

# Meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 25 February 2020, 10.00 am



SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL

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## Committee Members present

Councillor Chris Benn (Chairman)  
Councillor John Cottier (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Ashley Baxter  
Councillor Phil Dilks

Councillor Gloria Johnson  
Councillor Nikki Manterfield  
Councillor Mrs Judy Smith

## Cabinet Members

Councillor Dr Peter Moseley, Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations  
Councillor Robert Reid, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning

## Officers

Strategic Director, Commercial and Operations (Gary Smith)  
Assistant Director, Commercial and Operations (Ian Yates)  
Head of Environmental (Anne-Marie Coulthard)  
Grounds Maintenance Co-ordinator (Lynne Lord)  
Head of Development Management (Sylvia Bland)  
Assistant Planning Officer (Hannah Noutch)  
Assets Manager (Chris Pike)  
Sustainability and Climate Change Officer (Serena Brown)  
Scrutiny Officer (Zena West)  
Democratic Officer (Naomi Page)

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## 33. Comments from Members of the public

A member of the public wished to make a comment relating to item 11 on the agenda (Trees in South Kesteven). He expressed concern about a series of tree felling works that had occurred at the Grantham relief road site and asked why they had been undertaken and if an environmental impact survey had been carried out.

The Head of Development Management explained that the Council had granted planning permission in 2015 for phase three of the Grantham relief road. Pre-commencement enabling works were currently being undertaken in

preparation for the construction work, which was anticipated to begin in the summer. The felling of the trees under discussion had been allowed under the planning permission. Mitigation works would be required as set out in the planning decision documents; these would include replanting. Further information could be provided regarding the surveys completed and the planned mitigation works for phase three of the Grantham relief road following the meeting.

Another member of the public made a comment relating to item 27 of the previous meeting's action notes. She referred to the recommendation made to Cabinet that the Council's decision making and report templates were changed to include a carbon and climate change impact assessment and suggested that consideration be given to expanding this further to include the wider environmental impact of decisions.

The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations explained that the introduction of the carbon and climate change impact assessment had been requested in relation to the Council's declaration of a climate emergency, and as such, was intended to assess specific carbon-related information which may affect the achievement of the Council's carbon reduction target. The member of the public wished to expand on her comment outside of the meeting and it was confirmed that the Chair would follow up her enquiry.

The members of the public were thanked for their interest and the comments made.

**34. Apologies**

There had been no apologies for absence received.

**35. Disclosure of Interests**

No interests were disclosed.

**36. Action Notes from the meeting held on 26 November 2019**

The action notes of the meeting held on 26 November 2019 were noted and agreed as a correct record.

**37. Updates from the previous meeting**

The Chair outlined the action points and recommendations from the last meeting of the Committee and confirmed that they were all in progress, or had been completed.

Further detail was given regarding some of the items considered:

- It was confirmed that the report and decision making templates had been amended to include the carbon and climate change impact assessment. Any future reports would only be accepted if the updated template had been used.
- No suggestions had been received regarding potential waste management performance indicators for the Committee to consider. The Chair confirmed that he would ask officers to look at developing these, with a view to considering this item again at the next meeting of the Committee. One Member expressed a desire to assist in the development of the performance indicators to be considered and was asked to contact the Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations to make arrangements for this.

### **38. Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy**

The Chair presented the slides providing an outline of the outcomes from the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy workshop, which had been jointly held by the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Licensing Committee.

Members were asked if they had any comments or questions relating to the workshop conclusions.

Members supported the suggestion to incorporate the use of e-cigarettes and vaping devices in licensed vehicles under the SKDC penalty point scheme. One Member requested that when amending the policy to include the use of these devices, steps should be taken to future-proof the policy, by wording it in such a way to include any similar products which may be developed.

#### **Action Point**

- **The Chair to consult with the Chair of the Licensing Committee to ensure that all types of e-cigarettes and vaping devices (including any newly developed products) are incorporated into the SKDC penalty point scheme.**

The Committee asked for an explanation as to the intended governance process moving forward for the updated Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy. The Head of Environmental confirmed that following the present meeting of the Committee, a draft policy would be developed to encompass any recommended amendments. This pre-consultation draft would be presented to the Committee at its next meeting, with the aim that it then be recommended to the Cabinet for consultation. Once the draft policy was approved by Cabinet, a six-week public consultation period would then commence. Any amendments needed due to feedback received from the consultation would be incorporated into a post consultation draft policy. This final draft would then be presented to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny

Committee for it to consider recommending the amended Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy to Cabinet for approval.

Members discussed the Council's role in encouraging environmental sustainability and considered whether there was an opportunity to offer an increased annual vehicle licence discount for zero emissions vehicles. There was a suggestion that the 20% annual licence discount for LPG (Liquid Petroleum Gas), hybrid and ultra-low emissions vehicles be maintained, but that the discount for zero emissions (including electric) vehicles be increased to 50%. The benefits and limitations of introducing tiered discount rates were considered. Members also discussed the environmental impact of the suggestions arising from the workshop regarding vehicle age limits.

### **Recommendations**

- **That the updated draft policy include two tiers of annual licence discounts; a 20% discount for LPG, hybrid and ultra-low emission vehicles and a 50% discount for electric and zero emissions vehicles.**
- **That the maximum vehicle age for a first licence to be attained be decreased from 7 to 5 years in the updated draft policy.**
- **That the licensed vehicle age limit be extended from 10 to 12 years for wheelchair accessible vehicles, hybrid, ultra-low and zero emission vehicles.**

Members referred to the workshop conclusion regarding engine idling at taxi ranks and the potential for SKDC penalty points to be used to deter this behaviour. It was noted that enforcing this measure could present challenges, but the Committee requested that the possibility be further explored by officers.

### **Action Point**

- **Officers to investigate the possibility of using SKDC penalty points for engine idling at taxi ranks, and to include any such penalty point criteria in the draft policy if feasible.**

The Committee supported the workshop conclusions regarding driver knowledge and language proficiency. Members discussed the importance of the Council's role as the licensing authority in ensuring that taxi drivers' knowledge of English was sufficient to allow them to effectively respond to and manage emergency situations. One Member felt that the exemption criteria for an English language test should be extended to include those who had been educated in an English education system but had not achieved any formal qualifications.

### **Action Point**

- **Officers to consider extending the criteria by which an applicant is exempt from the English language test to include having being educated in an English speaking school or institution, to accommodate those who have not achieved qualifications, and to include this in the draft policy if feasible.**

#### **Recommendation**

- **That the existing local knowledge and arithmetic tests be maintained in the policy, with an externally provided English language test to be introduced for all new drivers and for any existing drivers where there are concerns. Applicants with a qualification taught and examined in English to be exempt from the test and the cost of the test to be passed to the applicants.**

### **39. Update from the Climate Change Action Task and Finish Group**

The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations presented the slides giving an update of the priorities arising from the work of the Climate Change Action Task and Finish Group, with options for the Committee to consider regarding LED (Light Emitting Diode) lighting and paper reduction. Members were asked if they had any comments or questions arising from the presentation.

The Committee expressed their support for the installation of LED lighting as standard in the offices at St Peter's Hill and South Kesteven House. During discussion, Members explored the potential for the installation initiative to be rolled out further to include other Council owned properties. Officers confirmed that the roll-out of LED lighting was considered an important aspect of the Council's work regarding its climate change targets. However, the cost of installation and corresponding payback periods needed to be taken into consideration. It was felt that priority should be given to facilitating the installation works in the identified key buildings, before exploring further options.

#### **Recommendation**

- **To recommended to Cabinet that arrangements be made to install LED lighting in the Council offices at St Peters Hill and South Kesteven House. The project to include three components; bulb replacements (where possible in existing fittings), replacement fittings (where current fittings aren't suitable) and the installation of compatible motion sensors.**

#### **Action Point**

- **Officers to explore the potential for extending the installation of LED lighting to other Council owned buildings as part of the wider carbon improvement plan.**

Members discussed the potential for paper reduction across the Council, focusing on Members' administration tasks and the use of report papers at meetings. It was suggested that the Chairs of Committees be asked to encourage members of their Committees to reduce their use of paper at meetings. However, it was acknowledged that Committees had varying requirements and that some use of paper would be necessary, particularly in relation to the Planning Committee. Other options considered included the potential for the Council to purchase the confidential component of the ModernGov software, the purchase and use of environmentally friendly paper stock where possible and the introduction of a small number of electronic devices for members of the public to view report papers at meetings.

### **Action points**

- **All Councillor administration tasks to be undertaken in soft copy where possible.**
- **All Committee Chairs to be asked to encourage their membership to go paper free where practical, giving due consideration to accessibility needs.**
- **Officers to investigate options for utilising more environmentally friendly paper where practical.**
- **That the cost of investing in the private component of ModernGov be investigated. The Committee to be updated as to whether the purchase of this additional tool is already underway.**
- **The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations to arrange for a small number of devices to be purchased to trial the use of electronic devices for members of the public to view agendas at meetings.**

The Sustainability and Climate Change Officer presented some additional slides relating to the work the Carbon Trust were undertaking to calculate the Council's carbon emissions baseline. The Committee was asked to consider the proposed methodology and categories of carbon emissions and put forward any requests for changes to those included and excluded from the baseline measurement, to feed into the current phase of work.

Members discussed the advantages and disadvantages of amending the included scope to encompass leisure centres within the district. Officers explained that it was not standard practice to include this type of scope 3 emission. A number of members of the Committee felt that including leisure centres in the scope would demonstrate the Council's commitment as a community leader in achieving its target of reducing the organisation's carbon footprint by at least 30% by 2030. Consideration was given to concerns raised that the Council had a limited capacity to directly affect the leisure centres'

carbon emissions. A vote was taken, and the Committee agreed to recommend that the leisure centres be included within the carbon footprint baseline.

### **Recommendations**

- **That Leisure Centres (scope 3 emissions) be included in the calculation of the Council's baseline and reduction target of at least 30% by 2030.**
- **That the outlined methodology of included and excluded scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions against the Council's baseline reduction of at least 30% by 2030 is approved, subject to the above amendment.**

#### **40. Single use plastic aspirations**

The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations presented the slides relating to the use of single use plastics at South Kesteven District Council. The Committee was reminded of the Council's aim to reduce waste where possible. Members were asked if they had any questions regarding the presentation or suggestions as to how the Council could discourage the use of single use plastics and promote alternatives.

The Committee considered the potential to include specific reference to the use of single use plastics in procurement contracts. It was also suggested that the operational aspect of the Council's services be considered as an area to reduce single use plastics.

During discussion, the Committee referred to the promotion of publicly available water refill stations. It was suggested that the Council's water dispenser in the Customer Services area be publicised to encourage the use of refillable bottles. One Member also enquired as to whether the conduit on Conduit Street was Council owned and the feasibility for this to be repaired. The Committee requested that the single use plastics item be considered again at a future meeting, with a report to consider potential areas for reduction and suggested alternatives.

### **Action Points**

- **Officers to consult with the Procurement Officer and investigate the feasibility of including requirements regarding the use of single use plastics in future contracts.**
- **Officers to investigate whether the conduit in Conduit Street is Council owned. If it is confirmed to be so, the possibility of repairing the conduit to be considered.**
- **That the single use plastics item be added to the Committee's work programme for a future meeting, with a report to be developed to explore the potential for the reduction of single use**

**plastics in Council owned buildings and to consider viable alternatives.**

#### **41. Food Waste Collection and Disposal**

The Committee were presented with slides giving an update on the food waste collection trial. The trial had been funded by the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership, and as such, the decision as to whether the trial would be extended further would be a partnership decision. Members were invited to make comments or ask questions relating to the presentation.

Members of the Committee expressed positive support for the food waste collection trial and asked about the potential for the service to be extended district-wide. It was explained that a district-wide food waste collection service would incur a significant cost to the Council if funded independently. Any financial benefits to the disposal authority (Lincolnshire County Council) would need to be invested to support the collection authority (South Kesteven District Council) for such a service to be viable. The future of food waste collection services would potentially be influenced by changes in government legislation.

#### **Recommendation**

- **To recommend to Cabinet that the success of, and support for, the current Food Waste Trial is noted and that any effort to continue the trial and move towards a more permanent arrangement is endorsed.**

#### **42. Trees in South Kesteven**

The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations introduced the item by presenting slides on trees in the district. The slides updated the Committee on the recent steps the Council had taken to protect and promote the planting of trees in the district and outlined the typical carbon sequestration values and costs of planting trees.

The Committee was then presented with slides relating to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). The Head of Development Management explained the process undertaken when applying for a TPO and the factors taken into consideration when the Council made its decision as to whether a TPO would be granted. Following a recent project, all TPOs were now available to view on the Council's website. The four types of TPO were outlined and the legal guidance relating to TPOs was explained. A TPO review project was planned for 2020. The services of an external organisation would be procured to undertake the project and it was anticipated that it would take up to two years to complete.

Members were given a final presentation relating to rewilding and natural meadows. Options were presented with potential sites for rewilding to be



introduced, with the aim of increasing biodiversity and creating wildlife corridors.

The Committee were asked if they had any questions relating to the slides presented for the 'Trees in South Kesteven' item.

- Members expressed their support for the introduction of the proposed rewilding areas, one for each town.
- One Member asked why the introduction of hedges had not been included in the options for rewilding areas. Officers explained that they were asked by the Committee to look at grass and meadow rewilding, but the costs of hedge planting could be investigated.
- The Committee asked if there were specific processes to govern the management of mature trees, particularly when they posed a risk to public safety. It was explained that the management of trees was the responsibility of the landowner. If a tree with a TPO became dangerous, the landowner could apply to carry out works to rectify the issue.
- Members asked if there was potential for the Council to do more to protect trees, referring to the requirement for one sapling to be planted in place of any mature tree with a TPO that had been felled. Officers explained that in some cases TPOs protected a group of trees. If a group of trees required felling, a group of saplings would be required to replace them. It was also highlighted that in the majority of cases, landowners could be expected to maintain trees adequately and that placing TPOs on well managed land was usually unnecessary.
- One Member asked for the number of trees with TPOs in Deeping St James to be circulated to the Committee.
- Members noted the planned TPO review and requested that the Committee be updated regarding its progress.

### **Action Points**

- **Officers to assess the indicative costs of planting and maintaining hedges on Council owned land and update the Committee at a future meeting (to be added to the Work Programme).**
- **Officers to email information regarding the number of TPOs in Deeping St James to members of the Committee.**
- **The Committee to receive an email update during the planned Tree Protection Order review and feedback when the review is complete, detailing any amendments that have been made as a result of the review.**

### **Recommendation**

- **That the potential rewilding initiatives, one per town, are supported and officers are asked to take the initiatives forward in consultation with stakeholders.**

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

The Scrutiny Officer outlined the upcoming items for the April meeting of the Committee. There would be a presentation from the Internal Drainage Board in addition to items relating to boiler replacement and plumbing options, the SKDC Cycle to Work Scheme, environmental performance indicators, the pre-consultation draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing policy and a review of the 2020/21 work programme.

**44. Close of the meeting**

The meeting closed at 13:47.