

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the
Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Held in the Committee Room 1 at 2.00 pm on **Thursday, 2 December 2021**

PRESENT

Councillors: Alaa Al-Yousuf (Chairman), Andrew Coles (Vice-Chair), Mike Cahill, Rupert Dent, Harry Eaglestone, Ted Fenton, Andy Goodwin, Liz Leffman, Martin McBride, Alex Postan, Carl Rylett, Harry St John and Ben Woodruff.

Officers: Laurence King (Shared Principal Engineer), Louise Oddy (Service Designer), Scott Williams (Business Manager - Commissioning Strategy), and Michelle Ouzman (Strategic Services).

Councillor Norman MacRae MBE was also present.

27 Minutes of Previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2021 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

28 Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Owen Collins.

29 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

30 Participation of the Public

There was no Participation of the Public.

31 Waste Bin Placement and Renewal Programme

The Chairman introduced the Contracts Manager, Scott Williams, and Service Designer, Louise Oddy.

Mr Williams addressed the Committee and shared a presentation on the Waste Bin Placement and Renewal Programme.

The Chairman thanked Mr Williams and invited Councillors to comment or ask questions of Mr Williams or Louise Oddy, remembering to focus on the Policy and not local issues.

Councillor Fenton asked who paid for the bins to be emptied, WODC or the Town Council. Mr Williams clarified that WODC was responsible for the adopted highway but if the land was owned by the Parish, or was the responsibility of the Parish, it would fall to them to maintain. However, he noted that as part of this service moving forward, WODC would offer this service to the Parish Council.

Councillor Goodwin enquired how long the gap was between removal of the old bin and installation of a new bin. He also queried if, where sites were busy, was there a plan to issue more recycling bins. Louise Oddy explained that at the beginning of the programme there had been a resource issue where ten members of staff were off sick with Covid on the same day. However, the programme got back on track and the gap between removal and replacement was usually two days.. As for the recycle bins, these were not being issued anymore as they were not properly used, and were mixed contaminated.

Councillor StJohn asked if the timetables for collection had changed, as some bins seem to be full. Louise Oddy confirmed that this would be reviewed at a meeting in January where all

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collections were going to be looked at. The review would include seasonal timetables where bins were fuller in summer and less so in winter, different routes would be planned and highlighted that Parish councils could request more frequent pickups. Mr Williams also confirmed that there was no decrease in resource, therefore Ubico had capacity, if there was a need to target bins more frequently.

Councillor McBride enquired about the consultation process and asked if there was a reduction in the number of bins at the Country Park. Louise Oddy explained that she and Councillor MacRae had visited the Country Park several times, and there was no reduction of bins. However, the location of the new bins may have been moved to convenient spots, where they were most needed. Councillor McBride also asked about bad aromas at key locations, particularly bus stops and play areas. Louise Oddy confirmed that only litter bins would be located at these areas, and dog waste bins would be located at positions where they were needed. At the January review meeting these issues were to be looked at especially in the summer months where key locations would have more frequent pickups.

Councillor Rylett commented that there were still recycle bins in situ and queried if there were some locations where recycling works. Mr Williams confirmed that once the replacement programme had been completed, there would be no recycle bins only the new ones, due to the contamination issues. However, there was no reason why they couldn't come back to looking at recycling at a later stage in the process, after the replacement programme was completed. Another tool being considered was electronic chips inside the bins that would read how full it was, resulting in targeted pick-ups.

Councillor Eaglestone raised concerns about the policy of the numbers of bins installed on newest sites, and how this was being managed, particularly the Windrush new estate. Mr Williams and Louise Oddy confirmed that at the moment the developers had to come to WODC and say how many bins they would like to install at the site. They were aware of the play park bin on that site was deemed to be too small, and were looking to replace this with a larger bin. Discussions were in place to improve the process to ensure that bin numbers were agreed with developers at the planning stage, so that no extra bins are installed putting a burden on the Council for pickups once the estate was completed and in use. Need to be strict with the developers to only put the number of bins agreed, there is a mechanism for a recourse to charge back, but it is better to stop this before it gets to that stage.

Councillor Postan also wanted to know about communication and information to the Parish Councils and the public, especially about one particular issue, the Country Parks. Louise Oddy confirmed the name of the Parish Council contact, and confirmed she met on site and walked the village only last week where there were these issues, and agreed quite swiftly where bins would be located. Ubico were starting the replacements today, and would complete tomorrow. Louise to share the emails with Councillor Postan.

Councillor Dent enquired if all bin locations were known. Officers confirmed that Ubico had a device that took a picture of which automatically populated their maps with the location.

Councillor Coles commented on the overflowing of bins near bus stops which he felt should be a priority and asked that his thanks be passed to the team because whenever he had reported an issue, this had been swiftly picked up and cleared.

Councillor Fenton wanted assurances about location of bins near to cafés and benches when, in the summer months, bad aromas and flies were a problem, perhaps accelerating the emptying of the bins, even if they were not full. Miss Oddy confirmed that bins would be strategically placed, for example not next to benches where people may want to sit and eat. She advised that consultation helped when making decisions on where bins were located.

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Councillor StJohn asked about the planning of two new housing estates where there were no plans for siting bins. Louise Oddy confirmed that this was not unusual, a bin would be placed at the playground but that typically, bins were not put on housing estates. Mr Williams referred to the Cabinet report which included details of a study by Herefordshire County Council where bins were taken away from housing estates, resulting in no increase in litter.

Mr Williams also stated that the kerbside recycling units within the District were working well and being used regularly.

Councillor Postan enquired if all Parish Councils were paying for their bin collections. Mr Williams confirmed there were two sets of figures that they had, and that at January's review they would be looking at these figures closely.

The Chairman thanked Miss Oddy and Mr Williams for attending and answering Members questions.

Resolved the presentation be noted.

32 Committee Work Programme 2020/2021

The Chairman addressed the meeting and provided an update on the Committee Work Programme as follows:

Review of the Section 19 Report and the Riparian Work – Item 1 & 2

The Chairman introduced Laurence King the Shared Lead Flood Risk Management Officer who addressed the Committee and gave a verbal update.

Mr King clarified that legally Section 19 report could not be delegated, and that an agreement between the Council and Oxford County Council (OCC) was unsigned. Frustration had grown locally regarding the floods, and the lack of a Section 19 report, however, WODC had decided to take the lead and put funding in place to commission the work. The report was due to be shared with Mr King, week commencing 13 December for final tweaking. It would then be submitted to Frank Wilson and Councillor MacRae for review. Following the review, the report would go to Scrutiny and finally formal Cabinet. To set expectations, the report was likely to be submitted to Cabinet in January 2022 at the earliest.

Councillor Coles commented that he had spoken with Mr Cotton and the County Council were keen that this report would be circulated as soon as possible.

Councillor Fenton asked for clarity as to whether producing Section 19 Reports was a County or District responsibility. In response, Mr King stated that OCC felt they had delegated the report responsibility to WODC, however, the legal agreement had not been signed.

Councillor Leffman noted there had been a lack of communication between OCC and WODC which had delayed action and this needed to be looked at further by the Committee to understand the process.

The Chairman agreed that the responsibility and processes between WODC and OCC regarding this issue needed to be added to the work programme.

Mr King was able to inform the Committee that OCC did used to have a team since the 2007 floods, which used to work closely with WODC, with regular meetings. The team leader had retired and OCC resources had been depleted hence why the agreement was never concluded and signed.

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The Chairman thanked Mr King and concluded that at the next meeting 3 February 2022 the report would have been issued and at that point the Committee could reflect on that and the process between WODC and OCC.

Councillor StJohn wanted to know why the Section 19 report had taken so long, and noted that no answer from Mr Cotton, even though he had been chased on several occasions.

Mr King reflected on the length of time the 2007 Section 19 report took to produce, it was over one year with the report not published until 2008. He believed the initial hold up was due to the unsigned agreement but he highlighted that the report was not an in depth technical report but a summary and did not unlock funding.

Councillor Postan reminded Members that it was not only Witney that flooding occurred in but also in Windrush and Shilton, affecting a great number of dwellings. If clearing the river upstream at these two points went ahead, the outcome could make it worse at Witney as more water flows down river.

Mr King agreed that clearing at these two points would just increase flood rise elsewhere, but also made it very clear that works should not be done on its own. All works should be properly managed following the recommendations in the report, surveys initially, before works, all of which would require funding.

Councillor Dent stated that there was a lack of clarity on responsibility, and felt this definitely needed reviewing.

The Chairman agreed that this would be on the Work Programme for the next Committee meeting 3 February 2022.

Mr King commented that there were still some negotiations to conclude on the OCC and WODC agreement, and it was not just a case of signing. The legal acts were there and were clear, but delegating authorities through such agency agreements was not so easy.

The Chairman noted that there were still clarifications to be made, and it was hoped that by the next meeting the Committee would be better informed.

Mrs Emberson-Wines from the Environment Agency (EA), had attended September's meeting, where a number of questions were raised. The answers to these questions were available for the 2 December meeting and the Chairman asked if there were any questions from the Committee Members.

In relation to Question 2, Councillor St John asked why the de-silting could not be done at the Witney bridge location. He advised that there were two channels that flowed under the bridge and the nearest to the south bank was where he thought the main issues were.

Mr King said he had visited this location with the EA's Operations Manager, and understood there was not the support or funding. The EA thought spot de-silting did not reap long term benefits and were not in favour, even as a repeated action.

Councillor Postan stated that he thought some locals were willing to fund private de-silting and Mr King informed the Committee that any work on the river must have formal consent from the EA.

Ubico – The Chairman confirmed that Ubico would be in attendance at the next meeting to give a presentation to the Committee, on future business plans.

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Air Quality – Councillor MacRae confirmed that there was a link now on the WODC Website. Councillor Leffman requested if the Committee could be updated on the latest information and the Chairman suggested that the relevant officers be invited to the 3 February meeting for an update.

The Chairman commented on the Climate Action Working Group who had met earlier that day and advised that the presentations would be circulated.

The Local Nature Partnership – The Chairman announced that this was already on the Climate Action Working Group's radar as it came under Bio-Diversity and Land Management. Therefore, to avoid duplication, this item would be removed from the work programme. In addition, the Committee should have received an invitation from Eventbrite portal to a webinar on Tuesday 7 December 2021, with Wild Oxfordshire to talk about their work, with WODC on nature recovery. The Chairman urged Councillors to check their emails for the invite.

Councillor Coles stated he was disappointed with the answers he received, now we are in a second year of delay. He was going to take it up with Environment Agency again, but wanted it noted.

33 Cabinet Work Programme

Resolved that the report be noted.

34 Members' Questions

Councillor Fenton raised the issue of late bin collections in Church Street, Bampton with seven out of twelve collections being late. He asked if communication, such as a leaflet drop, could be passed to residents to advise them of the situation and the reasons for lateness.

In response, Councillor MacRae updated the Committee advising that this was a result of faulty vehicles. This had been further compounded by a delay in sourcing spare parts, a situation which was affecting the whole country. He assured Members that the website was being updated daily regarding any collection issues.

Councillor Postan advised that having heard from Parish Council, the Councils Information Service was working really well.

Councillor McBride advised that where he lived neighbours shared information and bins so that all rubbish was collected - , one neighbour may have less collection one week so offered the space in the bin to other neighbours, which worked well.

The Meeting closed at 3.12 pm

CHAIRMAN