

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Environment and Communities Committee** held on Wednesday, 7th July, 2021 at The Ballroom, Sandbach Town Hall, High Street, Sandbach, CW11 1AX

PRESENT

Councillor M Warren (Chair)
Councillor Q Abel (Vice-Chair)

Councillors M Benson, J Bratherton, J Buckley, L Crane, T Dean, A Farrall, P Groves, C Leach, J Nicholas, K Parkinson and A Critchley

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Paul Bayley- Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services
Sarah Allwood- Senior Environmental Health Officer
Tom Evans- Neighbourhood Planning Manager
Laura Woodrow-Hirst- Anti-Social Behaviour and Community Enforcement Team Leader
Jo Wilcox- Head of Financial Management
James Thomas- Senior Planning & Highways Solicitor
Helen Davies- Democratic Services

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Les Gilbert (Councillor Kate Parkinson was substituting) and Councillor Jonathan Parry (Councillor Anthony Critchley was substituting).

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

Alsager Town Councillor Sue Helliwell attended the meeting and asked a question in relation to agenda item 4, Waste and Recycling Services- Implications of the Environment Act.

Sue noted that electric waste vehicles were shown to be a cleaner and quieter alternative to traditional bin collection vehicles. She hoped that Cheshire East Council would one day have its own fleet of electric waste vehicles.

Sue asked if the Council would consider weekly collection for food, clothes, home textiles and small electrical appliances and batteries. She noted that the Council operated a bulky waste collection and charges for that service and questioned if it would consider operating without charge to residents to discourage instances of flytipping.

The Chair, Councillor Mick Warren, responded to these three points. He advised

that ANSA Environmental Services was working with the Council's Carbon Reduction Team to map carbon reduction for waste collection vehicles. Trials had shown that because of the distances involved on the collection routes, battery life is not sufficient enough yet to be able to roll this technology out at this time but there was an ambition for electric waste vehicles to become part of the fleet by 2025 once battery technology improved.

In the meantime the Council and partners were utilising smaller electric vehicles and would continue to convert the live fleet to become electric. The Council had researched greener alternatives for waste vehicles such as green hydrogen to deliver carbon savings from fleet with the initial hydrogen dual fuel vehicles coming on line later this month.

The implications of the Environment Bill were part of the report the Committee were considering today, and outlined potential changes that included weekly food waste collections. The Council will be awaiting the final requirements of the Bill to consider changes as well as opportunities to help reduce waste through reuse and recycling.

Finally the Chair advised there was no clear link to show that charging for bulky waste correlated with flytipping and was not something the Council was considering at present. The current charges help offset the cost to the service costs and the Cheshire East bulky waste collection helped to support St. Pauls Centre in Crewe, a third sector organisation who use furniture and electrical items collected for social benefit locally.

4 WASTE AND RECYCLING SERVICES- IMPLICATIONS OF THE ENVIRONMENT ACT

Paul Bayley introduced the item, he advised the Committee that the report provided an overview of the potential changes to waste and recycling services within the borough, as a result of the Environmental Bill currently progressing through Parliament.

Based on proposals included within a consultation undertaken by Government, there could be mandatory changes for all Local Authorities from 2023. If these changes were mandated there could be a significant cost to the Council, although, Government have advised that any new burdens would be funded centrally.

There was some debate by the Committee that included:

- Many Local Authorities had strongly objected to the changes given the already incurred expense in setting up current waste and recycling services;
- Waste management companies had objected to the proposals and fed into the consultation;
- The question of Extended Producer Responsibility fund being able to cover the cost of the changes;
- Single use rubbish;
- The possibility of skip days, particularly in rural areas, or for those who were vulnerable or did not drive; and
- The current battery life for electric vehicles was insufficient.

The Committee agreed that any consultation documentation should be in plain English and easy to access for all residents.

It was noted the issue of bulky waste had been raised during public speaking, And that some of the Household Waste and Recycling Centres had closed down. The question of the council being able to collect small items to be recycled from community venues on designated days was discussed, Paul Bayley advised community recycling would be an idea for consideration as part of the waste and recycling changes.

It was noted the Government Consultation was scheduled from April-July 2021, the question was raised as to when this would become available.

RESOLVED: That:

- a) authority be delegated to the Head of Environmental Services to consult on potential service changes, if required by requirements of the final form of Environment bill once it passes into legislation; and
- b) the results of the Government Consultation be shared with this Committee when available.

5 CONTAMINATED LAND STRATEGY

Paul Bayley introduced the item to the Committee, he advised the Committee that Cheshire East Council had adopted the current Contaminated Land Strategy in 2015, and following a full review and consultation exercise, this was an updated Strategy for approval. Sarah Allwood attended the meeting to address any questions.

The Committee agreed the Strategy was fit for purpose, but noted the some of the completion dates within the action plan were not until another 2 years, and questioned if this was an indication that the work was given due prioritisation and attention.

Sarah Allwood provided assurance that the work was receiving appropriate prioritisation. She advised that the work involved reviewing 4,550 sites and the forecast dates for completion reflected the scale of the work involved.

RESOLVED:

That the Environment and Communities Committee approve the Contaminated Land Strategy.

6 SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE (SUDS) SPD

Paul Bayley introduced the item to the Committee, Tom Evans attended the meeting to address any questions.

The Committee described the document as being an excellent piece of work. There was some discussion on the application of the document and the ability to enforce it in relation to planning applications. Concerns were raised about the

amount of new developments being built across the borough and the increased incidents of flooding.

Tom addressed some of the points raised by the Committee, he advised that the document was produced in collaboration with experts on flooding and design in the Environmental Policy Team and the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). The document was a development tool with lots of guidance about specific measures and a set of criteria.

The impacts of Climate Change meant that the environment was getting hotter and wetter with more intense weather. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) slowed down water to hold it on land for longer, and released it more slowly into the wider drainage network.

Tom advised there were two opportunities for consultation over a minimum of four weeks. The Council were keen to hear feedback from developers as key stakeholders alongside residents.

The second draft of the Strategic Planning Document would be presented to the Strategic Planning Board in their consultation and advisory role on proposed planning policy.

RESOLVED: That:

- a) the draft SUDS Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix A) for four weeks of public consultation be approved;
- b) the associated Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report ("SEA") (Appendix B) be published; and
- c) the associated Equalities Impact Assessment Screening Report ("EQIA") (Appendix C) be published.

7 ENFORCEMENT POLICY- ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

Paul Bayley introduced the item to the Committee, Laura Woodrow-Hirst, attended the meeting to address any questions raised.

The Committee raised three points addressed below:

1) Dog fouling- this was an issue across the borough, any issues now had to be reported by email or phone and there was concern other Members and Town and Parish Councils were not aware of that.

Answer: Currently patrols did visit the areas of the borough with the biggest dog fouling issues and advertising was being rolled out to promote how to report, this could be extended to include Ward Members to get direct messages to wards. All signage had the website details in relation to public space protection orders.

2) The retention time of the footage from body-worn cameras was 31 days, was this long enough if a person who was filmed wanted to access that data?

Answer: The 31 days retention time was the basic compliance time for data protection if no further action was needed. There was an expectation that complaints would be received within the 31 days and from the point of complaint

that footage would be isolated. There could be a review of this retention period if complaints were being made outside of 31 days.

3) Was there a definition of Anti-Social Behaviour?

Answer: There was no firm definition, broadly it was any type of harassment, alarm or distress or having a detrimental impact on the community, although the policy includes a non-exhaustive list.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed policies for Community Enforcement, Anti-Social Behaviour Enforcement, and Body Worn Camera as set out in appendices 1-3 be approved.

8 DELEGATION OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING DECISION

Paul Bayley introduced the item to the Committee, he advised that under the previous governance arrangements, this function would have been within the responsibilities of the Portfolio Holder. Following the transition to the Committee System of decision-making, it is recommended this is delegated for the reasons set out in the report.

The Committee accepted the recommendations as per the officers report.

RESOLVED:

That the following decisions, related to the neighbourhood plan process, be delegated to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Chair of the Environment and Communities Committee:

- 1) Decisions to designate a neighbourhood area
- 2) Decisions to designate a neighbourhood forum
- 3) Decisions to consider whether plan proposals meet the requirements of Schedule 4B, paragraph 6(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- 4) Decisions on Examiners Recommendations (including in regard to modification proposals)
- 5) Decisions on plan proposals (including in regard to modification plan proposals)
- 6) Decisions on proposals to correct errors or make minor non material amendments to made neighbourhood plans.

9 DELEGATION OF STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING

Paul Bayley introduced the item to the Committee, he advised, as with the previous agenda item, under the previous governance arrangements, this function would have been within the responsibilities of the Portfolio Holder. Given the new Committee System of decision-making, it was recommended that these decisions be delegated for the reasons set out in the report.

The Committee raised one concern that the input of the Ward Member could be diluted with the proposed approach especially if they were not present at the decision making. The Committee noted it was important that names and events of the area were taken into account. The Head of Planning and Chair of this Committee might have no local knowledge.

Paul gave reassurances to the Committee that under the previous governance arrangements, proposals would be consulted with both the Ward Member and the Town and Parish Council, via correspondence, then through to the portfolio holder this part of the process would not change.

RESOLVED:

That decisions for street naming and numbering be delegated to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Chair of the Environment Communities Committee and relevant Ward Councillors.

10 ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES BUDGET 2021/22

Jo Wilcox attended the meeting and introduced the report and addressed any questions raised by the Committee.

The Committee raised a couple of points:

- The Knutsford Leisure Centre was not showing within the report;
- Could consultation meetings in the north and south be scheduled to accommodate Members who work full time.

Paul Bayley advised that funding for Knutsford Leisure Centre was being held on the Capital addendum until the detailed business case was approved.

RESOLVED: That:

- a) the decision of the Finance Sub-Committee to allocate the approved capital and revenue budgets, related policy proposals and earmarked reserves to the Environment and Communities Committee, as set out in Appendix A;
- b) the MTFS timelines, as set out in paragraphs 5.9 – 5.12; and
- c) the supplementary estimates and virements as set out in Appendix B be noted

11 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its Work Programme. Paul Bayley advised the committee that this Work Programme was indicative from officers' perspectives and would be added to as business progressed.

The Committee had some debate that included:

- How Members could add items to the Work Programme;
- Some concern about the number of items for the September meeting; and
- That Chapter three of the Council's Constitution still related to Cabinet and Scrutiny system and needed to be addressed.

The Chair advised that he was meeting with the Head of Democratic Services and Governance and the Monitoring Officer next week to discuss the requirements of adding to the Work Programme in his capacity as a Chair of the Constitution Working Group.

Additionally, he asked that if any Members of the Committee had any requirements for the pre-brief meeting in September, to let him know directly.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be received and noted.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 12.13 pm

Councillor M Warren (Chair)