

22 NOVEMBER 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 Wednesday, 22 November 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

Officers Attending:

Sally Igra, Chris Noble, Clive Tritton, James Carpenter, Joe Tyler, Paul McHenry and Nicola Plummer

Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

27 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

28 RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND: INVESTMENT PLAN FOR COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

The Deputy Economic Development Team Leader and the Strategic Regeneration Advisor presented the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF): Investment Plan for Community Infrastructure Improvements report. The main points raised were as follows:

- The total allocation stands at £540,000 and is separated into two strands, the Capital Grants for Businesses and the Grants for Communities. These strands share the total funding by way of a 60%-40% split respectively.
- The criteria that must be met for projects to be successful in their applications is that they fall within a 'rural fund area' as designated by DEFRA. There are some urban areas within the NFDC area which are ineligible for funding.
- All projects that are shortlisted for funding will be decided by Cabinet in early December 2023, following the closure of the registration window which saw 30 project applications.

- When assessing the applications, the primary measure will be the deliverability of the project. An assessment will be made on whether the project can be delivered in a short time frame and whether it is ready for implementation now.
- All funding must be allocated and spent by March 2025.

The Panel were given the opportunity to make comments and ask questions, these were answered as follows:

- Following a question on the National Park, the Panel were informed that the REPF covers the whole of the District including the National Park.
- The Council work closely with their partners to check that the various projects are not being 'double funded'. Other grants that have been awarded are checked and applicants for the REPF must, on the application form, explain where their funding comes from.
- DEFRA's designated REPF eligible zones can be checked in greater detail using the Council's website. It was confirmed that prospective applicants could see, using the postcode checker online, if they were within a 'rurally defined' zone.
- The Panel were informed that DEFRA's methodology on determining rural zones resulted in areas that were designated as 'rural hub towns'. They must be urban in area and have a 30,000 population or less whilst being 'intrinsic to the local rural area' that surrounds them.
- Applicants were encouraged not to apply for funding through the Council's various funding strands and were asked to consider practical bids through a single funding process. The Council would then, if necessary, enter them into a different stream of funding.

RESOLVED

That the Scrutiny Panel:

- i. Supports the process for allocating Community projects through the Rural Fund.
- ii. Recommends to Cabinet that they follow the process set out below to award funding to community projects where possible, to signpost unsuccessful bidding organisations to alternative funding sources for further review.

29 WASTE STRATEGY UPDATE

The Panel received an update on the Waste Strategy Implementation from the Projects and Performance Manager and the Assistant Director of Place and Operations. The main points highlighted from the presentation were as follows:

- Following the long-awaited response from Government regarding the consistency consultation by DEFRA, the headline update was for 'simpler recycling'. This means that the underlying principle remains the same and that the key aim is to get local authorities consistent in their range of materials they collect.
- A deadline for the collection of new materials is set as 21 March 2026, with plastic film collection introduced in 2027.
- One of the key changes from the Environment Act set out in 2021 is that the Secretary of State has set an exemption for authorities to collect recyclable

materials from a single container rather than a twin-stream collection. This makes disposal and collection of recyclable materials simpler for residents and the local authorities as well as there being fewer collection vehicles required.

- Businesses were required to make this change, of collection of recyclable materials, one year earlier (2025). The Council's business waste offer would therefore be impacted by this as business waste is collected in the same vehicles as the District's household waste. Therefore, radical change would be needed to implement this a year ahead of the domestic service.
- As set out in the Waste Strategy approved in 2022, the food waste collection will be implemented in March 2026, mirroring the changes in the recyclables collection service.
- There will be no changes to garden waste collection services and local authorities will continue to be able to charge for this, as per current arrangements.
- Defra have indicated that a minimum service standard should be a fortnightly collection for residual waste (alongside a weekly food waste collection).
- In terms of funding, there are three main elements – the capital costs, transition costs and the running cost. All of the funding is based on models from DEFRA rather than the reimbursement of what may be the actual spend on the new service. DEFRA have indicated that the Council will receive capital funding costs within this financial year and the hope was for a more comprehensive financial plan to be established in early 2024.
- It was hoped that the transition costs would be included in the 2024/2025 financial year and that the early running costs would be funded in 2026.
- Extended Producer Responsibility payments (paid by packaging producers to local councils) are intended to cover the cost of collecting additional packaging materials. Payments to start in financial year 2025/2026 – amounts are currently unknown but the system is intended to provide full net cost recovery, as long as collections are deemed to be “efficient and effective.”
- Hampshire councils approved a new Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) in 2021 and HCC has been working towards provision of suitable transfer stations and a new Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) that will handle “twin stream” material – metal, glass and plastic collected as one stream, and paper/card as another stream. However, in light of the latest update and the Secretary of State's exemption to enable single-stream collection of recyclable materials, there is likely to be a review of this.
- An alternative could be a fully co-mingled service – a new MRF would be required for this purpose. The exact implications of this on the current planned MRF facility (designed to deal with “twin stream” material) in Eastleigh are currently unknown. Discussions on this and funding will continue with the Council's Hampshire partners; a new MRF won't be ready until 2026.
- Despite this, due to the rollout of large parts of the service change in 2025, a phased approach will be implemented to enable flexibility once the new MRF is ready, whether that is as part of a twin-stream or co-mingled service.
- Due to timeframes and additional pressures, there is an immediate need to start procurement exercises to secure delivery of vehicles, containers and other rollout services.
- Residents are to receive their first official section 46 notice of a change in service in January 2025.

- Making these service changes in 2025 in a phased approach will give the Council the best opportunity to better provide services to householders and fully enact the waste strategy. A proposal will be prepared for Cabinet and Council which will allow full detailed work on a full timetable of service change. Discussions would continue with Hampshire partners and engagement would continue with DEFRA over funding for the new service.

After the presentation, members of the Panel were able to ask questions and comments. These were as follows:

- On recyclable plastics, the Panel were told that the environmental benefits of recycling these items once cleaned outweighs the impact of cleaning them.
- On capital funding, it was yet unknown how much the Council would receive but the funding would be materialised by the end of the financial year. It was hoped that funding would cover all costs but it may well fall short.
- Government have informed the Council that they will not fund the cost of food waste.
- The Panel were reminded that there were currently 3 depots and that service change would be implemented depot by depot by the end of 2025.
- Regarding the Council's fleet of vehicles, there are changes occurring often however the Council uses split-bodied vehicles so that different materials can be collected at the same time. It was explained however that if the twin-stream collection service proposal is replaced by the co-mingling service, this vehicle type will not be required.
- Following several suggestions that the Council write to DEFRA requesting greater clarity, officers gave reassurances to members that the Council were in constant conversation with DEFRA. This included representations that had been made to DEFRA as well as engagement via Government consultations and regular meetings with Hampshire County Council. This communication would continue and greater clarity on the situation would continue be sought as soon as possible.

RESOLVED

That the Panel note the update.

CHAIRMAN