

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **Climate & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Held in the Council Chamber, Woodgreen, Witney, OX28 1NB at 2.00 pm on **Thursday, 29 September 2022**

PRESENT

Councillors: Norman MacRae MBE (Chairman), Charlie Maynard (Vice-Chair), Alaa Al-Yousuf, Hugo Ashton, Michael Brooker, Andrew Coles, David Cooper (to item 14), Harry Eaglestone (to item 14), Andy Goodwin, Gill Hill, David Jackson, Natalie King, Martin McBride (to item 16), Rosie Pearson, Alaric Smith and Ruth Smith.

Also present: Councillors Lidia Arciszewska (Cabinet Member for Environment), Dan Levy (Cabinet Member for Finance), Andrew Prosser (Cabinet Member for Climate Change) and Harry St John.

Officers: Lily Paulson (Climate Change Officer), Anne Learmonth and Janet Eustace (Democratic Services).

Others present: Beth Boughton and Marc Osman (Ubico). Richard Aylard (Thames Water)

14 Minutes of Previous Meeting

In the minutes held on the 23 June 2022, were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

15 Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ted Fenton. Councillor Gill Hill substituted for Councillor Fenton.

16 Chairs Announcements

The Chair, Councillor Norman MacRae welcomed members, officers, speakers to the meeting. He said that the timed agenda was to act as a guide. He reminded members that the role of the Committee was to scrutinise the decisions of and to make recommendations to Cabinet. He noted that this was not the forum for Councillors to raise casework.

17 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

18 Participation of the Public

The Chair welcomed Kay Jerrerd to the meeting. Ms Jerrerd representing the Witney Flood Mitigation Group (WFMG), addressed the Committee. A copy of the script is attached to these minutes.

The Chair thanked Ms Jerrerd for her participation and congratulated her on securing grants.

19 Annual Ubico Update

The Committee received a presentation from Beth Boughton and Marc Osman of Ubico on the Ubico Annual Update. The presentation was circulated to all Councillors after the meeting.

In discussion Councillors asked for clarification on the number of new bins being ordered each year. Bill Oddy, the Group Manager for Commercial Development, advised that about 1,000 replacement bins had been requested in the District during the year split pretty equally between new, lost and damaged. There had been a time lag in the delivery of new bins but this

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was now down to 6.2 days. There had been some delays in collections from communal bins due to incorrect plotting but this was now being corrected.

Ms Boughton reported that the Incab system had now been installed in all vehicles. With the support of the digital team, drivers were now all using Incab which had improved the service.

Several Councillors expressed concerns raised by residents that waste which they had separated had been mixed together in a single vehicle. Ms Boughton assured Councillors that this was not happening. Waste was checked at the depot and no evidence had been found of mixed waste. Mr Oddy explained the two types of collection; the twin stream which is used in West Oxfordshire and kerb side which is used in other partner Councils. Kerb side produces a higher level of recycling but costs more to deliver. There is to be a detailed review of both systems over the coming months in the run up to re-letting the waste collection contract in April 2024.

Ms Boughton explained that there was no cross subsidy between the partner authorities and that Ubico operates as a not for profit organisation. Contract costs would increase as fuel prices rise. She said that the s.151 Officer held financial reports and copies could be made available to Councillors on request. It was noted that the vehicles belong to the Council and that replacement vehicles would have a 12 month lead in time and would cost between £5 and £6 million if diesel vehicles are purchased or circa £8m for electric vehicles.

Ms Boughton confirmed that the Depot facilities had been updated in 2017 and were good although agreed that it might be time to refurbish them with a view to improving staff facilities and also providing an electronic link between the weighbridge and the office.

The Chair thanked Ms Boughton and Mr Osman for their report and asked that the Committee's thanks be passed on to the whole Ubico team.

Resolved that the Committee note the report.

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Carbon Action Plan - Update on One Project

Hannah Keyon, the new Climate Change Manager introduced herself and invited Lily Poulson to update the Committee on the Carterton Leisure Centre decarbonisation project.

Lily Paulson (Climate Change Officer) said that completion of the decarbonisation project at Carterton under the current the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) funding round had proved unviable. Discussions with the distribution network operator (DNO) SSEN and a number of independent DNOs confirmed that the timeframes to deliver a new substation (which is required as part of the decarbonisation works for the building) would mean that the project would not be completed before the 31 March 2023 deadline. An application was being prepared for the next round of PSDS funding which was expected to open for applications in October 2022.

Consideration had been given to moving the existing grant funding to a project in Witney but the timing was too tight.

Mr Oddy asked the Climate Change Officer about the possible utility cost revenue savings arising from the Carterton project and whether a business case had been carried out for the council to fund a decarbonisation project. The Climate Change Officer was unaware of the savings and it was agreed that these figures should come to the next meeting.

The Committee recorded its thanks to Vanessa Scott, Climate Change Manager, who had now left the Council.

Resolved that the Committee note the update.

Councillor David Cooper left the meeting at 3.44 pm.

Councillor Eaglestone left the meeting at 3.50pm

21 Flood and Thames Water Update

The Committee received a presentation from Richard Aylard of Thames Water. A copy of the presentation was circulated to all Councillors after the meeting.

In discussion Councillors expressed concern about the lack of capacity particularly with the new large developments underway. Mr Aylard explained that the main source of the problem was surface water getting into the foul water system. He added that finances were tight. Ofwat had taken £2 billion from the current 5 year plan. Witney needed £50m of investment. He accepted that there problems further up the Windrush but said it was for the Environment Agency (EA) to decide where phosphorus strippers were sited but that nitrates presented a bigger problem. Thames Water monitor the quality as it leaves the treatment works but the EA is responsible thereafter.

Mr Aylard described the work underway at Clanfield. He explained the different population figures for Bampton was a result of Thames Water using different figures for the annual return and for generating capacity. He agreed to enter into discussions with the Council on this issue.

The Chair thanked Mr Aylard for his presentation.

The Committee received an update on the Environment Agency's actions from Phil Martin (Group Manager - Business Support) and Laurence King (Shared Principal Engineer). Mr Martin referred to the response from the Environment Agency (EA) which had been circulated to Councillors. He suggested going back to the EA asking for further information on the number of permits issued that has been declining year on year, the relatively low level of expenditure on maintenance for 2023/24 and clarification on the water courses that will be included in the proposed modelling exercise.

Mr Martin also highlighted to the Committee that whilst the Council had a specific action in the S19 Flood Report regarding the installation of Gauge boards from Woodford Mill through to Langel Common, it might be worth looking at building in additional resilience to the electronic gauge boards, which are part of the EA's early warning system, at Worsham as the failure of the existing system compromised the time residents had to prepare for the flood during Christmas 2020. Cllr Cole said that that the existing boards on bridge street were of valued by residents and there was a lot of data collected as a result of having them so advocated Officers look at the feasibility of having both. Mr Martin said he would bring back costings information and an indications as to whether the EA would be prepared to meet the costs to the next meeting.

It was agreed that officers should raise concerns with Oxfordshire County Council about the bridge in Bridge Street where there is no flow on the northern channel.

The Committee **resolved** to ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary Of State for the Environment calling on him to:

- Ensure the Environment Agency is fully funded to carry out flood protection and 'river cleanliness' works
- Ensure legislation is light enough to bring forward successful prosecutions of breaches to river pollution
- Alter Planning Legislation to make the Water Authorities statutory consultees in planning applications

Resolved that the Committee note the update.

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22 Service Performance Report - Quarter I

Bill Oddy (Group Manager - Commercial Development) introduced this item. He said that the number of missed bins were dropping as was the amount of fly tipping. He undertook to investigate whether anyone had yet been appointed to investigate the sources of fly tipping. Considerable effort had gone into transforming the business waste service and the service now looks set to be cost neutral in 2022/23.

There was discussion around the new system of charging Town and Parish Councils to empty their litter bins. There were concerns about the way the new charges had been communicated. Mr Oddy said that the new system was fair and transparent with Councils being given good notice of the new charges that would be introduced in April 2023. The changes would generate a modest increase in income next year but all this would go back into providing the street cleansing service.

Resolved that the Committee note the 2022/23 Q1 service performance

Councillor McBride left the meeting at 4.45 pm

23 Committee Work Programme

The Chair introduced this item providing the Committee with an updated Work Programme for 2022/23.

Mr Oddy advised that the renewal of the waste contract was a major item of work. He undertook to consider circulating the papers as far in advance of the December meeting as possible to give time for consideration. He said there might be a case for briefing all members on this item.

Councillor R Smith asked whether it would be possible to widen the energy agenda to include the creation of home and community energy generation. Councillor Prosser (Cabinet Member for Climate Change) undertook to consider this.

It was agreed that the Flood agenda should look at what WODC is doing as a riparian owner. Mr Oddy suggested that officers might look at this as part of a wider exercise to identify riparian owners.

It was noted that more information was awaited on the secondary legislation following the 2021 Environment Act.

Resolved that the Committee note the Work Programme and the suggestions listed above.

24 Cabinet Work Programme

The Chair introduced this item setting out the Cabinet Work Programme 2022/23.

Councillor R Smith asked whether the Review of Grant Schemes to be taken to the November Cabinet included grants for green measures and energy conservation. She was asked to take this up with the relevant Cabinet Member.

Resolved that the Committee note the Cabinet Work Programme.

The Meeting closed at 5.00pm

CHAIRMAN