

## 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 2 April 2015

### PRESENT

Councillors: J F Mills (Chairman), H G Davies (Vice-Chairman), M A Barrett, R J M Bishop, Mrs E M Coles, D A Cotterill, C Cottrell-Dormer, P J G Dorward, P Emery, H J Howard, Ms E P R Leffman and G Saul

#### 43 MR H G DAVIES

The Chairman advised Members that Mr H G Davies was not standing for re-election and that this would be his last meeting. He thanked Mr Davies for his support as Vice-Chairman of the Committee and for his work on the Council's behalf.

#### 44 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence were received from Mr M Brennan and Mr A D Harvey and the Chief Executive reported receipt of the following resignation and temporary appointment:

Mr G Saul for Mr A S Coles

#### 45 MINUTES

Mrs Coles made reference to her comments at the last meeting regarding particulate emissions from diesel vehicles (Minute ENV/42/2014/15 refers) and enquired whether any new guidance regarding Air Quality Management Areas had been received. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services undertook to ensure Mrs Coles received information on this.

**RESOLVED:** That, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 February 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 46 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

#### 47 PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

No submissions were received from the public in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure.

#### 48 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2014/2015

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Environment and Commercial Services providing an update on the work programme for 2014/2015.

### Open Space Grass Cutting

In response to a question from Mrs Coles, the Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that Officers were working on the preparation of maps for Eynsham and Chipping Norton, as a trial, to be provided to those councils showing the responsibility for grass cutting within their respective areas. The intention was to work with willing partners to develop an improved co-ordinated approach. In response to a question from Mr Mills, the Head of Environment and Commercial Services confirmed that local housing associations would also be involved in these discussions.

Following the transfer of the Council's depot services to UBICO, Officers were examining arrangements for grass cutting in greater detail with a view to maximising efficiency.

Mr Howard enquired whether the same level of service would be provided during the forthcoming season as in the previous year or whether there would be a change in the frequency of grass cutting.

In response, the Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that, whilst the County Council proposed to reduce expenditure on grass cutting, the District Council had no intention to change its own level of service. Officers were looking at ways to maximise efficiency and streamline its services and would continue to do so, the objective being to reduce costs and maintain as high a level of service as possible. It was likely that the County Council's decision to reduce its service would result in differing standards of maintenance in adjoining areas.

In response to a question from Mr Emery, the Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that some areas of land were left uncut to provide a habitat for wildlife. Whilst the programme was kept under review, it was important to ensure that highway visibility was maintained.

### Car Park Strategy

In response to a question from Mr Mills, the Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that the procurement process to appoint a consultant to undertake work to inform the development of a strategy for off-street parking had commenced. A specification had been issued and initial expressions of interest had been received. Submissions were to be submitted by the end of April and these would be assessed having regard to both quality and cost. In response to a further question from Mr Cotterill, she advised that, in addition to survey work, the consultants appointed would undertake consultation with service users and interested parties, including local councils and Chambers of Trade and Commerce. The outcome of this work would be used to inform the preparation of a draft Strategy Document.

Mr Cottrell-Dormer noted that, on occasion, car parking at Burford was at a premium. Mr Cotterill advised that the Town Council had brought forward proposals to extend car park provision but that the District Council had declined to fund the project.

**RESOLVED:** That progress on the Committee Work Programme for 2014/2015 be noted.

49 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Chief Executive giving the opportunity for the Committee to comment on the Work Programme published on 17 March 2015 was received and considered.

**RESOLVED:** That, the Cabinet Work Programme published on 17 March 2015 be noted.

50 PRESENTATION BY KIER

The Committee received a presentation from Mr Andrew Smith and Mr Michael Gibbon, representatives of Kier, the Council's waste contractor, regarding recycling within the District and the operation of the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) run by the Company. A copy of the presentation is attached as an appendix to the original copy of these minutes.

Mr Mills indicated that, when the current waste collection and recycling contract had been awarded, the Council had decided to commission a kerbside sorted collection model with a co-mingled collection from flats only so as to maximise the value of the material collected. He questioned whether, given the additional staff costs associated with kerbside sorting, this was still the most economically advantageous method or whether a co-mingled collection was preferable.

In response, Mr Gibbon advised that, given technological advances, the method of collection had little impact upon the final value of materials recovered.

Mr Mills advised that the use of unbranded duo trucks collection on recycling rounds continued to give rise to concerns amongst the general public that recyclable material which they had taken the trouble to sort was being sent to landfill and questioned how this might be addressed. Mr Gibbon suggested that the Council's website could provide a link to a video of the recovery process and Mr Smith suggested that the current collection arrangements were not particularly efficient and a co-mingled collection would be more effective. Mr Smith also suggested that an awareness package could be prepared emphasising that there was no benefit in taking recyclable material to landfill at a cost when it was the sale of this that generated income.

In response to a question from Mrs Coles the Head of Environment and Commercial Services confirmed that the Council had issued press releases in the past and would continue to do so. Information was also provided on the Council's website. Mr Dorward suggested that a sticker campaign such as that recently employed to promote food waste recycling could be equally effective. Mr Smith invited any Members wishing to visit the Company's Materials Recycling Facility at Ettington to make arrangements to do so through the Head of Environment and Commercial Services.

Mr Cottrell-Dormer suggested that the Council should consider changing its current recycling boxes as they were not effective in retaining material and resulted in littering. In addition, they did not have sufficient capacity to hold large pieces of cardboard and any such material left outside the boxes was not collected.

In response, the Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that all aspects of the waste collection and recycling service would be considered when considering the future shape of the service. The current contract was due to end in 2017 and this offered the Council the opportunity to remodel the service. The shape of the new service would be designed before the commencement of the procurement process and a report regarding this process would be submitted later in the year.

Mr Gibbon reiterated that a co-mingled recycling collection would be more efficient and Mr Howard suggested that this would be preferred by the majority of residents. He went on to enquire how shredded paper was dealt with and whether polystyrene was ever likely to be recyclable. In response, Mr Gibbon explained that shredded paper presented some handling difficulties because of its light weight and bulk. He advised that it would be preferable if only confidential elements of correspondence were shredded with as much paper as possible being left intact. He expressed doubt that it would ever be possible to effectively recycle blown polystyrene, suggesting that it was far more likely that its use would be phased out in preference to fibre based packaging material.

Ms Leffman encouraged Members to visit the Company's plant at Ettington and, in response to her question as to relative costs, Mr Smith advised that a co-mingled recycling collection should lead to a reduction in cost.

In response to a question from Mr Dorward, it was explained that, whilst DVD's and CD's could not be recycled. They were extracted from the waste stream and used as a fuel. It was also confirmed that material from general waste bins in the towns was not recycled.

The Chairman thanked Mr Smith and Mr Gibbon for their contribution to the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** that the information provided be noted.

## 51 RECYCLING BRING SITE SURVEY

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Environment and Commercial Services detailing the results of the survey undertaken with residents in respect of the recycling bring sites in the district.

In introducing the report, the Head of Environment and Commercial Services drew particular attention to the dissatisfaction expressed by users with regard to the cleanliness and tidiness of the sites, their reasons for using the bring sites (including dissatisfaction with the kerbside recycling service, its capacity and the containers used) and the widely held belief that businesses were able to use these sites to dispose of their waste. She emphasised the importance of addressing these issues and indicated that the renewal of the waste collection and recycling contract offered the opportunity to remodel the service to do so.

In response to a question from Mr Emery, the Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that there were 22 bring sites within the District. Mr Emery indicated that the survey results reflected both his own personal experience and views expressed to him by local residents. He went on to enquire how seriously the Council was considering the use of CCTV. In response, the Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that the Council was prepared to use CCTV where practicable and to take proceedings against

persons misusing the site. Whilst formal action would act as a deterrent, the Head of Environment and Commercial Services also acknowledged the need to address the apparent lack of awareness as to the appropriate use of the sites, signage and their operational management.

Ms Leffman suggested that, as there was little prospect of the County Council funding a replacement for Dean Pit, the Committee should consider establishing a Working Party to consider ways in which an alternative facility could be provided. It was AGREED that consideration be given to establishing a Working Party when formulating the Committee's Work Programme for the next municipal year.

Mrs Coles pointed out that the Council's Community Wardens should monitor the bring sites, reporting when sites were untidy or receptacles required emptying. She indicated that previous attempts to provide a recycling facility at 'Greystones' in Chipping Norton had not represented an adequate replacement for facilities at Dean Pit and suggested that an alternative comparable facility should be provided or the original site re-opened.

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services agreed that there was little prospect of the County Council funding replacement provision but advised that she would continue to seek to establish the County's current position on the matter and advise Members accordingly.

Mr Davies indicated that the survey had highlighted a range of diverse issues; the number of sites within the District, their capacity, use and management and the shortage of recycling facilities to the north of the District. He acknowledged that there was little possibility of the County Council addressing this shortfall and proposed that the Cabinet be requested to review the issues identified above as a matter of the utmost urgency with a view to making such financial provision as necessary to resolve them quickly and efficiently. In doing so, the Cabinet should be aware that the Committee is of the view that financial considerations should be secondary to the needs of local residents.

Ms Leffman concurred but noted that it should be made clear to the Cabinet that the Committee recognised that it was not simply the question of capital provision but on-going operational revenue expenditure that needed to be considered when reaching a conclusion. Ms Leffman went on to stress the importance of identifying a suitable site as a replacement for Dean Pit and suggested that the District might consider taking the original site over from the County.

Mr Saul advised that he had received a response from the County Council's Waste Strategy Officer to an enquiry he had made with regard to the current position. This indicated that a review of Household Waste Recycling Centre provision had been on-going for the past year to assess and understand the catchment area and the demand for each site. This work took account of future population growth and the changing nature of waste that people take to such facilities.

A public consultation on a new Household Waste Recycling Centre strategy looking at provision countywide was to be carried out in the summer.

Mr Howard noted that the matters raised in the survey were relevant to the whole of the District, not just the north. He went on to advise that he had personal experience of

commercial waste being left at the Carterton Co-op bring site and suggested that this was likely to continue until such time as the Council established an effective commercial recycling collection (even if such a service had to be operated at a financial loss).

In response to question from Mr Cottrell-Dormer, the Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that it was not always possible to provide a greater number of receptacles at bring sites as many were located on car parks where space was not available without loss of parking provision. She emphasised that responsive management should address issues surrounding the capacity of individual sites.

Finally, at the suggestion of the Chairman, it was **AGREED** that the last of the proposed points in the Action Plan be amended to read as follows:-

*Continue to engage with Town and Parish Council ensuring it is constantly being promoted in local new letters about abuse.*

**RESOLVED:-**

- (a) That the results of the survey be noted;
- (b) That the Action Plan outlined in the document, amended as detailed above, be approved;
- (c) That, given that there was little prospect of the County Council funding a replacement for Dean Pit, consideration be given to establishing a Working Party to explore ways in which an alternative facility could be provided when formulating the Committee's Work Programme for the next municipal year; and
- (d) That the Cabinet be requested to review the number of sites within the District, their capacity, use and management and the shortage of recycling facilities to the north of the District as a matter of the utmost urgency with a view to making such financial provision as necessary to resolve them quickly and efficiently.

52 THAMES WATER DRAINAGE STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Democratic Services regarding a document, Witney (Brize Norton) Drainage Strategy prepared by Thames Water in respect of delivering long term outcomes for drainage issues in Brize Norton.

Mr Mills suggested that representatives of Thames Water be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee to outline the strategy and to respond to any questions from Members. In addition, it was also proposed that representatives of Carterton Town and Brize Norton Parish Councils be invited to attend the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** that representatives of Thames Water be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee to outline the strategy and to respond to any questions from Members and representatives of the relevant local councils.

The Chairman requested that Members give notice of any specific issues they wished to raise through the Council's Democratic Services section.

53 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

There were no questions from members relating to the work of the Committee.

54 MRS E M COLES

Mrs Coles indicated that she had decided not to seek re-election to the Council, having served as representative for Chipping Norton for 20 years. Mrs Coles had served on the Committee since its inception, having previously been a member of the Environment Committee and the Public Health Committee. The Chairman thanked Mrs Coles for her contribution to the Committee and the work of the Council as a whole.

The meeting closed at 3:30pm

Chairman