

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
held in Committee Room 1, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxon  
at 2.00pm on Thursday 7 June 2018

### PRESENT

Councillors: A D Harvey (Chairman) R J M Bishop (Vice-Chairman), A H Al-Yousuf  
A S Coles, D A Cotterill, Ms M E Davies, P J G Dorward, Ms E P R Leffman, M D McBride,  
A H K Postan, C M Rylett and H E T St John

### Also in Attendance

D S T Enright and S J Good

#### 4 CHAIRMANS REMARKS

Mr Harvey welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Committee in the new municipal year.

#### 5 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence were received from Mr H B Eaglestone and Mrs E H N Fenton and the following resignations and temporary appointments were reported:-

D A Cotterill for Miss G R Hill

Ms M E Davies for Mrs L C Carter

H E T St John for E J Fenton

#### 6 MINUTES

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meetings held on 1 February and 16 May 2018 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

#### 7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

#### 8 PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

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

#### 9 ROADSIDE LITTER CLEARANCE

Mr Bob Lightfoot, Operations Manager for Ubico Limited, gave a brief presentation outlining the arrangements for roadside litter clearance in West Oxfordshire. A copy of his presentation is attached as an appendix to the original copy of these minutes.

In response to a question from Mr Cotterill, Mr Lightfoot advised that Ubico provided bags, litter pickers and personal protective equipment to those voluntary groups that conducted local litter picks. Ubico also collected and disposed of the litter collected. Arrangements were co-ordinated through the Council's Waste and Recycling Officer, Sian Edwards, and efforts were made to schedule collections to complement Ubico's timetable.

Mr Enright indicated that Witney Town Council would like to work more closely with Ubico and Mr Lightfoot confirmed that the Company would be happy to do so, ensuring that collections dovetailed with local initiatives such as the Britain in Bloom competition. Mr Harvey advised that he had made a similar request to the Council's Environmental and Regulatory Service with regard to flyposting.

Mr Dorward asked whether the Company had sufficient capacity to address the impact of further residential development in the District. Mr Lightfoot advised that, whilst changes had been made to maximise the efficiency of the service, the last major review of resources and increase in staffing was in 2014. The Company continually reviewed the need for growth, in consultation with the Councils Group Manager for Council Advisory Services and it was likely that some additional resources would be required in the near future.

Mr Dorward also asked whether Ubico or the County Council was responsible for clearing chippings left as a result of Highway pothole repair work. Mr Lightfoot advised that this had been a matter of some contention as the County Council's contractors failed to remove spoil after carrying out work. Ubico would clear this material but only as part of their scheduled rounds. Finally, Mr Dorward enquired about the procedure for relocating litter bins. Mr Lightfoot advised that usage was monitored and consideration given to re-siting any underutilised bins. However, any such relocation had to take account of the sensitivities of local residents.

Ms Leffman thanked Mr Lightfoot for his assistance and cooperation in the past. She expressed concern over litter thrown from vehicles between settlements and suggested that some form of signage could be erected to discourage littering. Ms Leffman also asked how Ubico dealt with leaf sweeping. In response Mr Lightfoot advised that there were health and safety issues to be addressed when working outside 30 mph speed limits as fatal accidents had occurred elsewhere in the Country. It was essential to ensure that safe working practices were put in place on high speed roads. Ubico did have appropriately trained staff and tried to litter pick between settlements as often as resources allowed. Such efforts generally took place in early winter or early spring as litter was difficult to collect during the growing season, as it was obscured by vegetation, particularly as the County Council only carried out two cuts a year.

Mr Lightfoot advised that there was a good volunteer group in Charlbury that carried out leaf sweeping. Leaves swept by hand could be sent for recycling whereas those recovered by mechanical means could not, due to contaminants present. Ubico assisted the group with equipment and collection and Mr Lightfoot praised the organiser and volunteers for their work on behalf of the community.

(Mr Enright left the meeting at this juncture)

Ms Leffman asked whether there was any best practice that could be shared by the Charlbury group to others within the District Mr Lightfoot confirmed that Ubico would be happy to help and advised that the success of a group often rested on the commitment of the local organiser.

Ms Davies asked whether Members could access the on-line database and it was **AGREED** that the link would be circulated.

Mr Coles expressed his thanks to Mr Lightfoot and his staff for their rapid response to his enquiries and agreed that voluntary groups made a valuable contribution throughout the District. He enquired whether there was any concern that the establishment of a drive-through coffee shop would result in an increase in littering. In response, Mr Lightfoot advised that any such concerns needed to be addressed by conditions imposed as part of the planning process. Whilst enforcement could be a potential issue, responsible companies were conscious of the damage negative publicity could do to their image.

Mr Postan noted that litter thrown from vehicles appeared to be a growing problem. Mr Lightfoot suggested that education in citizenship was crucial in this regard but, like all public sector organisations, schools were under greater pressure than in the past. Organisations such as the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership (since disestablished) had also contributed in this role but Mr Lightfoot suggested that there could still be an appetite for joint initiatives across Oxfordshire. Mr Postan also enquired whether recruitment and retention was an issue for Ubico. Mr Lightfoot acknowledged that recruitment could be challenging and, whilst Ubico paid a premium on rates in West Oxfordshire, it continued to be an issue.

The Head of Environment and Commercial Services advised that there were differing issues across the partner authorities. Cotswold district attracted employees from the Swindon area whilst there were fewer employment opportunities in the Forest of Dean.

Members thanked Mr Lightfoot and his team for their hard work and commitment.

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

## 10 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2017/2018

The Committee received the report of the Strategic Director seeking consideration of a work programme for the committee for 2017/2018.

### 10.1 Thames Water Flood Prevention and Infrastructure Issues

Mr Harvey advised that concerns had been raised with regard to the sewage treatment infrastructure in parts of the District. The age of certain pumping stations and deficiencies in the network resulted in problems in many areas. It was **AGREED** that representatives from Thames Water be invited to attend a future meeting to explain what steps were being taken to address these issues and Mr Harvey asked Members to give notice of any particular issues of concern.

Mr Postan indicated that Thames Water failed to provide answers or act on concerns raised and expressed concern over water quality in the river Swinbrook which appeared to be polluted. Thames Water had stated that the water quality was within limits. The river was some 40 miles long and was fed by other water courses and Mr Postan suggested that Thames Water should be asked to clarify what sampling had taken place and where it had been undertaken. They should also be asked to identify all points where effluent could discharge into the river or where chemical run off could take place. The Group Manager Council Advisory Services advised that this was a matter for the Environment Agency and suggested that representatives from that organisation be invited to attend jointly with representatives of Thames Water.

Mr Coles suggested that it would also be helpful to have a representative of the Planning Department present.

Mr St John questioned whether Thames Water and the Environment Agency would be happy to work together, Thames water having been fined for allowing sewage to enter the river network. The Group Manager Council Advisory Services confirmed that both organisations had worked together closely since the flooding in 2007. Mr St John expressed concern over the condition of local pumping stations and sewage treatment works and doubt that the existing infrastructure would be capable of supporting the additional levels of development envisaged in the emerging Local Plan.

Mr Cotterill confirmed that Thames Water and the Environment Agency worked together but noted that there were many potential sources of contamination. It was necessary to identify where these sources were and, whilst the Environment Agency took comprehensive measurements, they did not identify the locations at which they were taken.

Mr St John expressed concern over the use of tankers to remove sewage and suggested that Thames water should be asked how often this took place. Mr Bishop indicated that the same problems were evident in his Ward.

The Group Manager Council Advisory Services invited Members to notify Mrs Mandy Smith of any particular issues of concern at [Mandy.Smith@publicagroup.uk](mailto:Mandy.Smith@publicagroup.uk)

## 10.2 Implementation of Car Parking Strategy

The Group Manager Council Advisory Services explained that the Council's Car Parking Strategy incorporated two elements; the provision of additional capacity in key locations and the need to address a number of on street parking issues where traffic regulation orders were out of date or required revision.

Officers were aware of various on street issues and had identified locations where difficulties were evident. Whilst it fell to the County Council as Highway Authority to make or revise traffic regulation orders, West Oxfordshire had set aside funds for this purpose and was working jointly with the County. A review of on street parking in Corn Street and Church Green in Witney was underway and these areas had been prioritised in response to concerns over health and safety expressed by the Police.

There were particular issues in Corn Street resulting from the mix of retail and residential uses in the area, general levels of congestion and indiscriminate parking and the fact that it was on a major bus route. Public consultation was now underway, the results of which would be used to inform what, if any, action the Council should consider next. The consultation was the first step in a process of change as the Council sought to address the problems that had been identified. It was hoped that the information garnered would represent a balanced view of the conflicting interests in the vicinity.

In terms of additional capacity, there was a need for some 600 additional car parking spaces in Witney during the lifetime of the emerging Local Plan. Officers were working with the Universities Superannuation Scheme to assess the viability of providing a decked parking facility at the Woolgate.

Mr Postan stressed that the Council should maintain its commitment to the provision of free car parking and went on to request that consideration was given to the provision of a drop off point for community bus services as part of the viability assessment.

Mr McBride enquired as to the timescale of the assessment. The Group Manager advised that the Council was awaiting traffic modelling information from the County and it was anticipated that the review would take around four months.

Ms Davies noted that penalty notices had been issued to drivers in Long Hanborough for parking on highway verges and enquired if it would be possible to exercise discretion in enforcement in rural areas. The Group Manager explained that West Oxfordshire conducted on street parking enforcement under contract from the County Council and was obliged to enforce traffic regulations in a fair and consistent manner. Ms Davies also indicated that, whilst the strategy focused on the main pressure points, other parts of the District were also in need of additional car parking provision.

The Group Manager explained that the cost of provision was a significantly limiting factor when the Council did not charge for car parking. Without such revenue it was reliant upon other sources such as developer contributions to fund new parking provision.

Mr Rylett asked when Eynsham would be covered by the review. The Group Manager explained that this was not a District wide review but concentrated upon eight specific areas where particular problems had been identified. The next settlement to be considered was Woodstock and the Council was not able to conduct a continuing programme of traffic regulation order reviews as it did not have the funds to enable it to do so.

Mr Dorward questioned whether additional provision in Witney was necessary as the existing car parks were not fully utilised. The Group Manager explained that the Parking strategy was intended to address the future need generated by the additional development anticipated during the life of the emerging Local Plan.

Mr St John expressed some concern that the Union Street Car Park in Woodstock was used extensively by commuters who parked for long periods of time sterilising it for use by local residents. Mr Harvey indicated that the same allegations had been made in relation car parks in Witney and that survey work had shown them to be unfounded and purely anecdotal.

### 10.3 Waste and Recycling Contract

The Group Manager advised that whilst some difficulties had been encountered at the beginning of the contract, these had largely been resolved and performance was now satisfactory. Efforts were being made to improve performance further.

Ms Leffman asked for a review of the quantity of different materials that were collected for recycling as this varied from district to district across Oxfordshire. The Group Manager confirmed that information on tonnages could be provided. It was **AGREED** that this item be added to the Committee Work Programme.

### 10.4 Low Carbon and Environmental Plan

Mr Coles noted that the Low Carbon and Environmental Plan had not been reviewed for some time and it was **AGREED** that an update would be provided at the next meeting.

**RESOLVED:** That, subject to the amendments detailed above, the Committee's Work Programme for 2018/2019 be approved.

## 11 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Democratic Services, which gave members the opportunity to comment on the Cabinet Work Programme published on 15 May 2018.

**RESOLVED:** That the Cabinet Work Programme published on 15 May 2018 be noted.

## 12 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – YEAR END 2017/2018

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Leisure and Communities providing information on the Council's performance at the end of 2017/2018.

The Group Manager advised that, whilst there had been some difficulty at the start of the new contract (exacerbated by inclement weather during the early part of the year), by January the weekly number of missed household waste and recycling collections had been broadly comparable with the number being reported prior to the commencement of the new contract. However, numerous days of snow in December and March had a major impact on missed collections with each collection type; food, refuse, recycling and garden waste being counted as a missed collection.

Mr Dorward questioned why the volume of garden waste collected had reduced when a greater number of bins remained in use. The Group Manager explained that it had been expected that the introduction of a collection charge would result in a fall in volume. It was anticipated that the number of bins collected would fall from 35,000 to 22,500 but demand had exceeded expectations with around 30,000 residents subscribing to the service. The reduction in volume of green waste was also assessed in comparison with any increase in the volume of general waste, to establish whether garden waste was being diverted into the refuse stream.

Ms Leffman suggested that, at 27%, the cumulative volume of household waste sent for recycling appeared to be low and enquired how this figure compared with other authorities. The Group Manager undertook to provide comparative information and advised that recycling rates were monitored on an ongoing basis.

Mr Postan asked whether the additional revenue generated by the green waste service could be identified and consideration given as to how it could be applied. The Group Manager advised that income generated was contained within the Councils budgets and the service effectively operated at cost. An increase in service demand gave rise to a need for additional vehicles and staff hence the cost of service provision increased alongside income.

In response to questions from Mr Dorward, the Group Manager confirmed that collections lost as a result of vehicle breakdowns had been under the old contract. The new vehicles were standing up well but the Group Manager advised that the rural nature of the District meant that vehicles were worked harder than in urban areas. Costs were depreciated over a seven year period but not all vehicles remained serviceable that long. Vehicle breakdowns had an impact on service delivery and work was being undertaken in conjunction with Ubico to improve forward planning by reviewing the cost of ongoing maintenance against replacement of a vehicle.

Mr St John was under the impression that no waste now went to landfill. The Group Manager advised that the volume of waste sent to landfill was greatly reduced but that some material was unsuitable for use for the production of energy from waste. Information on tonnages and examples of unacceptable materials would be provided to the Committee.

Mr McBride noted that, whilst some producers accepted coffee pods for recycling, it was difficult to find a local collection point. The Group Manager undertook to investigate further options for recycling coffee pods.

Mr Coles enquired how much and what type of material was sent to produce energy from waste as incineration still had a negative environmental impact. He stressed the need to improve recycling rates in favour of incineration. The Group Manager undertook to provide the information requested.

Ms Leffman enquired as to the total number of fly tips reported and the Group Manager undertook to provide the information.

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

13 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 2018/2019 municipal year.

**RESOLVED:** That meetings of the committee for 2018/2019 commence at 2.00pm.

14 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Mr Harvey advised that Mr Eaglestone had enquired what steps could be taken to prevent unauthorised encampments on land at Deer Park, Witney. In response, the Group Manager advised that quotations had been sought for the construction of a ha-ha to prevent unauthorised vehicular access to the land. Mr St John questioned the efficacy of such measures against unlawful entry. The Group Manager advised that, whilst reasonable measures could be taken, it could not be guaranteed that unauthorised encampments would be prevented.

Mr Coles invited Members to support the RSPB by purchasing one of the badges available at reception.

The meeting closed at 3.45pm

Chairman