

15 JUNE 2023

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLACE AND SUSTAINABILITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 15 June 2023

- * Cllr Steve Rippon-Swaine (Chairman)
- * Cllr Alvin Reid (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- * Peter Armstrong
- * Keith Craze
- * Allan Glass
- * Matthew Hartmann

Councillors:

- * Stephanie Osborne
- * Adam Parker
- * Malcolm Wade

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

Geoffrey Blunden

Councillors:

Derek Tipp

Officers Attending:

James Carpenter, Rebecca Drummond, Kevin Green, Chris Noble, Nicola Plummer and Joe Tyler.

Apologies

There were no apologies.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the Environment and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 9 March 2023 and the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 22 May 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Wade declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 9 as a subscriber to the Garden Waste collection scheme. He concluded that there were no grounds under common law to prevent him from remaining in the meeting to speak and vote on the matter.

6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

7 TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE PANEL

Members noted the Panel's Terms of References as listed on the agenda.

8 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND PROVISIONAL BUDGET OUTTURN (2022/23)

The Panel received an update on the Council's annual performance and provisional outturn for 2022/23, from the Finance Manager and the Assistant Director for Transformation. The main points highlighted from the presentation were as follows:

- £1million had been received via the Shared Prosperity Fund and was being channelled into the three investment priorities.
- The Council's Coastal team had developed plans to protect the District coastlines, and through this 7600 cubic metres of shingle had been used to replenish Hurst spit.
- The new Waste Strategy aimed to reduce waste and carbon emissions across the District.
- 2500 cases of fly tipping had been responded to over the 2022/23 period.
- 5 strategic sites had obtained planning permission, with two of the sites commencing development already.
- 1133 planning decisions had been issued by the Planning Department and 58% of all the District's building control applications were undertaken by the Council.
- £580,000 had been spent on recreation projects across the District.
- 3500 businesses across the District had signed up to the Council's business e-newsletter.
- 86 young people had been supported with skills and training on the route to their employment.
- Cabinet had received three financial monitoring reports over the course of the year and despite the significant budgetary pressures, such as utility costs, the overall general fund outturn was close to the original budget, with no requirement needed to draw on the reserves.
- On the Capital Programme, expenditure was £43.7 million, against the original budget of £42 million, however it was explained that this outturn spend did include additional projects that were approved during the year.
- The Panel asked questions on the Capital Programme budget and were informed that schemes that had not taken place this year had been identified and were to be factored into the budget for the next financial year.
- On KPIs, the Panel were told that KPIs would continue to be reviewed throughout the next year to monitor the progress of each area.
- The Strategic Director of Place, Operations & Sustainability explained that work was ongoing with colleagues within the Communications team to continue to promote the Rural Development Fund and the business support e-newsletter. The expectation was that Councillors would also promote these matters throughout their work in their constituencies.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Performance and Provisional Budget Outturn (2022/23) be noted.

9 WASTE AND RECYCLING COLLECTION POLICY

The Panel received a report on the Waste and Recycling Collection Policy from the Projects and Performance Manager. The main points highlighted from the presentation were as follows:

- Development of the Waste and Recycling Strategy had taken place over two years, following the publication of the 2018 National Waste Strategy and the subsequent Government consultations of 2019 and 2021.
- Research had been carried out with various consultees, other authorities and NFDC residents throughout the development process.
- NFDC is a waste collection authority and works alongside Hampshire County Council to facilitate the disposal of waste and the processing of recycling. Therefore, the methods of disposal must work in cohesion with the proposed collection policies. Due to this, a waste collection policy had been created following the approval of the NFDC Waste Strategy last year.
- The new collection system required significant investment, particularly in terms of infrastructure and a new material recovery facility is being developed to enable the sorting of recyclable materials.
- The core aspects of the collection policy will be implemented in 2025, in line with the timeframes for the new material recovery facility.
- Garden Waste collections are not reliant on the new infrastructure and therefore can be brought forward, with the change to the wheeled bin service underway at present.
- Many of the existing aspects of the collection service will remain, such as assisted collections for those households where it is required. Households who need assisted collections will be able to request this, and in order to support this process, among others, new administrative systems will be put in place along with a change in working practices. These methods will all seek to improve the service as a whole, maximising collection efficiency, health and safety of the collection operatives and the environmental benefits.
- As NFDC has been one of the last local authorities nationwide to move to a wheeled bin service, there is a lot of guidance, best-practice and experience that the Council has been able to draw upon in developing the collection policy, enabling the policy itself to be strong and clear.
- The wheeled bins will be produced from recycled materials and, for example, the Garden Waste bin will contain roughly 95% recycled polymer.
- Advice would be issued to households with additional waste collection needs, such as those who require the collection of medical waste.
- In combination to the collection policy, a waste reduction plan will promote the prevention and reduction of waste, and engagement activities will ensure that residents are informed on what they can and can't recycle. The aim of this strategy is to improve the environmental impacts by reducing waste.
- At present, approximately 72 plastic bags per household are provided by the Council. The use of wheeled bins would see the level of plastic use drop over time.
- The Council has carefully implemented a vehicle programme over time so as to ensure that no vehicles that would be rendered obsolete by the new collection service had been bought. In terms of the Garden Waste service, existing vehicles would be retrofitted to meet the requirements of the wheeled-bin collections.

- Food Waste wood be delivered to the current NFDC transfer stations (provided by Hampshire County Council), before moving to an anaerobic digestion facility in Hampshire or the surrounding area.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel recommend to Cabinet the adoption of the proposed waste and recycling collection policy and new garden waste terms and conditions for the roll-out of new collection services as set out in the Waste Strategy 2022-2027.

10 GARDEN WASTE FEES AND CHARGES (2024/25)

The Panel received a report on the Garden Waste Fees and Charges (2024/25) from the Assistant Director of Place and Operations. The main points were as follows:

- The Council's fees and charges process normally takes place in January/February time, however this proposal requires approval for the new Garden Waste fees and charges scheme.
- 1 in 4 households currently take part in the Garden Waste Scheme.
- Historically, the NFDC fee for the service has been one of the lowest in Hampshire.
- Wheeled bins are to be introduced, ready for the service to commence in April 2024.
- A simplified charging structure, aligned with the median charge across Hampshire, sees a £65 charge for a single, 240 litre capacity bin and a year's worth of collections.
- The majority of existing customers had subscribed to the 1-bag service, with some residents opting for 2 bags.
- On financial implications, the base budget income from the service was £1.3 mil and the calculated assumption was that subscription levels will remain consistent going into the next year. Data from comparable authorities shows that the number of subscriptions does rise following a move to wheeled bins.
- There would be a supply charge for bins, however the Council would offer an 'early bird' service where those who opted into the service by a set deadline would receive their Green Waste bin free of charge.
- On the increase in charges, a member commented on the approximately 44% rise the service fee for the new wheeled bin service, highlighting that this may deter some residents from subscribing.
- The Panel were informed that neighbours, if they wished to, would be able to share a wheeled bin so long as there was a designated, paid subscriber to the service.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel recommends to Cabinet the adoption of the proposed garden waste fees as set out in Appendix 1 of this report, applicable from 1 April 2024.

The Panel voted on this resolution and the votes were as follows:

For: 6

Against: 3

11 PORTFOLIO HOLDER UPDATE

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability addressed the Panel. He gave the following update:

- Public exhibitions regarding the District's coastline were scheduled to take place over the coming weeks, with regard to prospective sustainable protections. The Christchurch Bay and Harbour consultation would be lead by Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council, supported by the Environment Agency in cooperation with NFDC. The Hurst Spit to Lymington coastal strategy and engagement plan would be lead by the Environment Agency, alongside NFDC Council. These exhibitions would focus on actions and options that could be implemented in order to protect the coastline from current and future environmental challenges. The Portfolio Holder emphasised that this matter, if left unchecked, posed a great financial risk to stakeholders across the District and he encouraged all Councillors and members of the public to attend the exhibitions. Following a question from a member, the Portfolio Holder reassured the panel that he would be visiting the coastlines in the East of the District and that the strategic coastal assessments were being done in sections. Areas were being assessed on a priority basis.
- No Mow May, a project that sought to encourage the growth of vegetation across the District in order to grow food for pollinators and encourage biodiversity, had widely been considered a success. Despite some complaints on the lack of verge/grass cutting in the more urban areas of the District, the no-cutting regime had enabled the Council to reduce its carbon footprint, had seen vegetation grow and had been received positively by the public.
- The Public Convenience Replacement Programme would see public toilet replacements at Barton on Sea, which had been scheduled for replacement during next few weeks, ready for the start of Summer season.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy addressed the Panel. He gave the following update:

- Town centre regeneration was ongoing and officers were continuing discussions with Totton and Eling Town Councils on measures being forward.
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money spending was being looked at with a full paper on proposed expenditure scheduled for later in the year.
- The Shared Prosperity Fund was ready to be spent and the Rural Development Fund would be available to use around the Autumn period.
- The Portfolio Holder attended an event in Lyndhurst called 'Bees Nest Pitching Competition' where local businesses pitch their ideas and the winner receives £1000 for their businesses, whilst others will benefit from the publicity at the event.
- Following a question from a member, the Director for Place, Operations & Sustainability informed the Panel that close partnership was ongoing with Hampshire County Council to promote sustainable travel across the District where possible and would be addressed as a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) going forward.

12 WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be approved.

CHAIRMAN