

11 JUNE 2020

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 11 June 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
- * Malcolm Wade
- * Derek Tipp

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

Diane Andrews
Fran Carpenter
Jacqui England
David Hawkins

Councillors:

Edward Heron
Alison Hoare
Christine Hopkins
Christine Ward

Officers Attending:

Daniel Reynafarje, Rebecca Drummond, Louise Evans, Steve Jones, Rob Lane, Joanne McClay, Chris Noble, Nicola Plummer, Colin Read, Andy Rogers, Ben Stockley, Claire Upton-Brown and Karen Wardle

Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

51 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2020 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

52 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

53 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No issues were raised in the public participation period.

54 PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' REPORTS

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

- Milford Sea Wall: The severe storms of 2019/20 had damaged the Sea Wall at Milford on Sea, west of the White House. A report had been received outlining the extent of the damage with options and costings which were being evaluated.
- Litter / Flytipping: This had become a big issue since the ease of lockdown. The team had increased litter bin emptying, particularly along the coast and signs had been put up to encourage people to take their litter home. Flytipping had decreased with the reopening of the Waste and Recycling centres. Litter picking had also been carried out along the A326, A31 and A35.
- Enforcement: The team had been working to address problems with bonfires, educating residents on the environmental and health risks.
- The Food Safety team had worked with businesses to offer a food takeaway service, however some premises had allowed customers to eat on the premises in gardens, or had served alcohol whilst customers waited for the food. Prohibition orders had been served in some cases.
- Officers had worked with HCC in relation ensure social distancing measures were maintained with the reopening of retail business in the high streets.
- Lymington Sea Wall work had been completed.
- Grass cutting had resumed on revised frequencies.
- The Leader had written to local MPs on behalf of the Council to encourage them to express their support to the proposed Local Electricity Bill as it makes its way through Parliament. If passed, the Bill could allow the District Council to become a local electricity supplier if it were to be a benefit to the local community.

Cllr Edward Heron, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure reported that car parking charges in all Council owned car parks had been reinstated. A question was asked about a possible suspension of car parking charges in town centres in order to support local businesses and encourage shopping locally. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged these concerns but also noted that the District Council had lost £400,000 in revenue during the closure of the car parks and that a car parking clock could be purchased to be used in car parks which offered good value for money. The Portfolio Holder reported he would consider the proposal if suggestions could be made for savings in other areas to account for the lost revenue. It was noted that circa £100,000 could be lost through the parking metre per month from any closure of town centre car parks. Consideration would also need to be given to those who had purchased a car parking clock.

55 COVID19 - SERVICE IMPACT UPDATE

The Panel received an overview with a timeline of the impact on services within the Environment and Regulatory Services Portfolio and the Portfolio for Planning and Infrastructure, as a result of COVID-19 and the financial implications. The slides from the presentation are attached to the minutes as an Appendix for reference.

56 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND PROVISIONAL BUDGET OUTTURN

The Panel received a presentation on the Annual Performance and Provisional Budget outturn report. It was noted that the report looked back over the last financial year, and as a result there was limited impact within the report of COVID-19. The new Corporate Plan had been agreed in February 2020 and therefore the report was in the transition period between the old and the new Corporate Plan. The achievements for 2019-20 were detailed per portfolio, information was provided against key performance measures as well as the financial outturn for the general fund and the Housing Revenue Account.

Due to the late publication of the report, members of the Panel reported they had not been able to consider the report in detail and felt they were unable to participate in discussion or agree to the recommendations. It was therefore agreed that they would pass any comments to officers outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That Members of the Panel consider the report outside of the meeting and pass any comments to officers for inclusion in the forthcoming Cabinet report.

57 WASTE STRATEGY UPDATE

The Panel received a presentation updating them on the progress of the work of the Waste Strategy Working Group.

The key findings of the Working Group, as well as national and regional factors was presented to the Panel, for example, a separate weekly food waste collection service was proposed to become mandatory for all waste collection authorities.

The Group had attended a workshop in February and as part of this, members had considered their high, medium and low priorities for any future service.

A survey with residents had been carried out by MEL research in January / February 2020 to better understand the views of residents on the current service, their waste and recycling behaviours, limiting and motivating factors, and what materials residents would like to be collected. It was noted that a doorstep survey had been carried out, stratified by ward and an online survey had been available. In total over 3,832 responses had been received. The differences in the results between these two types surveys was explained.

There was a high confidence interval in the results of +1.6%, at 95% confidence. The survey gathered both opinions as well information on gender, age, rural / urban, coastal and also Acorn classifications. This was to ensure that a representative sample was being surveyed. Where differences between the area profile and the sample occurred, the data had been weighted accordingly to reflect the metrics of the area.

It was noted that younger households, those with children and larger households generally created more waste. On average most households put out 1-2 sacks a week for recycling and residual waste. A question had been included in the survey about the use of recycling banks to establish whether they were widely used by residents as there had been evidence of small businesses using these banks rather than disposing of their waste appropriately.

In general, residents were satisfied with the current service. However, it was recognised that changes would be needed as a result of a national and regional factors, as well residents wanting to see recycling improvements.

58 FOOD AND SAFETY SERVICE UPDATE

The Committee considered the food and safety service work undertaken during 2019-20 and the key achievements. They also considered the proposed work plan for 2020-21 noting the impact of the current coronavirus pandemic on the provision of services.

The work of the food and safety team was explained. The team had been on track to complete 99% of the high-risk food inspections for the year, however due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and business closures 93% had been completed. The national food hygiene rating scheme for inspections was explained and it was noted that almost 98% of food businesses in the New Forest achieved ratings of 3 or above.

In addition to the food related work, the team carries out the enforcement of health and safety law in workplaces, animal welfare licensing, skin piercing registrations and caravan site licensing. Information on the work in these areas had been included in the annual report.

Members questioned how food inspections were being carried out during the coronavirus crisis. It was noted that officers had worked with local businesses, giving support and advice to enable them to trade. Social distancing measures were key during any inspection and officers were checking that all operating businesses could demonstrate they were COVID-19 secure. Risk assessments were carried out to ensure all inspections could be carried out safely.

It was asked whether dog walkers required a licence. It was noted that they were not covered by the Animal Welfare Regulations and did not need a licence, provided they did not offer any boarding or day care. Members expressed concerns about dog walkers, their ability to control several dogs and the risk to other dogs and members of the public. Hampshire County Council and the National Park Authority were aware of the problem and guidance was available.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the food and safety service over the past year as set out in the Service Review Report (Appendix 1) was reviewed; and
- (b) That the proposed Work Plan for the forthcoming year be agreed.

59 NEW FOREST VISITOR SURVEY 2018/19

A visitor survey had been commissioned by a partnership of local planning authorities, working with Forestry England and Natural England with funding from central Government in January 2018. The research had been the most comprehensive survey of recreational use of the New Forest since 2004/05. The study had been carried out to produce a robust evidence base to understand the pressures and impacts on the internationally protected habitats of the New Forest arising from increased development and visitor numbers. It was proposed that a joint strategic mitigation framework would later be developed.

Three types of survey had been undertaken; via phone calls, on site - face to face interviews and vehicle counts. The key findings for each survey had been included as an Appendix to the report. The research would help to improve understanding of the nature of the recreational impacts on the protected New Forest sites and would provide an evidence base for developing a strategic approach to avoiding and mitigating those adverse impacts.

It was acknowledged that it was important to continue to work collaboratively with other local authorities in the development of a strategic, proportionate and co-ordinated approach to mitigation of recreational impacts on the New Forest area.

RESOLVED:

That the report be welcomed.

60 BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

The Panel considered the proposal to introduce requirements for developments to provide for biodiversity net gain as part of planning permission. The proposals within the report will be considered by the Cabinet in July, to be followed by full Council.

Members views were sought on the introduction of a requirement for 10% biodiversity net gain on planning permissions granted after 7 July, and that it would apply to all new build developments with the exception of householder applications.

Members noted the 10% requirement and questioned how easy it would be to calculate. It was noted that DEFRA/Natural England had a calculation tool online, which would be used. Developers would need to consider the requirement as part of the planning application process. It was also noted that Government proposed to introduce a requirement for biodiversity net gain for applications in the future was part of the Environment Bill.

RESOLVED:

That the following measures be supported for approval:

- i. The introduction of a requirement for 10% Biodiversity Net Gain to all planning permissions granted after 7th July 2020.
- ii. Setting the biodiversity net gain requirement as a minimum of 10% increase in biodiversity.
- iii. Applying the requirement to all new build developments, except householder applications.

61 UPDATE TO THE STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Panel considered the proposed amendments to the Statement of Community Involvement, prior to consideration by the Portfolio Holder, Cabinet and Council seeking authority to undertake public consultation on the changes to the Statement.

The Statement of Community (SCI) was noted to be a statutory document, relating only to planning and the purpose of it was to set out the Council's consultation and engagement methods to involve interested residents, groups, organisations,

businesses and other representatives and individuals in the planning process. The SCI had originally been adopted in 2015 and revised in 2018.

The reasons behind the review were set out in the report and included, the new Government guidance, in light of the Covid 19 pandemic, work coming out of the on going review of development management processes relating to neighbour consultation and pre application engagement, the future adoption of the Local Plan and following feedback on the Hythe and Dibden Neighbourhood Plan process.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed amendments to the Statement of Community Involvement be supported.

62 UPDATE ON WATERSIDE RAILWAY BID

It was noted that since the last meeting in March, Hampshire County Council had been successful in their bid to the Department to Transport (DfT) for funding for a feasibility study into the restoration of a passenger railway link along the Waterside.

The feasibility study would involve the County Council, DfT and key stakeholders, including the District Council. The funding would be used to better understand the issues around the reopening of the railway line for passengers, within a context of multimodal transport such as enhanced bus services, better walking routes and cycle lanes and improvements to the A326.

Support was expressed by some members for the feasibility study. It was clarified that multimodal transport was supported by the District Council's current Corporate Plan, the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

63 WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be approved with the following amendments / additions:

- Review of Street Cleansing Activities and Standards to be postponed;
- Pre App Protocol to be considered at the meeting on 10 September 2020;
and
- Behaviour Change Litter Initiative to be considered at the meeting on 14 January 2021

CHAIRMAN

COVID 19

Timeline

- 16th March weekly briefings to operational staff – following WISH guidance re PPE and social distancing
- 17th March Special Collections stopped
- 23rd March Food Inspectors used to investigate breaches and to assist new Take-a-ways.
- All Office based staff working from home
- All play areas closed

ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

Timeline

- 24th 6,000 garden waste Direct Debits cancelled
- 26th March public Toilets Closed
- Garden Waste Suspended from 30/3/20
- 6th April 20 Leisure and E&H Staff trained on refuse collection
- 6th April additional vehicles used on refuse collection to ensure social distancing.
- 6th April additional staff trained on burials and additional equipment purchased.

Environment Portfolio

Timeline

- Taxi Testing / knowledge tests suspended
- Concerns around bonfires and smoke, communication with residents
- Fly tipping Incidents increasing
- Operational staff following WISH guidance re PPE and Social Distancing
- Cemeteries staff following guidance from ICCM.

Environment Portfolio

Timeline

- Garden Waste recommenced on the 20th April after 4 weeks as staff returned to work. Over 2000 new customers.
- Following Government guidance social distancing signage erected on coastal and open space areas from 13th May.
- Special Collections bookings restarted on w/c 18th May but not for soft furnishings
- Fly tipping incidents starting to decrease as HWRC's open

Environment Portfolio

Timeline

- 5 Public Conveniences reopened on the 22nd May following risk assessment
- To date 14 out of 23 toilets reopened but with reduced opening hours.
- Taxi testing has recommenced from 1st June 2020.
- Environment Health offices continuing to work with businesses to help re-opening
- Other works such as grass cutting continuing on revised frequencies

Environment Portfolio

Monthly Budget Implications

	April	May	TOTAL
INCOME			
Garden Waste	56,626	376	57,002
Waste - Bulky Waste / Special Colls income	6,012	7,190	13,202
Waste - Trade Waste	22,061	22,061	44,122
Pest Control	6,000	6,000	12,000
Beach Huts	31,206	15,081	46,287
Keyhaven River (only ad-hoc fees affected)	2,000	2,000	4,000
	123,905	52,708	176,613
EXPENDITURE			
Garden Waste Letters	7,445		7,445
Other - Staffing, Vehicles etc.		12,500	12,500
	7,445	12,500	19,945

Planning Portfolio

Timeline

- Charging in Town and Village Car Parks Suspended from 23rd March to assist those shopping for the vulnerable
- Coastal Car Parks closed on 25th March following government advice not to travel
- Enforcement Officers redeployed on food deliveries or social distancing
- Coastal Car Parks reopened on 13th May
- Charging in Town Centre Car parks commenced on 1st June 2020

Planning Portfolio

Timeline

- DM carried out its function as normal - 171 planning decisions issued over the period
- Building Control functioning as normal
- Enforcement limited site visits but otherwise have issued Notices/PCN
- Run 4 Virtual Planning Committee meetings with Public Speaking
- Responded to Covid 19 changes in legislation
- Working with HCC on Cycling and Walking

Planning Portfolio

Monthly Budget Implications

INCOME LOSSES	April	May	TOTAL
Parking - Town & Village Meter Income	131,256	127,470	258,726
Parking - Amenity Income	56,161	37,741	93,902
Parking - PCN's	25,982	27,725	53,707
Parking - Long Stay Q1 Clock	30,611	1,417	32,028
Parking - Long Stay Annual	1,946	2,875	4,821
Parking - Short Stay Annual	5,629	4,937	10,566
Land Charges	5,808	26,470	32,278
Building Control	0	0	0
Planning Fees	25,425	107,731	133,156
Pre App Income	11,577	3,948	15,525
	294,395	340,314	634,709

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