

**MINUTES OF THE GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT 7PM, ON
TUESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2020
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM**

Committee Members Present: Cllrs C. Harper (Chair), K. Aitken, R. Brown, C. Burbage, G. Casey (Vice-Chair), A. Ellis, Judy Fox, J. Howard H. Skibsted, C. Wiggin, I. Yasin
Co-opted Member: Parish Councillor Keith Lievesley

Officers Present:
Steve Cox – Executive Director, Place and Economy
Charlotte Palmer – Group Manager, Transport and Environment
James Collingridge – Head of Environmental Partnerships
Richard Pearn – Head of Waste, Resources and Energy
Pete Carpenter – Acting Corporate Director, Resources
David Beauchamp – Democratic Services Officer

Also Present:
Cllr Marco Cereste – Cabinet Member for Waste, Street Scene and the Environment
Cllr Nick Sandford – Liberal Democrat Group Leader
Alex Gee – Operations Director, NPS
Felicity Paddick – Manager, Estates and Valuation, NPS

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

**18. MINUTES OF THE GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2020**

The minutes of the Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 28 September 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

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

There were no requests for call-in to consider.

**20. PORTFOLIO PROGRESS REPORT – CABINET MEMBER FOR WASTE, STREET
SCENE AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

The report was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Waste, Street Scene and Environment, accompanied by the Head of Environmental Partnerships, the Head of Waste, Resources and Energy and the Group Manager – Transport and Environment. The

report provided updates on the progress of items under the responsibility of the Cabinet Member.

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

- Members suggested that some fly-tipping might be caused by people not realising it was illegal due to a language barrier and suggested the translation of anti-fly-tipping campaigns into different languages. Officers responded that fly-tipping signs could not be translated into every language but pictorial signs could be used instead. The Council worked with community groups and connectors to communicate the message that fly-tipping was illegal.
- Members referred to section 4.5.1 on page 16 of the reports pack and asked what the Council could do to improve recycling rates. The Cabinet Members responded that this was a difficult issue but the Council was doing everything it could to facilitate recycling. £48,000 was saved for every 1% of waste recycled so there were financial as well as environmental incentives for doing so. The new Household Recycling Centre (HRC) was performing well. The Head of Waste, Resources and Energy added that recycling performance had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated closure of the HRC for a period of time. Performance was good when this was taken into account. Section 4.5.6 on page 17 of the reports pack contained information on alignment with the Government's developing Resources and Waste Strategy and with the work with partners in RECAP. This would be a major change in waste management and the Council and partners had been in consultation for some time. A second round of consultation would start in March 2021 with the aim of improving recycling rates on a national and local basis.
- Members referred to section 4.5.4 on page 16 of the reports pack and commented that they had not seen visible signage educating people on how to dispose of waste. Could education be delivered remotely given the pandemic? Officers responded that ordinarily a great deal of education work would take place but this was not currently possible due to COVID. The Keep Britain Tidy campaign had provided posters and images to tackle littering. Online tutorials were provided via RECAP.
- Members suggested that signage regarding community litter picks should be placed around Community Centres.
- Members asked when the Council would encourage higher fines for fly-tipping. The Cabinet Member responded that on-the-spot fines were limited by law but a judge could impose a fine of up to £25,000. The cost of a fine was often less than the cost of disposing of waste legally. The Council was lobbying to change this.
- Members requested that the Cabinet Member for Waste, Street Scene and the Environment asks Aragon Direct Services to provide feedback to councillors when their fly-tipping reports were dealt with.
- Members requested that the Head of Environmental Services liaises with the Prevention and Enforcement Team to establish if any fly-tipping fines had been issued.
- A cyclical schedule was in places for street sweeping and leaf collection and Aragon Direct Services had started this work. Members were encouraged to inform officers if sweeping was needed in a particular area ahead of schedule.
- Members asked for information on the Council's litter picking programme outside the City Centre. Officers responded that the City Centre was classified as a high intensity cleansing area with a dedicated team. There were also medium density cleansing areas with more frequent visits, which were generally shopping areas in outer areas of the City. The majority of the City was a low density cleansing area with cyclical visits. This service would be tailored depending on the problems in different areas. Larger sweepers would clear the roadside. These would be

- followed up by smaller sweepers and hand litter pickers to collect litter that the larger sweepers could not, e.g. due to parked cars and on pathways.
- Members asked why there had only been a limited opportunity to use CCTV cameras. Officers responded that the use of cameras was subject to data protection and Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) restrictions but the cameras had been purchased and used by the P.E.S. team.
 - Members requested that the Head of Environmental Partnerships asks the PES team if they could provide councillors with confidential reports when covert cameras were installed in fly-tipping hotspot areas in their ward
 - Members asked if there had been any changes to waste collection in light of the second national lockdown. Officers responded that the HRC would remain open and all collections would continue but prioritisation would be needed if Aragon staff had to self isolate in large numbers. Recreational sport facilities had to close.
 - Members challenged the assertion that lower recycling rates were caused by the pandemic and felt that the Council's performance was poor and had declined relative to other areas. Based on the figure of a £48,000 saving per 1% extra recycling performance, the failure to reach the target set in 2007 of a 65% recycling rate would mean that the Council had lost £1,250,000. Members asked what would be done to improve performance. Officers responded that a briefing note previously issued to the Committee indicated that the City Council performed well compared with authorities with similar demographics. Recycling had also become more difficult on a national level due to the lighter weight of packaging. The Government's Recycling and Waste Strategy aimed to ensure that Councils' services could improve recycling rates. Local authorities were at the end of the 'value chain' so there needed to be an emphasis on materials being made easier to recycle in the first instance. Work was underway with DEFRA and RECAP to consider how to achieve this.
 - Tetra Paks could be recycled in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough despite the difficulties in processing them though this was not the case everywhere. It was of key importance that packaging producers considered the recyclability of their containers.
 - The Cabinet Member encouraged members to come forward with any suggestions for improving the Council's recycling rates and highlighted that Peterborough was ranked at approximately 190 out of 345 councils. Many authorities had worse performance.
 - Members asked how long information on 'safe traders' had been on the Council's website and if this had resulted in a reduction in fly-tipping. Officers responded that this page was new and they hoped to attract new companies to add to the list. There had yet to be a significant impact.
 - Members praised the work of Westcombe Engineering, which had continued during the pandemic.
 - Members asked when fly-tipping issues in Norwood Lane would be resolved. Officers responded that the road was currently closed off due to development work. When this was completed, the lane would be cleared.
 - All shrubbery would be pruned annually but this would take place more frequently if it was impeding the highway.
 - Members asked if FixMyStreet fly-tipping reports could be monitored and their clearance assessed against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), e.g. the proportion of reports collected within 48 hours. Officers responded that the system was not yet fully integrated but Aragon were working with the I.T. team to resolve this. Indirect reporting took place via Peterborough Direct but the 48 hour period for collection started when the issue was logged in the Bartec software. Reported issues could be followed up when required.
 - Members enquired about carbon-negative actions the Council could take. The Cabinet Member responded that green walls were currently being considered though cost could be a prohibitive factor.

- Members enquired about the costs involved when waste was not recycled, e.g. landfill costs. Officers responded that the figure of a £48,000 saving per 1% of waste recycled was accurate.
- Members referred to section 4.5.1 on page 16 of the reports pack and expressed concern that the reduction in the number of brown bin subscribers might continue in light of the proposal to increase charges in the Budget. The Cabinet Member responded that the Council did not make a profit from the brown bin service and it represented good value for money. Alternative savings would need to be found if this proposal was removed from the budget.
- Some members suggested that the cost of processing increased levels of non-recyclable waste could offset the proposed budget savings and that an assessment of the possibility of scrapping the brown bin charge should be undertaken.
- It was hoped that the backlog of birth registrations at the Register Office would be cleared by the end of December. Emergency appointments were offered if necessary.
- The Cabinet Member suggested it was unlikely that the St. Peters Arcade would re-open due to safety concerns. Disabled parking bays had been relocated accordingly.
- Members expressed concerns about this closure becoming permanent, especially in light of the potential environmental impact of closing a major pedestrian thoroughfare. Members requested a full public consultation before a final decision on closure. The Cabinet Member stated that he did not feel there would be an impact of the closure on transportation on the City. The increase in footfall on Bridge Street would benefit businesses. Although the initial closure was temporary, the subsequent benefits experienced might mean that the arcade does not open again.
- A report on Peterborough's plans for a Café Culture was being produced and mitigation measures against the possible safety risk of large numbers of people sitting outside were being considered.
- Councillor Ellis proposed that the Committee should establish a Task and Finish Group on Recycling. The Executive Director and Democratic Services Officer suggested that the proposal be considered in more detail outside the meeting due to limited officer availability. There was no seconder and the recommendation was therefore defeated.
- Various suggestions were made to improve the Council's environmental credentials covering themes such as sustainable transport, energy, tree planting, cycle racks and links between Council decisions and their climate impacts. The Cabinet Member responded that he agreed with these ideas, even if there were disagreements of how to achieve them. Funding would always be a challenge.
- Members praised the work of the Council in improving the biodiversity area at the John Clare Recreation Ground.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to note the contents of this report and

- Requested that the Cabinet Member for Waste, Street Scene and the Environment asks Aragon Direct Services to provide feedback to councillors when their fly-tipping reports were dealt with.
- Requested that the Head of Environmental Services liaises with the Prevention and Enforcement Team to establish if any fly-tipping fines have been issued.
- Requested that the Head of Environmental Partnerships provides a briefing note on fly-tipping performance compared with Key Performance indicators (KPIs).
- Requested that the Head of Environmental Partnerships promotes the message to the public that achieving higher recycling rates leads to financial savings.

- Requested that the Head of Environmental Partnerships asks the PES team if they could provide councillors with confidential reports when covert cameras were installed in fly-tipping hotspot areas in their wards.

21. RURAL ESTATES UPDATE

The report was introduced by the Manager - Estates and Valuations (NPS), the Operations Director (NPS) and the Acting Corporate Director, Resources. The report was presented at the request of the Committee to provide an update on the Rural Estate as a whole.

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

- Members referred to the loss of the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) for farmers after Brexit and commented that they believed alternative sources of funding were being made available, such as the Countryside/Environmental Stewardship and Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes, so farmers would not be left without money. Officers agreed but stated that detailed plans for replacement funding was not yet available. The BPS would be phased out between 2021 and 2027. Trials of a new scheme would run from 2021 to 2024 and one of Peterborough's tenant farmers would take part in this through Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF).
- Members asked about plans to improve the environmental credentials of the rural estates. Officers responded that working groups begun had been established of tenants and councillors to investigate how to contribute to the City's ambition for net zero carbon by 2030. Tenants were very willing to participate in this process but did have specific preferences, e.g. smaller wind turbines and building-mounted solar panels. Although some tenants were willing to accommodate tree and hedge planting, some were holding back until details of grant funding were known. There was a proposal for one tenant to run a pilot scheme for many of these measures.
- Some members in section 5. Consultation were listed due to be being relevant Cabinet Members.
- Rents were largely in line with market rates. Rent review notices had been served to five tenants to bring them in line with the market.
- Members enquired about the impact of the required additional investment on the Council's budget. Officers responded that a condition survey would be undertaken, with the potential to spread work over a five-year programme. All stock needed to be up to standard.
- Some Members felt that the Council's plans for tree planting were inadequate. Planting trees did not necessarily involve taking agricultural land out of use due to the potential for agroforestry. Members also commented that ground mounted solar panels should be considered alongside those mounted on buildings. Officers responded that tree planting and environmental proposals were in their early stages and all options for the estate would be considered.
- There had not been significant interest in proposed education programmes. This area of work required more focus. Officers would review this and see how to improve the situation.
- In light of Brexit, Members encouraged farmers to contact their parish Council to investigate the provision of trees and hedging, which had been discouraged under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Members encouraged officers to be more creative in seeking alternative sources of funding to replace the CAP.
- Members asked for more detail on what would be included in plans to expand the education offering on the estate. Officers responded that plans were at an early stage but the biggest concern was the provision of appropriate facilities. The use of redundant buildings was being considered.

- Members requested that the Rural Estates Manager circulates the update report to the Tenant Working Group on expanding educational opportunities around the estate at a future meeting of the Committee.
- Members requested additional information on the need for investment to remedy drainage problems. Officers responded that last year's rainfall had delayed the sowing of seeds and left standing water in new areas. Many tenants had responded with drainage schemes and the digging of dykes. There were still areas experiencing a detrimental impact and further investigation would take place.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the contents of this report
2. Note further investment may be required to remedy drainage and aging condition outcomes.
3. Request that the Rural Estates Manager circulates the update report to the Tenant Working Group on expanding educational opportunities around the estate at a future meeting of the Committee

22. MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which enabled the committee to monitor and track the progress of recommendations made to the Executive or Officers at previous meetings.

The Democratic Services Officer suggested that all items be marked as 'completed' with the exception of the recommendation on the Housing Revenue (HRA) from the 7 November 2018 meeting as this had recently been placed on the Forward Plan. This was agreed UNANIMOUSLY.

Members asked what could be done in relation to recommendations from Scrutiny that had been rejected by Cabinet. The Chair responded that the recommendations could be put forward again at future meetings.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the responses from Cabinet Members and Officers to recommendations made at previous meetings as attached in Appendix 1 to the report. All items were marked as 'completed' with the exception of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) recommendation from the 7 November 2018 meeting.

23. FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which invited members to consider the most recent version of the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions and identify any relevant items for inclusion within the Committee's work programme or to request further information.

There were no further comments from Members.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to consider the current Forward Plan of Executive Decisions.

24. WORK PROGRAMME 2020/2021

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the item which gave members the opportunity to consider the Committee's Work Programme for 2020/21 and discuss possible items for inclusion.

The Chairman commented that the Work Programme would be considered again at the Group Representatives meeting.

ACTIONS AGREED

The committee noted the work programme for 2021/21

25. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11 November 2020 – Joint Scrutiny of the Budget

13 January 2021 – Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee

CHAIRMAN

7pm – 8.41pm

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