

## 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 4 June 2015

### PRESENT

Councillors: D A Cotterill (Chairman), P Emery (Vice-Chairman), Mrs J C Baker,  
M A Barrett, R J M Bishop, M Brennan, J C Cooper, E J Fenton, Miss G R Hill, H J Howard,  
A H K Postan and G Saul

Also Present: A D Harvey and T N Owen

#### 4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence were received from Mr P J G Dorward and Mr D A Snow and the Chief Executive reported receipt of the following temporary appointments:

Mrs J C Baker attended for Mr H B Eaglestone  
Mr J C Cooper attended for Ms E P R Leffman  
Mr G Saul attended for Mr A S Coles

#### 5 MINUTES

**RESOLVED:** That, the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 2 April and 20 May 2015 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

#### 6 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

#### 7 PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

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

#### 8 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2015/2016

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Environment and Commercial Services seeking consideration of a work programme for 2015/2016.

##### Waste Contract

Mr Harvey reported that communication and engagement from Kier was much improved. In respect of the campaign relating to food waste Mr Harvey advised that an additional 140 tonnes had been generated as a result.

## Open Space Grass Cutting

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that work had progressed with Chipping Norton Town Council and Eynsham Parish Council being sent draft maps showing grass cutting areas and responsibilities. Feedback was awaited to enable maps to be finalised and discussions could then progress.

It was further reported that a meeting had been held with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) where options for future grass cutting as a result of OCC funding reductions had been discussed. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services indicated that discussions would be undertaken with local councils with a view to helping where possible and increasing efficiency to maximise the number of cuts that could be undertaken for the money available and the committee would be kept updated on progress.

In response to concerns from Mr Brennan and Mr Howard officers undertook to look at the situation at Shilton Park with regard to responsibilities for verge maintenance as it was understood that some roads were still not adopted highway. Therefore OCC highways may not have responsibility for maintaining the verges and it may in fact be the responsibility of the home owners if the road was not adopted.

Mr Cooper suggested that some local councils were better placed to deal with grass cutting responsibilities than others and it was important that guidance was given to smaller parishes possibly through the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that this had been raised during discussions with OCC. Mr Harvey highlighted the highway safety implications in some locations if verges were overgrown or signage was obscured.

## Car Park Strategy

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services explained that a suitable tender had not been forthcoming for the survey work and so a different approach was being proposed. It was explained that it was intended to do as much work as possible using existing in-house resources together with employing somebody on a short term basis who could collate survey data and carry out consultation with community groups.

The committee noted that some specialist support was likely to be needed on specific aspects and this would be procured as necessary. It was advised that an update, including a proposed timetable, would be given at the next meeting.

## Recycling Bring Sites

The Head of Environment and Commercial acknowledged that there had been increasing problems of excess or illegal waste being left at bring sites. The committee was advised that officers had recently spent time at the Carterton site providing advice to people.

It was reported that there was to be a press campaign and new signage installed at sites but it was considered that as a lot of fly-tipping was being undertaken CCTV was also a potential option. Mr Fenton asked what form of CCTV could be used and in response it was explained that it would be recorded so that images could be looked at if necessary.

Mrs Baker suggested that signage should make it clear that offenders could be prosecuted. Mr Harvey concurred and indicated that a successful prosecution would be a deterrent. Mr Howard supported the use of CCTV and suggested that the layout of sites may need to be reviewed to make best use of the technology. Mr Howard advised that a lot of the excess waste appeared to be commercial.

In response to a question about the provision in the northern part of the district and particularly the viability of Greystones, the Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that the Greystones site had not progressed as WODC could not acquire the land required to provide suitable access to the site. The business case had subsequently been revisited and the decision taken that there was no longer a viable business case as the projected material income had decreased and revenue costs for running the site were therefore around £40,000/year. Mr Harvey reminded the committee that Dean Pit had been an OCC facility and any suggested sites could be forwarded to them for consideration but a robust business plan would be required.

Mr Cooper expressed support for a working party to look at the issue and suggested that new development and increasing number of residents, particularly in Chipping Norton, would mean a facility was needed more than ever in the area. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services acknowledged the changing demographic but the business case was based on cost. The committee noted that OCC were doing a wider review of their recycling facilities and it was unlikely any new developments would be supported.

Mr Cotterill suggested that it would be beneficial to see if developer contributions, associated with new developments, could be used towards alternative facilities. Mr Saul indicated that there was a demand for a facility and options should be looked at. Mr Harvey highlighted that the project at Greystones had not been possible due to land ownership issues. Mr Cotterill suggested that this could be raised with Chipping Norton Town Council to see if the situation had changed since the original project was considered.

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services suggested that the on-going revenue costs, rather than capital expenditure, were the main concern. It was advised that the market for recyclable material varied greatly and material values have decreased since the business case was last reviewed so annual running costs will have increased.

Mr Cotterill suggested that it would be best to keep the situation under review and for the committee to receive updates as part of its work and not establish a working party at this stage.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee Work Programme for 2015/2016 be approved subject to the amendments agreed at the meeting.

## 9 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

**RESOLVED:** It was noted that there were no items in the work programme published on 19 May 2015 relating to the remit of this committee.

## 10 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 Huw Thomas, representing Thames Water, attended the meeting together with a representative of Brize Norton Parish Council.

Mr Thomas introduced himself and his colleagues Mr Kyle Robbins and Mr Andrew Haggar and thanked the committee for the opportunity to discuss the strategy. Mr Thomas acknowledged that the strategy was fairly high level but outlined that this was the first stage of four in the process and Thames Water were looking for initial feedback to help shape the final document.

Mr Robbins advised that Thames Water were committed to dealing with sewer flooding and a £1 billion programme of works was in place across their area of responsibility. Mr Robbins highlighted that previously the focus had been on properties suffering internal flooding but now a more comprehensive programme was being proposed.

Mr Robbins explained that Thames Water worked in five year cycles with the regulator OFWAT and any strategy should be based around customer needs. It was reiterated that the process was at an early stage and set the context for more detailed work and it was acknowledged there was a lot of work to be done including updating data.

Mr Cotterill sought a timescale for the strategy. Mr Robbins indicated that a clear programme of works should be agreed within two years. It was emphasised that this did not preclude works being undertaken earlier if a particular problem was found that needed rectifying quicker. Mr Robbins outlined that monitoring equipment was in place to measure flows through the system.

Mr Cotterill highlighted that large scale development had been approved near Carterton and asked whether this was taken in to account in the strategy. Mr Robbins confirmed that new developments were monitored. Mr Haggar advised that often problems were with existing infrastructure and some development particularly on brownfield sites could actually improve the situation.

Mr Cotterill sought further information regarding cost and prioritisation of works. Mr Robbins advised that Thames Water had to meet certain commitments set by OFWAT and if these were not achieved then penalties could be imposed. Mr Robbins acknowledged that various areas were competing for funding but Witney/Carterton was considered to be a priority.

Mr Howard, whilst acknowledging the issues in Brize Norton, suggested that neighbouring areas were not fully taken in to account and a more holistic approach was needed. Mr Howard advised that he had prepared a series of comments on the document and it was agreed that these would be forwarded to Thames Water for consideration. In addition Mr Howard suggested that a site meeting with local interested parties could help inform the process.

Mr Howard highlighted particular issues regarding flooding of roads, the implications of significant residential and business developments that had been approved and concerns about the capacity of pumping stations. Mr Thomas acknowledged the concerns and indicated that a site meeting would be beneficial and local knowledge would help to supplement the data that was being collected.

Mr Shorrock, representing Brize Norton Parish Council, addressed the meeting and advised that he had some initial comments for consideration by Thames Water. It was agreed that these would be forwarded for consideration as part of the strategy. Mr Shorrock expressed concern at the adequacy of the infrastructure in the area and there were a number of issues that needed resolving.

Mr Harvey advised that the council had some data that it would be happy to share. Mr Harvey referred to the five year programme and asked whether projects had to be delivered by 2020 or just be programmed in by that date. Mr Robbins clarified that the commitment was delivery by 2020. Mr Thomas reiterated that some work could be undertaken relatively quickly but the larger strategic schemes would take longer. In response to Mr Harvey it was confirmed that the figures in paragraph 3.2 of the strategy referred to the whole Thames Water area and there had been some 200 properties in West Oxfordshire affected by internal sewer flooding.

Mr Harvey asked about the cost implications for customers. Mr Robbins advised that all residents paid a common bill and the cost of any works were factored in to that. A lot more data and research was needed before such issues could be fully clarified.

Mr Postan suggested that problems were much wider and a proper study of the implications across the whole area was required. Mr Postan indicated that flooding problems could be exacerbated by works elsewhere. In response it was indicated that river flooding was generally the responsibility of the Environment Agency and OCC as drainage authority. It was however recognised that a cohesive approach was needed where possible.

Mr Robbins advised that further strategies were being developed, including Carterton, and these needed to be considered together. It was agreed that details of the Carterton strategy would be forwarded for information. Mr Thomas highlighted that Thames Water was involved in the Oxfordshire Strategic Flood Group.

Mr Brennan asked if discussions had been held with RAF Brize Norton. It was advised that this was somewhat limited at the moment and Thames Water dealt with issues off the site.

Mr Cotterill thanked Thames Water and Brize Norton Parish Council for their attendance and suggested it had been positive to develop links between interested parties with a view to finding suitable solutions. Mr Thomas confirmed that there would be on-going liaison.

Mr Bishop raised an issue regarding a development in Stonesfield and Mr Thomas undertook to provide a response.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the strategy and information provided at the meeting be noted;
- (b) That regular updates on progress be presented to the committee; and
- (c) That a site visit be arranged between Thames Water and interested parties to help inform development of the strategy.

11 START TIME OF MEETINGS

The committee received the report of the Head of Democratic Services seeking consideration of the start time of meetings for the remainder of the 2015/2016 municipal year.

**RESOLVED:** That meetings of the committee for 2015/2016 commence at 2.00pm.

12 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - YEAR END 2014/2015

The report of the Head of Business Information and Change Service providing information on the Council's performance as at the end of year 2014/2015 was considered.

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services explained that the red indicators for SS6 and SS7 were due to Kier staffing issues, the contractor moving depot and associated IT matters during Quarter 2. Performance had since improved but the issues in the first half of the year had affected the overall year end performance.

Mr Cooper asked if there was any penalty on the contractor for not meeting the performance targets. In response it was advised that any defaults were registered as part of the contract monitoring process.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

13 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Woodgreen Offices

Mr Postan expressed disappointment at the quality of landscaped areas at the Woodgreen offices. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services acknowledged the concern and confirmed the matter was being addressed.

The meeting closed at 3.25pm

Chairman