

19 SEPTEMBER 2019

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 19 September 2019

- * Cllr Steve Rippon-Swaine (Chairman)
- * Cllr Sue Bennison (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- * Ann Bellows
- * Geoffrey Blunden
- Allan Glass
- Andrew Gossage

Councillors:

- Stephanie Osborne
- * Tony Ring
- * Derek Tipp
- * Malcolm Wade

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

Alan Alvey

Councillors:

Alison Hoare

Also In Attendance

Dr Rebecca Sykes and Nicola Jolly

Officers Attending:

Rachel Higgins, David Hurd, Steve Jones, Joanne McClay, Nicola Plummer, Ben Stockley, Claire Upton-Brown and Karen Wardle

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Glass, Gossage and Osborne.

14 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2019 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made in connection with an agenda item.

16 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No issues were raised in the public participation period.

17 PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' REPORTS

The Panel received an update from Cllr Hoare, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regulatory Services. She updated the Panel on the following:

Lymington Quay: A public consultation exercise was being undertaken seeking views on a possible upgrade of facilities and use of the Quay. The consultation period would end on 23 September.

Burley Public Conveniences: A car had crashed into the public conveniences in Burley leaving them out of action. Portaloos had temporarily been put on site. It was hoped that the work to replace the doors, etc would be covered by insurance.

Ringwood clear up: New litter bins would arrive shortly. A photo was circulated to the Panel of the new bins.

Waste and Recycling: A letter had recently been received from Hampshire County Council (HCC) regarding the money the District Council receives from the County in relation to the sale of dry mixed recycling and recycling credits. HCC proposed that from 2021 they would no longer give any of the money raised through the sale of recycling of materials to NFDC. In addition, charges would be levied against NFDC for the cost of dealing with contamination. The combined impact of these measures on NFDC was in the region of £800k. This was significant sum of money and legal advice was being sought.

Safety on Bridges: A serious accident occurred in Brockenhurst where a boy fell from a bridge. The District Council had reviewed signage on Council owned bridges and additional signage was proposed to be installed on the bridge at Eling Tide Mill.

18 CLIMATE CHANGE TASK AND FINISH GROUP - INITIAL REPORT

A report from the Climate Change Task and Finish Group was presented to the Panel. The group had met on two occasions to consider the motion on Climate Change. It made recommendations to the Panel and also sought the Panel to agree two recommendations to be presented to Council. The Portfolio Holder had been involved in the work of the group and was very supportive. The Group recommended that a Climate Emergency should not be declared but that an Environment Action Plan be developed as part of the forthcoming Corporate Plan. It was also suggested that the Council aim to be carbon neutral by 2050.

The Council had already undertaken to reduce emissions, by purchasing electric vehicles, installing solar panels and using energy saving lighting. Further work however was required to establish the Council's baseline position.

Nicola Jolly and Dr Rebecca Sykes addressed the Panel on the issue of Climate Change. It was noted that the proposals in the Task and Finish Group report went no further than the national commitment to be carbon neutral by 2050 and that the recommendation had an ambition, rather than a commitment or target to be carbon neutral by this date. Concern was expressed that the Council should set an earlier target. The date of 2050 would increase the risk of impacts in the New Forest area which could include permanent flooding in marshland around Lymington, Milford and Fawley and that higher temperatures would cause massive eco-system disruption, loss of wildlife, risks to commoners' animals and agriculture.

The majority view of the Panel was that the Council should not declare a climate emergency, but instead work to develop an Environment Action Plan, incorporated within the Council's Corporate Plan, which held the overall ambition to become carbon neutral as a District Council by 2050.

RESOLVED:

- (a) To note the initial report of the Climate Change Task and Finish Group; and
- (b) To request that the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regulatory Services work with partners and relevant Members in the development of an Environment Action Plan

That the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel advise the Council that:

- (a) The Panel does not support the motion referred to the Panel by the Council; and
- (b) Whilst the Panel recognises that other Councils have declared a climate emergency, this Council can achieve more on a local level through the development of an Environment Action Plan, with the ambition of achieving a carbon neutral position for the New Forest District Council by 2050. Once developed the Action Plan should give prominence within the Council's Corporate Plan to ensure that environmental issues, including climate change, are taken into account in future decision making.

19 MOTION FROM COUNCIL

Officers reported that different pieces of work were being carried out in relation to the strategic transport infrastructure along the Waterside by Network Rail, Hampshire County Council, Solent Connectivity and Transforming Cities. Discussions had also been taking place with individual landowners and the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership. It was suggested that a report be presented to the Panel in six months to detail the progress of the individual pieces of work. The Panel could then consider the motion in more detail.

Cllr Alvey addressed the Panel and spoke in opposition to the Motion. He felt that a railway link along the Waterside would not be a good use of resources and that funding should be directed towards improving the A326.

An alternative view was expressed to support the motion. It was felt that a railway line would enable people to travel by train, which would take pressure off the road network and reduce the impact on the environment.

RESOLVED:

That a report be presented to the Panel meeting in March 2020 setting out the progress of the different strands of work in relation to the transport and railway infrastructure along the Waterside.

20 ON AND OFF STREET PARKING IN HYTHE - UPDATE

The Panel received an update report on street parking in Hythe. Statistics had been provided to the Panel in Appendix 1 of the report of the available car parking

spaces in the Jones Lane and New Road car parks in the month of July 2019. The survey demonstrated that there was sufficient car parking spaces in Hythe.

It was noted that the move of the market from St John's Street Car Park to the Town Centre had increased the use of the Council owned car park on a Tuesday.

Income from the Council car parks in Hythe had reduced since the Lidl store had opened, due to the Lidl car park being free and there was currently no time restriction on the use of the car park.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and that there be no further requirement to review the car parking availability in Hythe at the present time.

21 ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS

The Panel considered the report on electric vehicle charging points in Council owned car parks. The report detailed the background to electric vehicle charging points (EVCP's), with JoJu being the Council's approved contractor under the Hampshire EVCP framework which NFDC had signed up to use. JoJu had been tasked with assessing the car parks to establish which car parks would be suitable for the installation of EVCP's. A Task and Finish Group had considered the outcome of the study, as had the financial backers of the scheme and a list of 10 car parks were proposed to be suitable for the installation of EVCP's as Phase 1 of the project.

Two funding options were proposed under the framework agreement. The Council could either fund the project and take the revenue or alternatively JoJu could fund everything and the Council would receive a rebate on the cost of the supplied electricity to the EVCP's. The supplier would give the EVCP's to the Council when a return had been made on the investment, predicted in the report to be in year 7 of a proposed 15 year order period. Tables 1 and 2 of the report proposed a predicted profit and loss for the two options, and based on the figures presented, the supplier funded option proposed a profit of £54,000 over 15 years, whereas the Council funded option proposed a loss of £60,000 over the same time period. Support was expressed by Members for the supplier funded option.

The off-street parking order, covering the enforcement of the Council's parking bays will be amended following a Portfolio Holder decision to allow for electric vehicle charging places and EVCP's in NFDC car parks.

Members asked about plans to publicise and inform members of the public of the electric charging points in car parks. It was noted that the locations would be plotted by JoJu on 'ZAP map', which would also indicate whether the EVCP was in use. In addition, this information would be available on the NFDC mapping website.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That it be noted that the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure had formally approved that the off-street parking places order be amended to allow for the use and, where necessary, enforcement of electric vehicle charging places and charging points.

That the Panel recommend to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure:

- (a) That the Council should proceed with Phase 1 of the installation of electric vehicle charging points at the car parks, detailed in paragraph 2.5 of the report, using the supplier funded option; and
- (b) That a review of Phase 1 be undertaken prior to consideration of implementation of Phase 2 of the electric charging point project.

22 FOOD SAFETY PLAN

The Panel reviewed the performance of the food safety service over the last year, as set out in their service review report and received the work plan of priorities for 2019/20.

The Panel noted that there were over 1,800 food businesses in the District. Businesses had been inspected based on risk, those with the higher risk were inspected on a more frequent basis.

Officers had responded to 663 service requests relating to food, or cases of infectious diseases, which was an increase from the previous year. It was noted that the majority of businesses in the New Forest (97%) had received a food hygiene rating of 3 (generally satisfactory) or better.

New Animal Welfare Regulations had replaced a number of existing pieces of legislation in 2018. Officers had inspected all animal establishments, which had applied for a licence under the new legislation. The new regime had a star rating system which would dictate the length of the licence awarded (between 1-3 years).

The Panel praised the work of the Food and Safety Team.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the performance of the food and safety services over the past year, as set out in the service review report (Appendix 1) be reviewed; and
- (b) That the work programme for the Food and Safety Services in 2019/20 (Appendix 2) be supported.

23 AIR QUALITY UPDATE PRESENTATION

The Panel received a presentation on air quality. Details were provided to the group on the background of air quality. Local Authorities had a legal duty to review and assess air quality in their district. The assessment of local air quality was determined at locations of relevant exposures, for example outside schools. Generally, locations were chosen where someone might spend 15 minutes of their time. Each year the assessment needed to be reported annually to DEFRA. If any of the National Air Quality objectives (AQO) was being, or likely to be exceeded, then the LA had a duty to declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA's). Following this, the LA must produce an Action Plan listing options, which if implemented may improve pollutant concentrations in pursuit of the AQO.

It was noted that in the New Forest there was continuous monitoring using real time analysers and diffusion tubes. There had been no monitored exceedances of the air quality objectives in 2018. In 2005 three AQMA's had been declared in Totton, Lyndhurst and Fawley. Air quality had improved in both Fawley and Totton and

these areas no longer were declared as AQMA's. Lyndhurst, however, still required an Action Plan. The Action Plan adopted in 2008 assessed a range of schemes including a by-pass. A green filter had been installed at the traffic lights on the one way system to enable traffic wanting to turn left towards Cadnam to keep moving, in order to improve air quality. The scheme also detected long vehicles which would need additional space on the road to turn left and the green filter light would turn red.

Other measures to address the impact of poorer air quality in Lyndhurst included encouraging school children to walk to school using a clean walking route through the church rather than through the high street.

Officers had been working with partners regarding air quality. A clean air zone had been identified by the Government in Southampton and along the A35 in Totton. DEFRA had accepted that there was no breach in the air quality in the District Council area, however officers were continuing to work alongside Southampton City Council to introduce schemes to improve air quality. Other work with partners included a Regional Air Quality Group attended by other local authorities, highways, transport and public health.

The Government had introduced a Clean Air Strategy in 2019 which sought to introduce a reduction of pollutants in general, for example, agriculture, bonfire and woodburners. It also had no air quality targets, and therefore wanted the air quality to be improved generally.

It was proposed that a New Forest Clean Air Strategy would be developed to review the air quality across the New Forest and to determine a work plan to improve the local air quality. A draft Strategy was expected to be presented to the Panel in 2020.

24 WASTE STRATEGY CONSULTATION UPDATE

The Panel received an update on the outcome of the four Government consultations carried out between February and March 2019. The consultations were on:

- Consistency in households and business recycling collections in England
- Introducing a Deposit Return Scheme in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- Reforming the UK packaging producer responsibility system
- Plastic packaging tax consultation

NFDC had responded to each of the consultations. It was noted that the recycling rate in England had remained at 44-46% for the last six years and needed to be improved. A summary was provided to the Panel on the responses on the four consultations, detailed below:

Consistency in household and business recycling collections in England:

- Support was expressed for the consistency of dry materials, which included glass, paper, card, plastic tubs / trays, cans. It was noted that further consideration be given to cartons and tetrapacks and that there was support for phasing in plastic bags and film;
- Support for separate weekly food waste collection;

- Free garden waste collections supported by individuals but not stakeholders;
- Government supported a separate collection of dry materials to achieve high quality recycling; and
- Lack of support for bin colour standardisation

Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)

- Strong support for DRS;
- Government indicated they would like to introduce a DRS in England and Wales from 2023;
- Further analysis on the cost and benefits of the scheme would be required;
- A second consultation was proposed in 2020 to consider the scope and model of a DRS; and
- DRS proposed to be implemented from 2023

Packaging producer responsibility

- There was strong support for proposed producer payments to local authorities;
- Strong support for using producer fees towards communication campaigns
- Consultation on the proposals of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme would be carried out in 2020;
- Target year for packaging EPR to take effect was 2023

Plastic packaging tax:

- Tax would be introduced by 2022
- The recycled content threshold would be considered further;
- HMRC would public draft legislation for consultation in 2020

The Panel would receive regular updates on waste and recycling to keep members fully informed.

25 TREE STRATEGY UPDATE

A Tree Strategy Task and Finish Group had met for the first time last week to review the Council's Tree Strategy. The new Strategy would include legislative changes, a new section on planning and the policy on tree protection would be strengthened. A particular concern for the Council was the risk of pests and diseases to trees and impact on public health.

The proposed new Strategy would be presented to the Panel in March 2020 for consideration and approval would be sought by Cabinet in April 2020.

26 WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be approved with the inclusion of the following items, listed below:

- Waste Strategy update: 9 January and March 2020
- Draft Tree Strategy: 20 March 2020
- Waterside Rail Update – Motion from Council: 20 March 2020

27 MEETING DATES

RESOLVED:

That the following meeting dates for 2020/21 be approved:

- 11 June 2020
- 10 September 2020
- 14 January 2021
- 11 March 2021

CHAIRMAN