

## 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 28 January 2016

### PRESENT

Councillors: D A Cotterill (Chairman), P Emery (Vice-Chairman), Mrs J C Baker, M A Barrett, R J M Bishop, P J G Dorward, H B Eaglestone, D S T Enright, E J Fenton, Miss G R Hill, H J Howard and Ms E P R Leffman

Also Present: A D Harvey

#### 43 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Brennan and A H K Postan

The Chief Executive reported the following temporary appointments:

Mrs J C Baker attended for Mrs C R Reynolds

Mr D S T Enright attended for Mr A S Coles

#### 44 MINUTES

**RESOLVED:** That, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 November 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 45 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

#### 46 PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

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

#### 47 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.

##### Thames Water Flood Issues

It was reported that Thames Water had offered to attend a future meeting to outline progress on the drainage strategies being developed for various areas in the district. It was agreed that Thames Water be invited to attend the scheduled March meeting.

Mr Howard suggested that the relevant local Parish/Town Councils be invited to attend and it was agreed that this would be beneficial.

##### Open Space Grass Cutting

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services gave an update and reported that discussions were on-going with Witney Town Council and there were a number of issues to be resolved. It was emphasised that both councils were committed to making the proposal work but it was important that both minimised their risks whilst generating efficiency savings.

(Mr Dorward, Mr Eaglestone and Mr Harvey declared an interest at this juncture by virtue of their membership of Witney Town Council)

Mr Cotterill asked about the present position in other parts of the district. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that initial discussions had been held with other local councils but it was considered that finding a workable solution in one area that could be rolled out elsewhere was the initial aim. This did not however preclude councils coming forward with proposals for joint working.

(Mr Enright joined the meeting at this juncture)

Mr Fenton sought an update regarding the mapping of responsibilities for maintenance in various parishes. The Environmental Services Manager advised that a single map for the whole district was not available but information had been made available to parishes on request. It was stressed that not all land ownership was known and information from local communities on tenure of land would be welcomed.

In response to Mr Howard it was confirmed that no discussions had been held in respect of Carterton to date.

Ms Leffman expressed particular concern regarding verge cutting near main roads and cited Finstock as an example and asked about future provision in light of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) funding cuts. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services acknowledged the concern and advised that the impact of OCC funding cuts was due to be discussed at Cabinet in the coming months. It was indicated that Ubico had suitably trained operatives but there would be a degree of cost shunting if the district took on responsibility.

Ms Leffman emphasised the importance of looking at the issue in the longer term and fully assessing the relevant contracts. Mr Cotterill reiterated that the matter was on the Cabinet Work Programme and the committee could request to consider the report. The Committee agreed that this would be a good approach.

Mr Enright, in acknowledging the budgetary constraints, suggested that service provision was paramount and the various authorities needed to find a workable solution. Mr Cotterill advised that many parishes employed private contractors to undertake grass cutting. Ms Leffman recognised that this could work but the particular problem was areas of grass in parishes being the responsibility of different interested parties. Ms Leffman suggested that a single contract, whilst difficult to achieve, would provide a solution.

Mr Harvey advised that members and officers were trying to move forward on this matter but there were also issues around gaining permission to maintain land owned by third parties. Mr Harvey suggested that it was often easier to get agreement at a parish level. Mr Fenton reiterated that responsibility for land was not always clear. Mr Harvey referred to health and safety issues and responsibilities as another factor.

Ms Leffman asked if there were any examples elsewhere where a more cohesive approach had been achieved. Mr Harvey responded that he was not aware of anything but would check with the Local Government Association to see if there were any models of good practice.

### Car Park Strategy

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services reminded the committee that they had considered a report some time ago outlining the process and timetable for the strategy. It was advised that some work was being undertaken internally with some specialist aspects being contracted out.

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services reported that the parking survey work was continuing over the coming months and the data already collected was being reviewed. The next stage would be a public consultation exercise using an online survey and workshop events with key town/parish councils and other interested stakeholders. It was emphasised that elements such as national legislation and likely requirements as a result of development through the Local Plan needed to be factored in.

Mr Cotterill asked about the workshop events and it was confirmed that officers would be contacting interested organisations to invite them to attend.

Ms Leffman highlighted that some communities such as Charlbury and Long Hanborough had railway stations and this, together with increased development, could put significant pressure on parking. Mr Harvey acknowledged the concern and whilst the strategy was primarily about council controlled parking it was important that members were cognisant of such local issues. Mr Harvey advised that there would be significant publicity and expressed the hope that there was a good response to the consultation.

(Mr Emery joined the meeting at this juncture)

Mr Howard suggested that use of public transport could help alleviate parking problems and was something that could be considered. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that the current focus was to identify the issues before potential solutions were identified which would be set out in an Action Plan appended to the Parking Strategy when it was developed. Public transport was one solution that will be considered and it was reiterated that Local Plan policies were also relevant.

#### Recycling Bring Sites and Household Waste Recycling Facilities

The Committee noted that the OCC Cabinet had deferred a decision on the closure of household waste recycling facilities and therefore Dix Pit would remain open for at least two years. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that OCC would be reviewing each centre in turn, starting with Redbridge as that was already at capacity, and it was important that there was a clear procedure for the reviews.

Mr Harvey reported that OCC had been asked a number of questions about this issue to which they were yet to respond.

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services gave an update regarding the bring sites in the district. It was confirmed that the facility at Carterton was operational at the Asda site. The issue of CCTV was being discussed including use of the cameras already on site.

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that other sites continued to be monitored and enforcement undertaken as necessary. It was acknowledged that in anticipation of getting particular problems over Christmas/ New Year, the Council had asked Ubico to undertake some additional clearance. This had worked extremely well and although Ubico had absorbed this cost as a one off, continuing this sort of arrangement would result in a significant cost increase for the Council. Ms Leffman highlighted specific problems in Charlbury and emphasised the cost to the council of fly tipping.

Mr Howard asked about tonnages collected from sites and expressed concern about commercial waste being deposited and associated fly tipping. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that tonnage figures were available and CCTV, when operational, would help identify contraveners. The Head of Environment and Commercial

Services clarified that if the site at Carterton was lost an alternative would be sought but this may prove problematic.

Ms Leffman referred to the loss of the facility at Dean Pit and advised that discussions had been on-going locally to try and identify suitable alternative sites. Ms Leffman reported that Charlbury and Chipping Norton Town Council's had met to try and seek a solution. A number of sites had been identified on the edge of both towns and it was noted that Viridor were vacating their Enstone site which could have been another option. The next stage would be to look at costs. Ms Leffman indicated that any facility would not necessarily be a seven day a week operation but any additional capacity would be welcomed.

Ms Leffman suggested that the proposals could be progressed and the support of the council would help in this regard. Ms Leffman highlighted that if the on-going OCC review meant that Dix Pit was closed then there would be an even greater need for alternative sites.

Mr Cotterill suggested that in the first instance more detail was needed so that the options could be looked at. Mr Harvey concurred and in acknowledging the uncertainty regarding the future of OCC sites suggested it was important that facilities were available throughout the district. Mr Harvey advised that details could be forwarded to officers for initial consideration.

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services confirmed that Ubico may be able to help with cost estimates but they had been reviewing how they priced contracts so there had been some delay.

**RESOLVED:** That progress with the Committee Work Programme for 2015/2016 be noted subject to the issues raised at the meeting.

#### 48 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 12 January 2016.

The Committee requested that the reports regarding Land Exchange with Witney Town Council and OCC Reduction in Grass Cutting Expenditure be referred for consideration, if practicable, prior to Cabinet.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Cabinet Work Programme be noted; and
- (b) That reports relating to Land Exchange with Witney Town Council and OCC Reduction in Grass Cutting expenditure be referred to the committee for consideration.

#### 49 WASTE SERVICE DESIGN – CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The report of the Head of Environment and Commercial Services providing an update on the responses received during the consultation on the Waste Service design for the new contract was received.

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services introduced the report and explained that a key factor in any contract was to improve recycling rates. The committee was reminded that agreement had been given to employ two temporary staff to engage with the public on this issue.

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services introduced Alison Leask, Environmental Services Manager and Sian Edwards, Waste and Recycling Officer, who had led on the initiative.

The Environmental Services Manager reported that the project had particularly targeted food recycling and areas with low recycling rates. It was explained that the two officers had visited specific events and individual properties to provide advice. An update sheet providing information about the initiative and showing comparative figures for recycling rates and household waste was circulated. This showed that recycling and food waste had increased notably during December/January compared with the previous year.

The Waste and Recycling Officer reported that the reduction in residual waste was to be welcomed and advice provided by officers had been well received by residents.

Mr Enright asked if there were any plans to target overall consumption and seek reductions in packaging. The Waste and Recycling Officer advised that re-use of materials was encouraged where possible. Mr Harvey expressed support for the project and indicated that the final figures regarding the impact on recycling rates would be interesting.

Mr Cotterill asked about trends in the figures in the district. The Waste and Recycling Officer indicated that there were differences throughout the area and it was important to concentrate on areas where recycling was low and targeted efforts may be needed.

Mr Howard asked if comparative figures for 2013/14 were available and if the recent mild weather was a contributory factor. The Environmental Services Manager advised that the outcomes would be looked at in detail and such issues considered to assess the effectiveness of the campaign.

Mr Fenton highlighted that whilst improved recycling rates were positive the overall waste stream had increased.

The Committee expressed thanks to all the officers involved on the success of the initiative.

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services then presented the report in detail and highlighted the consultation that had taken place to date. The committee noted the responses that had been received in respect of what residents wanted to see in the new waste and recycling service.

It was explained that the various options now needed to be fully costed and legal implications assessed to ensure compliance with waste regulations. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that a number of matters still needed consideration before the final options report could be presented.

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services reminded members that at this stage it was the contract content that was being considered and not who would be delivering the service as this was a decision for later in the year.

It was suggested that an additional meeting could be held to consider the final options report prior to consideration of the matter by Cabinet. The committee agreed that a meeting be held on Thursday 3 March 2016 commencing at 2.00pm.

Mr Cotterill asked about the procedure if a paid for green waste service was introduced. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that most authorities charged for an annual licence for each bin. Mr Cotterill asked about likely take up if a charge was introduced. In response it was acknowledged that there would probably be a reduction in

numbers as some only used the service occasionally and may not wish to pay for such limited use. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services clarified that the previous charged scheme in the district had been a pilot in specific areas with a limit on numbers so that was not a relevant comparator.

Mr Bishop advised that he had made his local parish councils aware of the charging option and they had all supported charging if this protected the service.

(Mr Dorward left the meeting at this juncture)

Mr Enright highlighted the problems for some householders if a wheelie bin was introduced for recycling due to the nature of the property or issues for particular residents such as ill health. Mr Enright further suggested that shared facilities for flats and similar developments needed to be considered.

Mr Harvey acknowledged the concern and suggested that a hybrid system may be needed whereby some properties had different receptacles. Mr Harvey reminded members that a tailored approach could increase contract costs and it was important to try and keep the collection systems as simple as possible.

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services concurred and advised that it may be possible to provide smaller bins for residual waste to households producing less waste. Mr Fenton questioned whether this would increase costs if different sized bins were being provided. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that costs should not be significant if it was part of one order and it was emphasised that the bins would be the same height so could be collected by one vehicle.

Mr Howard indicated that the current recycling system had been chosen on the basis that with kerbside sorting there was less cross contamination and therefore values were higher. Mr Harvey responded that the recycling market fluctuated greatly so was difficult to predict. Mr Harvey clarified that in the currently the contractor was responsible for the recyclates so the council was protected against variable prices.

Mr Howard asked if discounts could be applied if residents required more than one green waste bin. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that most councils charged the same fee for each bin. Mr Howard expressed the hope that the frequency of green waste collections would be greater if licences were introduced. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services confirmed that frequency of collection could be specified in the contract.

Mr Howard expressed some concern at fortnightly recycling collections as there may be issues around contamination if recycling was not properly cleaned when put in the bin. Mr Harvey emphasised that bins would be able to take an increased amount of waste compared to the recycling boxes. The Head of Environment and Commercial Services reminded members that the frequency of collections would be reflected in the contract costs.

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that residual waste is collected fortnightly, wheelie bins prevent entry by vermin so environmental concerns should not be an issue and the Council do encourage residents to rinse out recycling.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the present position be noted; and
- (b) That an additional meeting be held on Thursday 3 March 2016 to consider the final options report for the contract.

50 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

There were no member questions.

The meeting closed at 3.35pm

Chairman