and was intended to be easier to understand and navigate. 19 steps outlined in the original document had been reduced to four and there were clearer headings and signposts to navigate through the document rather than having to read it in its entirety.
- In the past retro fitting sustainable urban drainage systems had been too costly to consider but was now something that was being encouraged.
- Members wished to see more reference to the role of natural systems such as flood plain forests and linkage to the Biodiversity and Tree and Woodland Strategies.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to endorse the Peterborough Flood and Water Management Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to Cabinet for approval.

The Committee also requested that:

- Within Appendix B - Using Sustainable Drainage Systems there should be specific reference to what types of trees could be planted.
- That the officer look at reducing the use of acronyms within the document and look to create a non-technical summary for the document to inform the wider audience of the purpose of the document.

44. DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD) UPDATE

The Senior Strategic Planning Officer introduced the report which provided the Committee with a draft update to the existing SPD which was adopted in April 2015 and which itself was prepared to coincide with the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy in Peterborough. The current 2015 SPD was also linked to the policies of the existing Local Plan and would therefore be out of date when the new Local Plan was adopted in late 2018. The proposed replacement SPD linked into the new Local Plan and updated references to external information where needed so that it remained relevant.

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- The previous document had been too long at 80 pages so officers had acknowledged this feedback and had now condensed this new SPD and reduced any unnecessary duplication to make it more user friendly. The document retained the same level of coverage of themes including transport, education, affordable housing, health services, open space and green infrastructure, community and leisure, and waste management.
- The Council hoped to speed up planning applications and avoid delays by making the process simpler and clarifying to developers exactly what would be sought by the Council.
- Members referenced a freedom of information request that had been submitted by Radio Cambridgeshire some years ago which showed that there was £8 million of unallocated CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) monies. Officers were asked to investigate whether in this time of austerity and stretched resources, this level of unallocated funds still existed.
- Members felt that there should be a tie-in with the Trees and Woodland Strategy so that green spaces and trees should be referenced together in the developer contributions SPD document.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to endorse the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Update to Cabinet for approval.

The Committee requested that:

- The Officer to find out how the developer contributions fund was allocated and spent and provide a briefing note to the Committee.
- The comments on open space which relate to trees to be drawn out further within the document.

45. MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Senior Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which provided the Committee with a record of recommendations made at the previous meeting and the outcome of those recommendations to consider if further monitoring was required.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to consider the response from Cabinet Members and Officers to the recommendations made at the previous meeting, as attached in Appendix 1 of the report and agreed that further monitoring of the Sports Strategy recommendation was required.

46. FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Executive Decisions containing key decisions that the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the forthcoming month. Members were invited to comment on the Plan and where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's Work Programme.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the latest version of the Forward Plan.

47. WORK PROGRAMME

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2016/17 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the latest version of the Work Programme 2017/18.

48. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 8 February 2017 – Joint Scrutiny of the Budget
- 5 March 2018 – Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee

CHAIRMAN
7.00pm – 8.21 pm

This page is intentionally left blank