

**MINUTES OF THE GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT 7PM, ON
WEDNESDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2021
ENGINE SHED, SAND MARTIN HOUSE**

Committee Members Present: Councillors C. Harper (Chair), C. Burbage (Vice Chair), R. Brown, G. Casey, N. Day, Judy Fox, N Moyo, E. Murphy, L. Sharp, C. Wiggin

Officers Present in Steve Cox – Executive Director, Place and Economy
David Beauchamp - Democratic Services Officer
James Collingridge – Head of Environmental Partnerships
Richard Pearn – Head of Waste, Resources and Energy
Lewis Banks – Transport and Environment Manager

Also Present: Councillor Nigel Simons, Cabinet Member for Waste, Street Scene and the Environment
Councillor John Fox, Group Leader, Werrington First

20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Skibsted and Parish Councillor Samways.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

No declarations of interest were received.

22. MINUTES OF THE GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2021

The minutes of the Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee held on 8 September 2021 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

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

There were no requests for call-in to consider.

24. LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN – REVIEW

The report was introduced by the Transport and Environment Manager which gave the Committee the opportunity to review the Council's draft Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

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

- Members praised the report, noting that it had changed significantly since the draft version.
- Members asked why C15 was now considered a priority cycle route when it was not previously classified as such. Officers responded that it was a requirement of the Department for Transport (DfT's) Active Travel Funding for routes to be put forward in Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plans. There had been insufficient time to review the whole plan in light of this and the inclusion of the route was to maximise funding opportunities. This Scrutiny Committee and the Walking and Cycling Working Group would be consulted on this going forward.
- Route C15 had been ranked first in priority order as a result of an online tool which produced a weighted score.
- Members asked when rural areas would be provided with cycle infrastructure. Officers responded that this plan was a response to a government initiative and following their guidance had resulted in a focus on urban areas. The importance of developing infrastructure outside urban areas and beyond Peterborough's boundaries was recognised and the Working Group would help to achieve this.
- Members commented on the importance of connecting rural communities and hoped that urban areas would not be funded at the expense of rural areas. Officers responded that it was important for this plan to be put in place and for the Council to maximise funding opportunities.
- Members and officers agreed on the importance of e-bikes.
- Members expressed concern about the exclusion of Werrington and Gunthorpe, noting that the infrastructure in these areas had become overgrown and commenting that grant money should be spent on repairing existing infrastructure rather than creating new facilities. Officers responded that improving Werrington paths would make sense in the next stage to integrate with North-South routes.
- Repairing footpaths was a challenge due to funding constraints.
- Exceptions to LTN 120 (government cycle infrastructure design standards) were possible.
- Members requested that the Transport and Environment Manager liaises with Planning colleagues to ensure that developments around the Manor Farm Estate have appropriate cycling infrastructure.
- Members and officers commented on the importance of ensuring new developments have appropriate cycle infrastructure at the planning stage.
- Maintenance costs were not included in this government capital grant funding and the Council would be liable for these costs going forward. Once routes had been reviewed, officers would need to review this issue to ensure maintenance liabilities were kept to a minimum. Maintenance of routes would need to be funded from the annual Highways Budget provided by the DfT and the use of this would need to be monitored.
- It was not known what the cost would be of upgrading existing cycle paths to modern standards.
- Officers were preparing for any funding that would be available. The Active Travel Bids for the 2021/22 financial year were worth £450,000. Although this was significant, it would not be sufficient to cover multiple routes. Other options were available besides costly infrastructure however.

- Members suggested that the Council could increase enforcement action against pavement parking as an alternative to funding new infrastructure. Officers noted this point.
- The Council would seek opinions from as many groups as possible during the consultation, such as wheelchair users, scooter riders and cyclists in order to consider their needs.
- Members referred to page 102 of the reports pack and queried the suggestion that the Russell Street underpass would be removed, noting that the area had been revamped 14 years ago. Officers responded that this work was driven by data and online tools. This would be an interesting subject for the working group to consider.
- Members commented that upgrading existing infrastructure to modern standards might be more expensive than building new infrastructure. Officers responded that this was uncertain. Some of the facilities installed by the Peterborough Development Corporation were ahead of their time (e.g. Bretton cycle ways) while others were not up to standard (e.g. cycle lanes on Oundle Road). Some infrastructure might be easier to bring up to modern standards if it just involved grass cutting.
- The Government could revoke funding if LTN 120 standards were not followed. The Council was aiming to be as compliant with these standards possible.
- No update had been received on Tranche 3 capability funding.
- Members expressed concern about the Council's reliance on seeking grant funding and asked if there could be a way of developing a grander plan to achieve its objectives. Officers responded that there would be opportunities from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) once a comprehensive walking and cycling plan had been developed.
- Members asked if the Council was planning for the use of innovative forms of transportation, such as e-scooters and Segways. Officers responded that e-scooters were not currently permitted in Peterborough due to safety concerns. Micro-mobility would need to be kept under review. Members added that the Committee had voted against the e-scooter trial as the appropriate infrastructure was not in place.
- Members commented that Peterborough had 70km of cycle tracks and suggested that events could be organised to promote their use. Officers commented positively on this suggestion which could include guided walks and cycle rides, vegetation clearance and communities taking ownership of routes.
- Concern was expressed that motorbikes might use LTN 120 compliant cycle paths and have a negative impact on safety.
- Members asked if there were plans to reallocate road space away from cars.
- Members commented that snow was not regularly cleared from key walking and cycling routes and improving this was vital to promoting their use. Officers agreed that it was important to ensure new routes would be maintained.
- Officers stated that existing funding included the annual DfT grant and Integrated Transport Block Funding which was spread across the Council on several transport enhancements, including some cycle provision.

ACTIONS AGREED:

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

1. Consider, and make comments as it sees fit, in respect of the Council's draft Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.
2. Request that the Transport and Environment Manager liaises with Planning colleagues to ensure that developments around the Manor Farm Estate have appropriate cycling infrastructure.

25. PORTFOLIO PROGRESS REPORT FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR WASTE, STREET SCENE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The report was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Waste, Street Scene and the Environment accompanied by the Head of Environmental Partnerships, the Head of Waste, Resources and Energy and the Transport and Environment Manager. The report updated the Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the progress of items under the responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Waste, Street Scene and the Environment.

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

- Members referred to section 4.5.5 of the report and praised the good progress on increasing the use of food waste bins.
- Noting that of 81 fly tipping fines issued since April 2021, only 9 cases had been prepared for Court, Members asked if all covert cameras were being used and how frequently they were operated. Officers responded that the cameras were run by the Prevention and Enforcement (PES) Team, who used hotspot data to identify priority areas. Even when cameras were used, vehicle registrations needed to be collected to identify the perpetrator.
- Members requested that the Head of PES provides the Committee with information on how many covert fly-tipping cameras were being used and how frequently they were in operation.
- The Cabinet Member added that it cost the council £2,000 to achieve the issue of a £450 fixed penalty notice and that two cameras had been stolen. It was hoped a new company would achieve good results at zero cost to the Council.
- Members suggested that the Council's response to fly-tipping was too focussed on the short term and asked if the Council had assessed solutions from cities such as Norwich where fly-tipping did not appear to be an issue.
- Members questioned the value of the promised free bulky waste collections given the cost and the current limits on collection capacity and suggested that community skips could be used instead. The Cabinet Member responded that he also favoured this approach, which would be considerably cheaper than free bulky waste collection. Another member suggested that this could be a recommendation from the Committee.
- Members suggested that cutting bushes twice a year, rather than once, would be beneficial due to the safety risks posed to children of the current arrangements, which meant bushes were overgrown by the summer. The Cabinet Member responded that he favoured twice-yearly cuts but budgetary constraints had meant this could not be implemented. Suggestions for doing this in a commercial way, e.g. via saving money on fly tipping, would be welcome however.
- The Cabinet Member added that the Council should deliver basic services but the community needed to be involved for more pristine landscaping. Officers were always investigating possible new funding sources.
- Members suggested that it might cost the Council less to cut bushes more, as was the case with grass cutting. The Cabinet responded that any such savings would be negligible due to staffing requirements in the growing season when cuts needed to be completed and the need to take into account the nesting season.
- Members asked why Aragon Direct Services was struggling to retain staff. The Cabinet Member responded that staff were not adequately remunerated and there had been greater pressure on this Council service than many others.
- Operatives removed food waste containers from black bins which were then placed in a separate pod in front of the lorry. It was then sent to Birmingham to make gas for electricity. Members commented that this should be more widely promoted to show people the value using a food waste caddy.

- Officers commented that education work had been underway prior to the pandemic. The Council shared a contract for dry recycling with Recycling for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (RECAP) who hosted education resources regarding this on their website. This could potentially be expanded to include food and garden waste. Compost was primarily distributed to farmers with some being packed up and sold, although not necessarily to people in Peterborough.
- Members commented that the Council should educate residents on recycling and promote the Council's work in this area.
- Members suggested that the Committee could recommend that Cabinet should focus on basic public priorities, rather than schemes such as free bulky waste collection. The Cabinet Member responded that budgetary factors were the main constraints and he was aware that more grass and shrub cuts were needed.
- Members suggested that the Council's decision to bring property maintenance in-house had resulted in savings.
- Members requested that the Head of Environmental Partnerships provides the Committee with the cost of moving to twice-yearly shrub cutting and having two extra grass cuts per year.
- Members asked if opportunities for the Council to operate in a commercially minded way had been explored, e.g. by providing paid-for services to residents. The Cabinet Member responded that the Council did aspire to be more commercial.
- The Cabinet Member commented that there was a shortage of tree maintenance staff caused by salaries being too low, which had resulted in reduced maintenance in the town's parks. Staff shortage was also the reason for the suspension of brown bin collection. Budgets were in place to fund these positions if they were filled.
- Members expressed concerns that the suspension of brown bin collections might lead to the contamination of black bins.
- Members requested that the Head of Waste, Resources and Energy provides the Committee with an analysis of the contents of black bins over the last six months, in light of the suspension of brown bin collections. Officers were not aware of any feedback from operators suggesting there had been a significant change in the contents of black bins after the pausing of brown bin collections.
- The Cabinet Member stated that local authorities with good recycling rates often invested money, approximately £100k, in education whereas in Peterborough there was only a single member of staff for whom education only formed half of their job.
- The Council made a profit on all recycled material via a rebate mechanism, which reduced the cost of running the Household Recycling Centre (HRC).
- There could be a financial benefit of collecting fly-tipping. Aragon Direct Services received white goods via a transfer station. Electricals were covered by the Waste from Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) directive and were collected for free for all councils.
- Members raised concerns about the possibility of the Government making energy from waste plants uneconomical to operate. Officers responded that they were unaware of any such plans. Incineration was expensive but was used as a cheaper alternative to landfill. The Government saw such plants as part of a transition to a low carbon economy and aimed to get more out of them as a means of avoiding landfill and achieving a recycling target of 85%. Business were encouraged to contribute waste heat via the Peterborough Integrated Renewables Infrastructure (PIRI) Project.
- Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Day, proposed that the Committee recommends to Cabinet the suspension of the zero charge for bulky waste collection and the use of these resources to salvage more and increase recycling and re-use in Peterborough. Meanwhile, the Committee encourages the Cabinet Member to explore better enforcement measures that are efficient, economic and effective. The Committee encourages all councillors to promote recycling

measures in their wards and use the revision of policies as an opportunity to educate residents. This was UNANIMOUSLY agreed.

- Delivering free bulky waste collection had a cost of £60,000 in the Budget.
- Members requested an update in 3 to 6 months' time from the Cabinet Member on progress made on the recommendation.
- Some members expressed concern that the saving from removing free bulky waste collection from the Budget might be reallocated elsewhere. Other members commented that the Cabinet Member could put forward the case that the Committee's proposal could create more income and increase recycling rates.
- Members commented that budgets needed to be revised so that key services could be delivered.
- Members commented that the Fly-Tipping Task and Finish Group had already considered many of the issues raised by Members at this meeting and had consulted with a variety of stakeholders. Free bulky waste collections for a household's first 5 items was one of the Group's recommendations.
- It was suggested that parish council bulky waste collection schemes did not reduce fly-tipping, as they attracted people who would already be disposing of their waste responsibly.
- Members added that items of value could sometimes be salvaged from these collections.
- Members requested that the Head of Waste, Resources and Energy provides Members with an information pack to inform residents how recyclable materials were processed and which items should be placed in each bin.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to recommend to Cabinet the suspension of the zero charge for bulky waste collection and the use of these resources to salvage more and increase recycling and re-use in Peterborough. Meanwhile, the Committee encourages the Cabinet Member to explore better enforcement measures that are efficient, economic and effective. The Committee encourages all councillors to promote recycling measures in their wards and use the revision of policies as an opportunity to educate residents.

ACTIONS AGREED:

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

1. Note the contents of the report
2. Request that the Head of PES provides the Committee with information on how many covert fly-tipping cameras were being used and how frequently they were in operation.
3. Request that the Head of Environmental Partnerships provides the Committee with the cost of moving to twice-yearly shrub cutting and having two extra grass cuts per year.
4. Request that the Head of Waste, Resources and Energy provides the Committee with an analysis of the contents of black bins over the last six months, in light of the suspension of brown bin collections.
5. Request that the Head of Waste, Resources and Energy provides Members with an information pack to inform residents how recyclable materials were processed and which items should be placed in each bin.
6. Members requested an update in 3 to 6 months' time from the Cabinet Member on progress made on the recommendation above.

26. 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.

There were no further comments by members.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Growth, Environment and Resources 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.

27. FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Chair 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. No requests for further information were made.

ACTIONS AGREED:

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

28. WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

The Chair presented the report which considered the work programme for the municipal year 2021/22 and asked Members if they had any further items to add to the work programme.

Cllr Wiggin advised that he would be unable to attend the Group Representatives meeting due to a clash with a meeting of the Financial Sustainability Working Group.

29. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

17 November 2021 – Joint Scrutiny of the Budget

6 January 2022 – Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee

7pm – 8.43 pm

CHAIRMAN

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