

Minutes

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 8 March 2022



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Members present

Councillor Nikki Manterfield (Chairman)
Councillor Gloria Johnson (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Phil Dilks
Councillor Dean Ward
Councillor Hannah Westropp

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Robert Reid (Cabinet Member for Housing and Property)
Councillor Mark Whittington (Cabinet Member for Waste Services)

Officers

Richard Wyles (Chief Finance Officer)
Paul Stokes (Head of Corporate Operations)
Serena Brown (Sustainability and Climate Change Officer)
Amy Pryde (Democratic Services Officer)

44. Comments from Members of the public

There were none.

45. Apologies for absence

No apologies for absence were received.

46. Disclosure of Interests

Councillor Ashley Baxter declared that he had attended meetings of 'Friends of Jubilee Park'.

47. Action Notes from the meeting held on 30 November 2021

One Member requested that further information be added to the Action Notes from the previous meeting regarding the item relating to Green Flag Status parks.

The Democratic Officer confirmed that the information would be added, and the Member would be notified once completed. The Action Notes were deferred to the next meeting for approval.

48. Updates from the previous meeting

One Member raised a query regarding an update in relation to Flooding.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property confirmed that work had been undertaken with Lincolnshire County Council to compromise an agreement. Further work had been undergoing with the Emergency Planning & Health and Safety Lead on flash floods.

It was reported that each Parish in South Kesteven had been contacted regarding communications to the Council on the officers responsible for these situations. It was noted that not all Parish's had responded to the Council; 9 Parish's had taken up the initiative of storing 200 sandbags. Each Parish had also received an emergency contact update protocol.

Another query was raised on progress relating to a new recycling centre to serve Stamford and the Deepings.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property reported that there were currently no plans for a new recycling centre to serve Stamford and the Deepings.

ACTION:

For the Cabinet Member for Waste to provide the Committee with an update on a new recycling centre that would serve Stamford and the Deepings.

The Chairman confirmed that the progress update on the depot project would be discussed at the next Committee meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property provided a brief update on the depot project. It was reported that the depot was at stage two of the project and that a new depot was required due to the expanding growth of the district. It was noted that this project would need to be affordable and deliverable within the reams of financing. At stage two, several checks and balances would take place to ensure the Council build only what is required.

It was reported that an Officer working group meeting was due to take place at the end of March 2022 on the management of the project. A further update would be brought to the next Committee meeting in April.

49. Update on Green Flag Status at Council Parks

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property presented the report that outlined considerations and requirements to attain Green Flag Status for additional parks in the district. Advice and guidance had been offered to 'Friends of Jubilee Park'

towards developing details of the future Green Flag application process for Jubilee Park in Deeping St James.

It was noted that Jubilee Park may require park improvements to be eligible for Green Flag Status, which would be carefully assessed and budgeted for.

It was reported that the Council offer guidance and support to Parish and Town Council's if they wish to pursue Green Flag Status for any public park, however, the Council do not have the resources to directly lead this process.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property confirmed that the Council would be happy to assist and support Jubilee Park and transfer the land if they wish to apply for Green Flag Status.

Further ambition for Green Flag Status at Dysart Park in Grantham was highlighted, moreover, this was subject to funding which were not statutory requirements and cautionary budgets had been set around Green Flag Status and public park expenditure.

One Member raised concern over the communication from the Council to 'Friends of Jubilee Park'. It was reported that no communication had been pursued from the Council to 'Friends of Jubilee Park'. Further concerns were raised on the lack of communication to the Parish Council and Ward/Parish councillors on this matter, furthermore no contact had been made to the Member who requested the item on the agenda for the community's aspirations.

It was noted that 'Friends of Jubilee Park' were supportive of the aspiration for a Green Flag Status for Jubilee Park. On the other hand, they deemed the plan impractical, due to the report stating that 'Friends of Jubilee Park' were responsible for a management and maintenance plan. It was highlighted that the Council maintain and manage Jubilee Park and 'Friends of Jubilee Park' exists for the betterment of the park and its community.

A working partnership was suggested between the Council and 'Friends of Jubilee Park, however, 'Friends of Jubilee Park' could not be responsible for the maintenance and the management of the park. It was noted that budget expenses should not be incorporated, due to the Council, Parish Council and 'Friends of Jubilee Park meeting expectations.

The Head of Corporate Operations confirmed that the report laid out the requirements of proceeding towards Green Flag Status at Jubilee Park. No communication had been sought at this stage due to the decision not currently being made by the Council on whether Green Flag Status was appropriate for Jubilee Park.

It was highlighted that financial commitment and resources would be required to support Jubilee Park.

Another Member expressed his disappointment over the amount of time it had taken the Council to achieve Green Flag Status at one park, however there were now two parks with Green Flag Status in Grantham with the Council aspiring to achieve

another in Grantham. It was highlighted that aspirations around Green Flag Status should be spread across parks in the whole District.

A query was raised on which Parish Councils the Council were meaningfully communicating with regarding Green Flag Status.

It was clarified that Jubilee Park was owned by South Kesteven District Council.

It was noted that a park in Stamford had been in the process of applying for Green Flag Status for 2 years.

It was suggested that the Council communicated with Nottingham City Council on their work surrounding their achievement of 68 Green Flag Status parks.

One Member reported that the Corporate Plan states 'maintaining and enhancing our green areas across the district aiming to secure Green Flag Status for two parks in Grantham and other relevant areas'. It was also highlighted that the community had identified Jubilee Park of significance to their well-being and believe it should be considered for Green Flag Status.

A concern was raised over the prohibitive costs surrounding Green Flag Status stated in the report.

It was noted that prohibitive costs included the assessment of pathways and ensuring accessibility for everyone.

One Member queried the report and what works, and costs would need to be undertaken for Jubilee Park to pass and achieve Green Flag Status.

It was clarified that section 1.7 in the report were requirements for a park to meet a Green Flag Status to which would be a cost to the Council.

One Member requested an indicative figure of the overall cost for a park to apply for Green Flag Status so that options around budgeting and monies could be explored.

It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED:**

- 1. For the Council to offer guidance to Parish and Town Councils as outlined in the report for potential ambition to attain Green Flag standard against eligible sites under their control.**
- 2. That the Council provides guidance to support a Green Flag application for Jubilee Park, Deeping St James.**

50. Update on Water Refill Stations

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property presented the report that outlined the proposal to install four public water refill fountains in South Kesteven with costings provided for a five-year period. The costings included unit costs, direct installation, estimated water bill, projected staff resource cost (daily and weekly cleaning), intermittent gritting and a contingency for reactive maintenance.

It was confirmed that the items set out in the report would cost between £20-22,000 per unit installed over five years. No costing had currently been allocated towards the initiative, other than a potential award of £6000 for a unit in Stamford. It was reported that some risks would need to be managed if the proposal was agreed.

An offer of £6,000 had been put forward from the Harry Skells trust in Stamford to make a provision towards installation of a water refill station.

Members thanked the report author for their hard work.

One Member queried the arithmetic set out in the report, a further query was raised regarding whether the public toilets at Grantham and Bourne were maintained.

It was confirmed that Bourne and Market Deeping public toilets were maintained by their Town Council's.

It was noted that the Council's staff would be going to the sites of the proposed water refill stations to maintain the public toilets every day, therefore it was suggested that a new member of staff may not be necessarily needed and that the one member of staff would maintain the public toilets and the water refill station.

A query was raised over the responsibility over a public statue in St Peters Hill. It was questioned as to what Committee would be authorising the costs of maintenance and CCTV.

It was highlighted that money should be spent on water refill stations to portray the Council's concern for the environment and to encourage communities to reduce plastic in oceans.

Another Member questioned the figures around costings for the water refill stations and that another Member had previously provided lower figures to the Committee at the last meeting.

A suggestion was raised on the funding and the possibility of seeking sponsorships, grants and Town/Parish contributions.

One Member reported statistics that had been gathered from other Councils:

- Vale of Glamorgan Council was the first Council in Europe to install their first public water refill site in 2015, they now currently have 14 sites.

- Hackney in London had 26 water refill sites.
- Winchester City Council installed their first public water refill site in 2019, furthermore, they had now installed a water fountain for dogs.
- Bradford-on-Avon Town Council with a population of less than 10,000 are in the process of installing 3 water refill stations.

It was suggested that the Council revisit the costs surrounding water refill stations to explore options of a lower expenditure.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property confirmed that Bourne, Stamford and Market Deeping Town Council had been written to, for them to take over the public toilet's property from the District Council. Therefore, this facility would be undertaken by the three towns.

It was reported that the Council could organise and provide a facility of a grant to support Town Council's to support them in these locations. The Council would need to look ways to facilitate a financial contribution to each of the Town Councils.

One Member further questioned the extra cost of gritting at the water refill sites due to the Council already gritting the sites where public toilets are accessed.

A query was raised on why a new staff member would be necessary. A further question was raised on the cancellation of the rental agreement and how easy it would be to have the stations removed.

The Chairman sought clarification on costings and whether the stations would be a 'one-off' purchase or will the Council own the unit.

It was confirmed that Stamford were just trustees of the awarded £6000 from the Harry Skells Trust and it was earmarked for installation of a water refill station. Stamford Town Council had previously voted against water refill stations due to the ongoing costs of maintaining and running the facility.

The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that notional grant contribution to the respective Town Council could be an option, however, this would not be available in Grantham due to the absence of a Town Council.

It was noted that this had not been accounted for within the budget this year, therefore further work would need to be undertaken on how the monies could be allocated, re-prioritised and receive approvals to move monies. It was suggested that it could become an April 2023 proposal and be built into the budget for the Autumn period.

The Sustainability and Climate Change Officer reported that the Council had requested costs from suppliers for both rental and 'one off' costings. The rental costs were provided within the report due to protecting the Council over a maintenance contract meaning if the fountain needed to be removed or replaced, it is expected no money would be lost, whereas paying for a 'one-off' cost may mean the money is not refundable and the Council may be liable for additional replacement costs. It was

highlighted that the rental cost was the cheaper option for some of the proposed models.

A further query was raised relating to rental terms and conditions and early exit of the rental agreement if necessary.

The Sustainability and Climate Change Officer confirmed that the Council had contacted five different suppliers, who have different terms and conditions for rental which had not been discussed in detail at this stage.

It was highlighted that having a new staff member would be the responsibility of the Town Council to deliver on the Council's behalf. The duties of current staff employed by the Council were at full capacity. It was further reported that several staff employed by the Council did not have a Driving License so would be unable to travel to other areas of the district.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property reported that negotiations were in process between the Council and Stamford Town Council in regard to the handover of the public toilets to change from District Council to the Town Council. It was suggested that further works took place on exploring grant status for each of the four Town's in South Kesteven.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the Sustainability & Climate Change Officer works with the Council's Communication Team and InvestSK to promote the national Refill scheme.**

It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED:**

- 2. That the Council works to explore funding options for each of the four towns in South Kesteven to expedite the facility of installing water refill stations.**

51. Verbal Update on Climate Change

The Sustainability and Climate Change Officer reported an overview of projects that the Council had been focussing on in relation to Climate Change:

- Budget preparations – grant funding allocation for an energy efficiency scheme targeting domestic properties of low-income in the district.
- Sustainable warmth competition had allocated the Council up to £1.4 million to oversee a program of energy efficiency upgrades targeted beyond the Council's housing stock. The intention would be to deliver the partnership with three other Council's (City of Lincoln, West Lindsey and North Kesteven). This project would be delivered in the coming months.
- Local Authority treescape fund is managed by Lincolnshire County Council. 17 Town and Parish Council's had registered their interest, SKDC submitted

proposed sites for up to 85 trees to be planted. The newly planted trees had been completed and would be added to the Council's tree register.

- Tree call to action fund had been discussed with Lincolnshire County Council as a consortium bid to maximise tree planting opportunities. An expression of interest had been submitted and the Council were waiting on a decision of the funding.
- In discussion with Woodland Trust regarding their emergency tree funding opportunity. A decision on the funding would be received at the beginning of the next financial year.
- The Climate Action Group previous meeting considered a motion to consider integration of climate change into planning decisions.
- The Council would begin to review it's carbon emissions for the 2021/22 financial year from April 2022 onwards.

One Member queried the grant linking to energy efficiency upgrades, whether the grant would be match funded and what this grant would achieve.

The Sustainability and Climate Change Officer highlighted that the funding was targeted at firstly domestic properties, then low-income properties that are not social housing or controlled by a housing association. The scope of the grant funding was aimed towards owner – occupied properties and those within the private rented sector. It was noted that there was no expectation of any Local Authority to contribute match funding and most other local authorities had been made aware of the scheme and would be making use of their own allocation.

It was reported that the scope of energy efficiency had two streams; off-gas properties would be able to claim a higher level of grant funding. Other properties with a gas connection would be directed more towards insulation upgrades.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property notified the Committee that the grant offer had been received at a last stage for next year's budget, however, it was confirmed that 10% for the Housing Revenue Account had been facilitated within the next financial year.

The Cabinet Member for Waste Services confirmed that an update would be brought back to the Committee regarding the grant for regular updates and to identify the properties to maximise the usage of the fund.

52. Work Programme 2021 - 2022

ACTION:

Members requested that the following items be added to the Work Programme for the next meeting on 10 May 2022:

- **Update on Climate Change (report)**
- **Update on Environment Act – impact on Local Authority**
- **Electric charging points**
- **Lincolnshire Waste Partnership – Food waste scheme trial**

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property reported that car charging points had been discussed at the previous meeting and the feasibility around doubling the capacity. Works had been undertaken to whether the Council could attract grant funding again as previously successfully achieved. It was confirmed that the grant funding sources remain available for future years.

It was further highlighted that due to grid capacity the car charging points were slow-charging units and that work would be done around the next installation batch to ensure they are faster-charging units where possible, as dictated by grid capacity.

53. Any other business which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, decides is urgent

The Cabinet Member for Waste Services provided an update on a recycling centre around Stamford. It was reported that the team had been in contact with Lincolnshire County Council, who confirmed that they had no current plans for a household waste recycling centre in Stamford because it's within 12 miles radius of Bourne.

54. Close of meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 11:55.