

12 MARCH 2020

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 12 March 2020

* 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
Alison Hoare

Councillors:

David Harrison

Also In Attendance

Colin Cooley and Jeff Calendar (Min no 38-43)

Officers Attending:

Jo Braid, Mark Bursey, Gary Champion, Rebecca Drummond, Louise Evans, Rachel Higgins, Rob Lane, Joanne McClay, Nicola Plummer, Colin Read, Claire Upton-Brown and Karen Wardle

Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

38 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2020 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

39 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

40 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No issues were raised in the public participation period.

41 PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' REPORTS

The Panel received an update from Cllr Hoare, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regulatory Services. She reported that:

Sea Wall, Milford-on-Sea: 4 cracks had appeared in the sea wall east of the White House. 9 beach huts had been deemed unsafe. The sea wall was not the responsibility of the District Council as it was not the landowner. Meetings were being held with the Environment Agency and the local landowners.

COVID 19: Hand sanitizer had been placed in reception at Appletree Court. Rolls of hand towels had been placed in the toilets and more cleaning of the hard surfaces was being carried out.

Waste bins on the streets were being emptied more regularly. Environmental Health team had worked from home on Tuesday successfully. This demonstrated that the IT system could cope with the demand when staff worked outside of the office.

Milford-on-Sea public toilets: The new toilets had been opened on time. The Portfolio Holder thanked the team who had been involved in this project.

42 DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Panel considered the principles and design of the performance management framework, in support of the delivery of the Corporate Plan. A performance dashboard was presented to the Panel for the two Portfolio areas which report to the Scrutiny Panel. Members were asked to consider what information they would like to see, how often and in what format.

Members expressed their support to the proposed dashboard approach, noting that it was clear, concise, easy to read and understand. It was suggested that Key Performance Indicators be included within the dashboard as this was a good assessment tool.

It was also noted that any targets needed to be mindful of any partner involvement which could affect the ability of the District Council to deliver projects in a timely manner.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the performance dashboard approach be supported; and
- (ii) That an update on performance management be presented at each meeting of the Panel

43 WATERSIDE RAIL UPDATE - MOTION FROM COUNCIL

The Panel received an update on the transport issues relating to the Waterside area. It was noted that Hampshire County Council proposed to submit a bid to fund a feasibility study into the resumption of a rail link along the Waterside. This bid proposal was supported by key partners, including the National Park Authority, Julian Lewis MP, Marchwood Parish Council and Southampton City Council. To

support the principle of rail transport was in line with National Planning Policy Guidance.

Mr Colin Cooley addressed the Panel in objection to the proposed Motion. He expressed the view that the rail link was not a good use of public money, there was no business case, the proposed revenue was overstated and it would not reduce peak congestion on the A326.

Cllr Harrison who had proposed the motion addressed the Panel on the merits of the rail link, noting that the infrastructure was already in place and that it would help people to travel across the forest in an environmentally sustainable way.

Cllr Alvey also addressed the Panel. He raised concerns about there being no appraisal of a business case and that the railway would not connect to places like Calshot or Hardley. He felt that resources should be directed at improving the A326.

Members of the Panel expressed their views in relation to the rail link along the waterside. It was agreed that the motion should be amended to express support to the HCC led bid for funding into a feasibility study into the resumption of a rail link along the waterside.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel advise the Council that it is supportive of the following amended motion:

That this Council supports the principle of rail transport, and therefore supports the HCC bid for the funding of a feasibility study into the resumption of a rail link along the Waterside as part of a strategic transport infrastructure in the light of planned development in the south waterside area. Officers will be tasked to work closely with HCC staff to ensure oversight on planning issues and economic and environmental viability are maintained and resolved.

44 CLEAN AIR STRATEGY

The Panel received a presentation on the principles of the proposed Clean Air Strategy. The aims were:

- To improve air quality in the New Forest and create a healthier environment in which to live, work and visit by working with internal and external stakeholders;
- To achieve and maintain air quality objectives (as set out in law) across the district; and
- To identify areas to specifically target for intervention to improve local air quality.

The District Council would continue to work with key stakeholders and regional partners and to work within the Air Quality Management regime.

The Strategy would consider all areas which contribute to air quality, including transport, agriculture, households and planned developments. An evidence based approach would inform the development of the strategy in order to determine priority areas and actions.

A Task and Finish Group was proposed to set up to review the aims and consider the proposed objectives and priority areas.

45 BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE LITTER INITIATIVE

The Panel received a presentation on research carried out by Social Engine regarding the behaviour of those littering from vehicles.

The scope of the research was outlined. The purpose had been to understand what motivated people to litter and how they could be influenced to change their behaviour. It was acknowledged that no one single measure would influence everyone who litters.

The extensive evidence and insight gathering included, key stakeholder workshops, observing littering in a range of places, an online survey and talking to young people. The research concluded that residents of the New Forest were proud of the area they live in and that people were more likely to litter if they thought they would not be caught. There was often a perception that HGV drivers were part of the problem of littering, the evidence showed this was not the case. White van delivery drivers were reported to be less considerate, possibly due to having fixed delivery times, being more rushed and more likely to litter.

A framework was presented to members. A set of graphics had been developed with an owl stating a love for the New Forest and another about litter bugs. Four interventions were presented to the group which included, writing to van drivers and a formal process to report littering. These would be further considered and work would take place with fast food outlets and distributors as to how littering from vehicles could be reduced. Baseline data had been collected in relation to litter at the roadside and therefore any measures put in place to reduce littering from vehicles could be assessed against this data.

The Panel thanked officers for the work carried out so far and requested that a further report be presented to the Panel in September.

RESOLVED:

That an update on the progress of the litter initiative be presented to the meeting on 10 September 2020.

46 REVIEW OF STREET CLEANSING ACTIVITIES AND STANDARDS

It was proposed that the Panel set up a Task and Finish Group to review street cleansing activities and standards as it had been several years since the previous review. It was suggested that the Task and Finish Group also include representation from Town and Parish Councils. The group should have members from both rural and urban areas.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That a Task and Finish Group be set up to review street cleansing activities and standards;
- (ii) That the size of the group consist of six District Councillors and a representative from the a Town and Parish Council; and

(iii) That Cllrs Ring and M Wade be members of the working group.

47 TREE STRATEGIES

The Panel considered four proposed tree documents; the Tree Strategy, Tree Risk Management Strategy, Ash Dieback Action Plan and a Planting Specification.

These had been produced following a Task and Finish Group. The two strategies had been a revised to be in line with relevant guidance, however, the Ash Dieback Action Plan and Planting Specification were new. Consultation had been carried out in relation to each of the documents.

It was important to have a robust policy for the future provision and protection of trees. The Tree Strategy included a framework for proactive management of trees and it detailed how the council would fulfil its legal duty in relation to tree inspections. The documents were proposed to be revised in the next 12 months to form a suite of policy documents to sit alongside the Environment Action Plan.

Members of the Panel highlighted tree planting schemes in their local area which included Ringwood, Fawley, Fordingbridge and New Milton.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed four Tree Strategy documents be supported for approval by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regulatory Services.

48 GUIDANCE ON TREE PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Panel considered a report with details on guidance for tree protection and development. This had been prepared as a result of the tree service being brought back in-house from the National Park Authority in April 2019. It was felt that it was important to provide guidance on what the District Council expects for new development proposals and works to protected trees, with specific reference to the retention, protection and provision of trees. It included how new development could be designed giving consideration to the relationship of trees to buildings and also set out current best practice.

It was proposed that the Guidance would be approved by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure.

RESOLVED:

That the Guidance on Tree Protection document (included as Appendix 1 to the report) be supported for approval by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure.

49 LOCAL PLAN REVIEW UPDATE

The Panel noted that the Planning Inspector had informed the District Council that there would be no need to reopen the Local Plan examination and that the Plan was sound. An Inspector's report was anticipated to be received shortly and following this, the Plan would go to Cabinet and Council for approval. Very few changes had been made to the Plan following the Inspectors examination which was unusual.

The Panel congratulated the planning policy team for their hard work.

50 WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be approved with the addition of the following item, listed below:

- Behaviour Change Litter Initiative for the meeting on 10 September 2020

CHAIRMAN