

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee
held in Committee Room 1, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxon
at 2.00pm on Thursday 30th January 2014

PRESENT

Councillors: J F Mills (Chairman); H G Davies (Vice-Chairman); M A Barrett;
M Brennan; Mrs E M Coles; D A Cotterill; C Cottrell-Dormer; P J G Dorward;
W A Goffe; H J Howard; Mrs L E C Little and Dr E M E Poskitt

Also Present: Councillors A S Coles and A D Harvey

44 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

There were no apologies for absence or temporary appointments.

45 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 November 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

46 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest, at this juncture, from Members or Officers in matters to be considered at the meeting.

47 PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

In accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure Mr David Bates, Chair of Madley Park Residents Association, addressed the committee in respect of Agenda Item No. 9 – Update on Abandoned Shopping Trolleys.

Mr Bates advised that he had lived on Madley Park for 12 years and during that time abandoned shopping trolleys had become an increasing problem on the estate. Mr Bates referred to paragraph 3.5 of the report which indicated that one trolley a month was being reported. It was suggested that this did not reflect the actual number being abandoned but it was acknowledged that they may be being reported through other channels such as Trolleywise.

Mr Bates highlighted the requirement in the policy for trolleys to be removed within three days and advised that, in some cases, trolleys had been left uncollected for up to two weeks.

Mr Bates indicated that a major concern was trolleys being abandoned in the brook and thus impeding water flow and increasing the risk of flooding. It was advised that there had been such issues around Christmas and residents did try and remove debris from watercourses when possible.

In respect of reasons for the problem Mr Bates suggested that whilst some incidents could be anti-social behaviour it was acknowledged that residents returning with trolleys from

town could be a factor. Mr Bates advised that the association was prepared to help residents with lifts to town etc. if needed. Mr Bates highlighted the need for supermarkets to do more to improve the situation.

Mr Howard asked what the district council could do to help the situation. Mr Bates acknowledged that the policy was in place and that it was difficult to resource such issues but the council could lobby supermarkets to do more to prevent trolleys being taken from their premises.

Mr Harvey outlined the systems that were in place and emphasised the importance of reporting abandoned trolleys. Mr Bates suggested that the methods for reporting needed to be clearer for the public.

Mr Mills advised that, with the agreement of the committee, he would take Item No. 9 and Item No. 7 before Item No. 5.

48 UPDATE ON ABANDONED SHOPPING TROLLEYS

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Environment and Commercial Services providing an update on the abandoned shopping trolley policy.

Mr Dorward asked if the location of abandoned trolleys was logged together with the supermarket responsible. Mr Mills indicated this was the case and highlighted the importance of a single point of contact in this regard. Mr Harvey reminded members that reports could be made on the Town Centre Shop number and details were then logged on the system.

Mr Goffe suggested that the supermarkets should be taking more responsibility and initiatives such as paying a deposit for a trolley could help. Mr Goffe indicated that the use of fines could also be a deterrent. Mr Mills advised that a good relationship had been achieved with retailers and taking a collaborative approach was proving effective. Mr Mills suggested that better information on abandoned trolleys would provide a clearer picture of the situation.

Mr Cotterill asked if there were any powers within planning legislation that could help. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that this was unlikely but she was happy to talk to the retailers about other initiatives that could help.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted and the current policy and approach is not changed at this time; and
- (b) That, officers continue discussions with retailers to look at initiatives to reduce the number of abandoned trolleys.

The committee received a presentation from Andrew Ward, Senior Technical Officer, updating on the Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) and strategy in the district. A copy of the presentation is attached to the original copy of these minutes.

Mrs Coles highlighted the work of the Chipping Norton Action group in securing an advisory lorry route to take heavy traffic away from the town centre. Mrs Coles advised that whilst this had some positive impact the benefits had been somewhat mitigated as signage for traffic coming from Oxford was not in place.

Mrs Coles expressed disappointment that the working group established a number of years ago by the committee had been disbanded. Finally Mrs Coles suggested that there could be health implications for people in Horsefair as there were a number of houses and hotels in the area.

Mr Cotterill made reference to the Freight Partnership that had been established to discuss networks and also the work of the A44 Action Group in achieving some success in diverting Heavy Goods Vehicles, particularly international hauliers, on to agreed routes. Mr Cotterill advised that there was still an issue with lorries using unsuitable roads through Burford.

Dr Poskitt referred to different types of particulates and in response it was clarified that NO² was the most common in the district so this was monitored. Mr Howard concurred with Mr Cotterill about on-going problems in Burford and the need for enforcement when necessary. In respect of pollution in Bridge Street, Witney Mr Howard highlighted the number of buses using the road and that greater use of hybrid buses could help. The Senior Technical Officer, whilst acknowledging it focussed on Oxford City Centre, advised that the Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) Local Transport Plan (LTP) covered this issue and improvement in emissions from buses was a key aim.

Mr Goffe emphasised that discussions on the AQMA had been on-going for a long time and asked if any health data for those areas was available. The Senior Technical Officer advised that he was not aware of any such data.

Mr Davies highlighted that the main responsibility of the council was to monitor the AQMA and had little power on other matters. Mrs Coles emphasised the importance of being aware of the issues and for it to continue to be discussed.

Mr Harvey acknowledged that the issue of air quality had been discussed for a number of years and reiterated that air quality monitoring was the main responsibility of the council with a duty to produce a plan if levels were being exceeded. Mr Harvey highlighted that the main responsibility was with government and OCC through the LTP. Mr Harvey emphasised that it was important to keep lobbying other authorities but finance was still a major barrier.

Mr Brennan asked if any assessment had been made of the impact of RAF Brize Norton on the air quality in the vicinity of the airfield. The Senior Technical Officer clarified that monitoring was undertaken at four sites in Carterton and diffusion tubes had also been placed on the base but no major problems had been identified.

Dr Poskitt emphasised the importance of assessing health data if any was available and that the committee needed to keep a watching brief on air quality. Mr Cottrell-Dormer highlighted that vehicles all had an annual emissions test and a lower limit could help improve air quality.

(Mr Coles declared an interest at this juncture by virtue of being employed by Stagecoach as a driver)

RESOLVED: That, the presentation be noted.

50 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2013/2014

The Committee received and considered the report of Ralph Young, Strategic Director, giving an update on progress with regard to the Work Programme for 2013/2014.

Flood Prevention

Mr Mills advised that discussions were on-going with partner organisations and he and Mr Davies would be meeting with Thames Water to receive an update on the issues raised by the committee at previous meetings. Mr Mills reported that there would be a detailed update at the March meeting and if members had any particular issues this was an opportunity to raise them.

The Strategic Director advised that there was a meeting with ministers on 3rd February and the Leader of the Council would be attending that meeting. In addition OCC would be holding a flood summit on 21st March and it was understood that district councillors would be invited to that event.

Mr Harvey highlighted the work undertaken by the council since 2007 and that this had proved effective during the recent weather events. Mr Harvey reported that parish flood plans would be updated as necessary and the council would continue to ensure that other organisations were meeting their responsibilities. Mr Harvey paid tribute to the work of staff during the flooding.

Mr Coles referred to flooding in the ward he represents and the evacuation of vulnerable residents from Riverside Gardens. Mr Coles thanked all those involved in providing sandbags and helping residents in the area. Mr Coles emphasised the importance of continuing the flood prevention work.

Mr Howard highlighted a specific issue in Brize Norton regarding delays in the construction of a balancing pond that would help alleviate problems in that area. Mr Harvey undertook to look at the issue in conjunction with officers. Mr Howard questioned how flooding issues were prioritised and highlighted problems with roads near the pavilion in Carterton. The Strategic Director emphasised that the council monitored watercourses it was responsible for and took remedial action as necessary.

Mr Brennan thanked members and staff for their hard work in respect of flooding matters. Mr Cotterill asked what the overall impact on the district had been. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that five properties in Witney and a couple of others in other areas had flooded. There had been problems at Bablockhythe where the

mobile home site had been evacuated. Overall however the works undertaken in the district had mitigated the risks.

Mr Cottrell-Dormer suggested the main problem was the very high water table and subsequent problems with trying to disperse flood water. Mr Cottrell-Dormer emphasised the effectiveness of balancing ponds and asked if it was possible to implement these in areas at risk. Mr Harvey advised that potential sites were being investigated to see if such an initiative was possible.

RESOLVED: That progress on the Committee Work Programme for 2013/2014 be noted.

51 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Chief Executive giving the opportunity for the Committee to comment on the Work Programme published on 14 January 2014 was received and considered.

The Strategic Director advised that the report on public convenience provision and the review of grounds maintenance had been put back in the work programme until later in the year.

Mr Coles highlighted a specific issue with the public conveniences in Chipping Norton and expressed the hope that matters could be resolved soon.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Work Programme published on 14 January 2014 be noted.

52 LOW CARBON AND ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN

The report of the Head of Environment and Commercial Services seeking consideration of the West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) Low Carbon and Environmental Plan was received.

Mr Dorward highlighted the graph on page 3 of the plan and asked if there was any more up to date data as the latest available appeared to be from 2003. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services acknowledged the concern and clarified that this was the most recent information available.

Dr Poskitt indicated that a concern was lights being left on in commercial premises overnight when they were empty. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that the council did not do this and outlined a number of initiatives to reduce energy usage within the organisation. Mr Davies highlighted the costs to businesses of unnecessary energy usage.

RESOLVED: That the Low Carbon and Environmental Plan be recommended to Cabinet for approval.

53 REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The report of the Head of Environment and Commercial Services regarding possible changes to performance indicators reported to the committee was received and considered.

Mr Howard suggested that there could be a perception that targets were being changed just so they could be met more easily. Mr Howard acknowledged the rationale for changing the targets but this needed to be properly communicated. The Strategic Director clarified that longer term targets associated with the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership were still in place and the changes related to performance targets in the short term. The Strategic Director suggested the figures were realistic and the council was still performing well by being in the top ten shire districts in the country.

Mr Cotterill highlighted that reduced tonnages of recycling was not unique and was being experienced elsewhere. Mr Harvey emphasised the importance of trying to achieve targets that were as high as possible. Mr Harvey reported that the initial aim of the contract had been to achieve 80%+ recycling but fluctuation in the market and types of material since then had meant this could not be achieved.

Dr Poskitt suggested the key indicator to be aware of was the amount of residual waste being produced. Mr Cottrell-Dormer sought further information regarding composting of street sweepings as the report appeared contradictory on this issue. Mr Harvey explained that advice from Defra had indicated that street cleansing arisings could not be composted but a process for removing unwanted material had now been found. There was a cost implication associated with this and a more local facility had been identified so that material could be sent for composting.

Mr Cottrell-Dormer, whilst acknowledging that all suitable material was recycled, expressed some concern that on occasions recycled material was placed in a single unit rather than being kerbside sorted and this could be perceived badly by the public. In response it was acknowledged that replacements vehicles sometimes had to be used and there may be a need to communicate the situation better.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That, current performance indicators on litter and detritus, graffiti and fly posting be deleted but some management information should still be collected;
- (b) That, a new performance indicator for graffiti be introduced to reflect the percentage of reported graffiti that is removed within 4 weeks; and
- (c) That performance indicators SS2, SS3, SS4, and SS5 are amended as set out in paragraph 3.15

54 ANALYSIS OF RECYCLING PERFORMANCE BY AREA

The committee received the report of the Head of Environment and Commercial Services providing data on recycling performance across the district.

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services reported that data would continue to be collected and mapped so that relevant factors affecting rates of recycling could be identified. The detailed information would also help in targeting resources to educate residents about recycling and promote the service.

In response to Dr Poskitt it was clarified that 20 rounds operated each day and there did not appear to be any pattern in recycling performance between rural and urban areas.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

55 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Bring Site at Chipping Norton

Mrs Coles asked what the position was with introducing a receptacle for recycling small electrical items at the Chipping Norton site. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services undertook to look in to the matter and advise Mrs Coles accordingly.

The meeting closed at 3.40pm

Chairman