

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, 23 March 2023**

PRESENT

Councillors: Charlie Maynard (Vice-Chair), Alaa Al-Yousuf, Michael Brooker, Harry Eaglestone, Ted Fenton, Andy Goodwin, Natalie King, Rosie Pearson, Alaric Smith, Ruth Smith, Colin Dingwall and Gill Hill.

Officers: Bill Oddy (Assistant Director, Commercial Development), Phil Martin (Assistant Director, Business Services), Mandy Fathers (Business Manager, Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service), Michelle Ouzman (Democratic Services Officer), and Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer).

Other Councillors in attendance: Lidia Arciszewska and Andrew Prosser.

38 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 8 December 2022, were approved by the Committee and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

39 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Norman MacRae MBE, Ted Fenton, Hugo Ashton, Andrew Coles, David Cooper, and Martin McBride.

Councillor Gill Hill substituted for Councillor Norman MacRae MBE, Councillor Colin Dingwall substituted for Councillor Ted Fenton, and Councillor Nick Leverton substituted for Councillor Martin McBride.

Councillor Charlie Maynard chaired the Committee, as Councillor Norman MacRae had sent his apologies.

40 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Members.

41 Participation of the Public

There was no public participation at the meeting.

42 Flood Risk Management Update

Phil Martin, Assistant Director for Business Services, introduced the Flood Risk Management Service Review Report, additionally stating that due to the date of the Committee meeting being delayed, the report had previously been approved by Executive, and the additional funding was built into the 2023-24 Budget.

The Assistant Director provided a general update on flood related activities that Council had been involved with, which included an update on the flood warden pilot scheme, set up with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and Witney Town Council. The Assistant Director further updated on the outcome of discussions with the Environment Agency (EA) and Witney Flood Mitigation Group (WFMG) regarding the installation of both an electronic sensor to help improve the resilience of the current EA flood warning system, and installation of additional physical gauge boards. The Assistant Director outlined the work of an informal

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working group led by the Executive Member for the Environment, which had met with Thames Water (TW) over a number of months, focusing on the current capacity of local Sewage treatment works, and how Thames Water calculates volumes and flows to help process and work on the development of a Grampian condition.

The Committee were pleased to learn of the additional resource, and suggested that the following should be added to the job description of the Senior Flood Engineer role:

- Maintenance and inspection of water quality and aquatic life;
- Liaison with all stakeholders and partnerships.

Members were also keen for WODC to inform EA, TW and other parties what standard is expected from them, and to actively monitor their performance where possible. It was also suggested that once the team had recruited the additional posts, information on activities such as gully clearance and OCC highways would be made available & sign posted to.

The Vice-Chair expanded on some of the points The Assistant Director had covered, referencing a summary document that had been devised, to be shared with the Committee at the next meeting.

The Assistant Director confirmed that the letter that the Committee requested to be written to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs had been replied to, and a copy of the reply was shared with the Councillors of the Committee.

In the wider debate, Councillors reflected on the following:

- Lengthy process for riparian owners to attain permits;
- WODC control of smaller water courses;
- Parish and Town Councils experiencing lengthy process for permits;
- Ownership of a map identifying where problems exist;
- TW not a statutory consultee on planning applications but required to respond due to potential adverse impacts on the ultimate decision;
- How treatment processes work;
- Resource restraints on TW and EA.

The Vice-Chair announced that the agency agreement with the Lead Local Flood Authority (OCC) would be signed after the meeting.

The Assistant Director agreed to update the Committee on the progress of the gauge boards to the next meeting.

The Committee considered the outcomes of the reviews within the report.

Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Agree the recommendations within the report.

43 Fly Tipping Enforcement Update

Mandy Fathers, Business Manager for Environmental, Welfare and Revenues, introduced a presentation on Fly-Tipping, which covered the following topics:

- Fly-tipping data;
- Enforcement action taken;

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- Mapping and reporting of Fly-Tipping;
- Achievements;
- Initiatives.

The Business Manager introduced two members of her Team to the Committee. Phil Measures, the Service Leader for Environmental Health, and the newly appointed Environmental Crime Officer, Jack Graham.

Jack Graham informed the Committee that he would grow his connections and communications with Councillors, to help keep Communities cleaner, and be more proactive with environmental crime.

Councillor Nick Leverton highlighted high costs of waste collections, yet the Council had increased prices at wastes sites, which deterred people from using them.

Jack Graham agreed that, on many occasions, fly-tipping is premeditated and planned.

The Service Leader explained that fixed penalties are set, but the Council were looking at scope for changing payment scales and discounts for early payments, and that these would be reviewed by Council.

Councillor Nick Leverton suggested that both the District and County Councils tackle the issues together.

The Committee discussed the following topics with the Enforcement Team:

- Court prosecutions;
- Fixed penalty notices;
- Resource preparing evidence for case files;
- Cotswolds District Council trial of CCTV use;
- Framework option for enforcement policies;
- Waste licences;
- Repeat fly tipping offences;
- Residents advice for employing Waste Disposal Officers;
- Team working with ICT on the GIS mapping system;
- Signage on hotspots for fly tipping;
- Public awareness initiative and education;
- Privacy risk assessment process.

The Chair and Members thanked Mandy Fathers and her Team for coming to present to the Committee.

Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Note the presentation.

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44 Swift Nesting Sites Motion

Swift Nesting Sites – Motion to Council Proposed by Councillor Harry St. John, Seconded by Councillor Colin Dingwall.

Motion:

“Council is pleased to note that, to encourage nesting by swifts, swift brick planning conditions are already imposed as a matter of course on applications where the size and aspect of the building is appropriate. Council wishes to increase the availability of suitable nesting sites on domestic and commercial buildings for a bird that is a quintessential part of our spring and summer months and whose numbers have been declining rapidly for various reasons.”

The Committee agreed that the Motion that was proposed was supported, therefore recommended it should be referred back to the Executive to be included in the Local Plan review. The Committee also discussed and agreed that the motion should also be referred to Officers to see if it could be included in the Sustainability Checklist, looking at a universal brick that allows more than swift’s bird’s access.

Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Recommend to Executive that motion is included in the Local Plan review;
2. Recommend to Officers that the motion should be looked into to ascertain if it could be included in the Sustainability Checklist;
3. Recommend that a universal brick size should be explored to allow other birds access.

Councillor Harry Eaglestone left at 15:40.

45 Development Grampian Conditions

Development Grampian Conditions – Motion to Council Proposed by Councillor. Harry St. John, Seconded by Councillor Richard Langridge.

Motion:

“This Council will seek to impose suitable ‘Grampian’ conditions on any development where the connection of the new dwellings or commercial space would impose additional flows of sewage and/or surface water into the local foul or surface water drainage systems, where these are unable to cope due to lack of adequate existing capacity.

This has been evidenced by pipe bursts, flooding, regular blockages and resultant flooding or surcharging either from main pipes, or at the eventual Sewage Treatment Works (STWs) serving the appropriate local system. When a system is upgraded to cope with the additional flows the development generates, then the development can proceed in accordance with the Local Plan. In particular the Council is concerned about schemes where surface water from a new development is proposed to be connected directly to a foul sewer unless the foul system has the capacity to treat the additional flows without storm events occurring at STWs – i.e. release of untreated sewage into the river system due to excess surface water in the system.

Council wishes to reduce/minimise the risk of untreated foul water being released onto land, into residents’ property and into our river systems where Council Policy is to improve water quality, minimise pollution and enhance our natural environment - where necessary through suitable controls.”

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The Committee agreed that the Motion that was proposed was supported, and recommended it should be referred back to the Executive to be included in the Local Plan review. In debate, Councillors reflected on the following:

- Replacement of old pipes;
- New builds, scrutinising the work of developers;
- Housing controls and monitoring of;
- Certification;
- Sewage and surface water capacity;
- Age of drains;
- TW reality of measurements;
- Housing retro-fits;
- Heating systems, Geo thermal, solar panels, wind farms.

Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Recommend to Executive that motion is included in the Local Plan review.

46 Committee Work Programme

The Chair introduced an updated Work Programme for 2022/23.

Councillors requested the following items to be added to the work programme:

- Action Plan for Flood Management;
- Overview of new Grant Scheme;
- Overview of Local Plan.

Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Note the Committee Work Programme.

47 Executive Work Programme

The Chair introduced the Executive Work Programme.

Councillor Dingwall and Councillor Brooker had stated that the Salt Cross Area Project was not proposed to have solar panels installed

Councillor Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Change, informed the Committee that other options were being investigated.

Councillor Dingwall suggested looking at geo thermal energy solutions.

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Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Invite Chris Hargreaves to the next Committee meeting to give an overview of the local plan;
2. Invite Andy Barge to the next Committee meeting to give the Committee an overview of the Grants Scheme.

The Meeting closed at 4.17 pm

CHAIR