

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee
held in Council Chamber, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxon
at 2.00pm on Thursday 17 September 2015

PRESENT

Councillors: D A Cotterill (Chairman), P Emery (Vice-Chairman), Mrs J C Baker, A S Coles, Mrs M J Crossland, H B Eaglestone, E J Fenton, S J Good, Miss G R Hill, Ms E P R Leffman, A H K Postan and Mrs C E Reynolds

Also Present: A D Harvey

22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence were received from Mr R J M Bishop and Mr M Brennan

The Chief Executive reported the following temporary appointments:

Mrs J C Baker attended for Mr P J G Dorward

Mrs M J Crossland attended for Mr H J Howard

Mr S J Good attended for Mr M A Barrett

Mrs Crossland sent apologies for her late arrival at the meeting having been delayed at another council meeting.

23 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 July 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

25 PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

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

26 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

Mr Cotterill advised that he would be taking Agenda Item No. 7 before Agenda Item No. 5.

27 CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES IN OXFORDSHIRE

The report of the Head of Environment and Commercial Services regarding a consultation document from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) in respect of proposed changes to Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) in Oxfordshire was considered.

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services introduced the report and highlighted the suggested response attached as Appendix D to the report. The committee was advised that further data had been requested from OCC and having received that information further objection reasons were being recommended. The additional points reflected the increased mileage and time for some residents to access facilities if Dix Pit was to shut and the considerable carbon impact this could have.

Mr Fenton, in supporting the suggested response, asked whether data could be added in respect of increased fly-tipping to counter the assumptions in the OCC consultation. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that it was somewhat difficult due to changes in the data collection requirements but some information could be provided to strengthen the point. Ms Leffman asked if information from Kier, who were responsible for clearing fly-tips, could be used. In response it was confirmed that the tonnages collected and number of tips removed was available but may need some commentary to put it in context.

Mr Fenton referred to bullet point 6 in the response and suggested that the biggest impact could be for those with small/medium gardens who were less likely to home compost and reference to orchards should be removed.

Mrs Reynolds acknowledged the possibility of reducing hours at sites and asked if there was any merit in considering having sites that specialised in receiving certain materials. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services indicated that generally people preferred to tip a variety of materials in the same trip at a single site.

Mr Coles suggested that the committee seemed to support the draft response and that it was vital, in the strongest terms, to highlight the cost to the district council of clearing excess waste and the potential for 'cost shunting' by OCC. Mr Coles indicated there was already an impact on the bring sites and expressed his support for the additional bullet points regarding the carbon impact.

Mr Harvey thanked the Head of Environment and Commercial Services for obtaining the additional information. Mr Harvey highlighted that Dorset County Council was proposing to charge for non-recyclable goods taken to centres. It was suggested that a similar approach could help OCC generate income and could be considered as part of the district council response.

Mr Good advised that Dix Pit was in his ward and the local residents were keen to keep the facility open and the district council should be very strong in objecting to any closure. Mr Good suggested that bullet point 5 was important and OCC should be encouraged to look at alternative options for delivering the service and generating income. Ms Leffman concurred and highlighted initiatives elsewhere, such as re-use facilities, where certain goods could be sold to help cover costs.

Ms Leffman highlighted that some residents may be taking material to sites in other counties as they were nearer than facilities in Oxfordshire.

Mr Postan emphasised the importance of making residents aware of the consultation and the strong objections of the district council to any closures. Mr Postan asked about options for the district council to operate services or facilitate alternative delivery models. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services urged caution and reiterated the possibility of 'cost shunting' and the danger of raising expectations that the district council could step in. Any proposals for such options would need to have a robust business case and full cost analysis.

Mr Harvey suggested that it was important that residents were aware of the respective responsibilities of the district council and OCC with regard to waste collection and disposal. Mr Cotterill urged some caution in respect of reduced opening hours and cited issues in Cornwall, where such changes had already been made, as an example.

The committee agreed that the draft response, including the additional reasons circulated at the meeting, together with the issues raised at the meeting be recommended to Cabinet for approval.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet be recommended:

(1) To approve the draft response attached as Appendix D to the report subject to the following additional bullet points:

- Analysis by OCC of travel times to existing sites suggests the maximum time travelled is 35 minutes each way. WODC considers this is too long and residents should not have a total journey time in excess of an hour to deposit their waste. No data has been provided by the County Council to analyse what impact the closure of some sites will have on travel times but it is clear it is likely to increase for the majority of residents in our District. For example the closure of Dix Pit with only Redbridge or Drayton offered as an alternative in the South of the County would increase mileage for a Burford resident from 26 miles return to 42 miles return and is likely to double journey times.
- There will be a considerable Carbon impact of the proposed site closures as it will force residents to make longer car journeys to travel to the remaining sites.

(2) To consider adding reference to OCC being asked to consider the possibility of income generation at HWRCs to reduce the financial pressure including charging for non-recyclable waste.

28 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2015/2016

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director providing an update on progress with the committee work programme for 2015/2016.

Waste Contract

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services referred to the member workshop that had been held earlier in the day to establish initial views regarding the new contract. It was explained that further work would be undertaken including wider consultation and collation of data with further reports on options being presented in due course.

Thames Water

The Chief Executive advised that site meetings had been held in Brize Norton and Carterton between Thames Water and interested parties. Officers would be liaising with Thames Water in respect of progress with the relevant strategies with a view to a report being considered at the November meeting.

Open Space Grass Cutting

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services reported that initial meetings had been held with Witney Town Council around responsibilities and land ownership. A meeting regarding a more strategic approach was now needed and it was acknowledged that progress had not been as quick as hoped.

Mr Coles asked if there was anything the committee or individual members could do to try and expedite discussions. Mr Coles indicated that the current position was increasingly frustrating and a multi-agency approach was needed.

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services acknowledged the concern and advised that the district council was being as proactive as possible. It was emphasised that funding and the difference in frequency of cutting were key issues and it was difficult to get agreement from all parties. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services suggested that continued lobbying of the various organisations was needed.

Mr Good asked about the cost of grass cutting in the district. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services confirmed that figures were available in respect of the district council and reiterated that a more unified approach was needed to reduce costs if possible.

Mrs Reynolds suggested that the various parties seemed to have the same ambition and that the district council could take the initiative and lead the project. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that discussions had been held with individual organisations but no agreement had been reached as yet.

Mr Harvey advised that a lot of the background work had been undertaken with a mapping exercise of open spaces and responsibilities having been completed. Mr Harvey reiterated the main issues and the need for a coherent approach to be adopted. Mr Harvey highlighted the transfer of some services to Ubico and their ability to be able to competitively tender for contracts.

Mrs Reynolds suggested that OCC needed to look at how revised delivery of services could provide efficiency savings. Mrs Baker indicated that it would be beneficial to bring all the organisations together to reach a solution. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services acknowledged that this had not yet taken place and some of the parties were more engaged in the process than others.

Car Park Strategy

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that work was progressing in accordance with the agreed timetable and project plan. A report would be presented to Cabinet in October seeking additional funding for some of the specialist work that is needed.

Mr Postan advised that he had been contacted by some traders in Witney seeking better long term parking provision for workers. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that there would be on-going engagement with a wide range of interested parties. It was indicated that there was likely to be a divergence of views and parking requirements would need to be balanced when a decision was made.

Recycling Bring Sites

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that there was a delay in the implementation of CCTV at the site in Carterton due to a change in ownership of the site. It was hoped that an agreement with the new owner could be completed soon.

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services further advised that there was increased enforcement activity and discussions were on-going with Kier about changes in the collection regime at bring sites.

Mrs Crossland referred to the recycling of small electrical items and indicated that it was sometimes difficult to get items in to the containers. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services undertook to look at the matter.

Mr Emery highlighted some issues in respect of the site at Back Lane, Eynsham. Mrs Hill referred to excess waste at the Sainsbury's site in Witney. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services gave an assurance that incidents were reported to Kier so that fly-tips could be removed quickly. It was acknowledged that incidents needed to be dealt with quickly and sites kept tidy to ensure that the goodwill of landowners, on which containers were sited, was maintained.

RESOLVED: That progress with the Committee Work Programme for 2015/2016 be noted.

29 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Executive giving the committee the opportunity to comment on the Cabinet Work Programme published on 18 August 2015.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Work Programme be noted.

30 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

West Oxfordshire Design Guide

Mr Postan highlighted the on-going consultation in respect of the design guide and suggested that some of the policies could help protect the environment of the district. Mr Cotterill reminded members that it was guidance document only and was within the remit of the planning department.

The meeting closed at 2.55pm

Chairman