

Meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 6 October 2020, 10.30 am



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Meeting held virtually, via Skype

Committee Members present

Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor John Cottier (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Helen Crawford
Councillor Phil Dilks

Councillor Gloria Johnson
Councillor Nikki Manterfield (Chairman)
Councillor Linda Wootten

Officers

Strategic Director, Commercial and Operations
Head of Environmental
Head of Governance
Sustainability and Climate Change Officer
Performance Lead
Scrutiny Officer
Democratic Officer

1. Comments from Members of the public

No comments from members of the public were received.

2. Register of attendance, membership and apologies for absence

No apologies for absence were received from the Committee.

The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations, Councillor Dr Peter Moseley advised the Chairman of his apologies.

3. Disclosure of Interests

No interests were disclosed.

4. Action Notes from the meeting held on 23 June 2020

The Chairman read out a statement regarding the Action Notes of the meeting held on 23 June 2020.

“The notes brought to Committee are in a draft format, until confirmed by the Committee as a true record of the meeting. Should any Councillor have issue with the accuracy of the notes from the previous meeting, they should present their alternative wording, and be as specific as possible on which part is incorrect, and what the record should state instead.

A Councillor may propose amendments to the notes of the previous meetings, but those suggested amendments will be voted on by the Committee – if there is not agreement, then the amendment will not be made as requested.

With that in mind, I move on to the two sets of action notes to be agreed. The Head of Governance has conducted a review of the notes and recordings from this Committee, to address accuracy concerns from Councillors, and so that we can hopefully get the issue resolved today. I’d like to thank her for her help with this. The findings from this investigation are as follows:

*The first issue regarding the accuracy of the previous notes has arisen as a result of some confusion over names and definitions. The action notes from 26 November 2019 capture an action point to consult with EnvironmentSK and report back to the committee with examples and indicative costs for introducing **managed wildflower diversity areas** in the district, to begin with one area in each town. This wording has morphed and in future meetings, the managed wildflower biodiversity areas have become intertwined with **re-wilding**.*

The reference to one area per town which is included in the recommendation made in February 2020 is consistent with the recommendation made in November 2019. From listening to the recordings of later meetings and reviewing the papers for Feb, I can understand, based on the wording of the recommendation that it was not made clear to committee members that only 4 schemes would be consulted on. Recognising the context that there would be one rewilding scheme per town would not preclude running consultation on all proposed sites and then the most appropriate site from each town being picked. If that was the intention, the learning is to make sure Members are clear in their understanding of what they’re voting on and officers are clear in setting out a specific proposals. This could have been made clearer in this instance, and Members would have known what they were agreeing to (or not) and could have helped inform which proposal was taken forward, or lobbied for both, with a view to making a future recommendation about the best scheme.

The confusion over what was agreed was unfortunate, but not malicious or borne of conspiracy, it was simply a different interpretation of what was being agreed to by the Officers and some Councillors.”

Members of the Committee thanked the Chairman and the Head of Governance for their time in reviewing the concerns that were raised.

A member provided an overview of their recollection of events, that had led to the concerns raised over the accuracy of the notes.

Members gave consideration to the notes of the meeting held on 23 June 2020.

A member proposed if note 47. of that meeting, could be reconsidered and amended as follows:

- Removal of the references to one re-wilding site per town.

They explained that it had not been agreed by the Committee.

The Chairman seconded the proposition to amend the action notes, as per the members comments. After a vote was taken, members agreed that the notes of the meeting held on 23 June 2020, be agreed subject to those amendments.

ACTION

To amend the action notes for the meeting held on 23 June 2020, be approved, subject to the following amendment:

- **Note 47., removal of references to ‘one re-wilding site per town’.**

5. Action notes from the meeting held on 21 July 2020

The Committee considered the notes of the meeting held on 21 July 2020. After discussion of their contents, they were agreed as a correct record.

A member requested that notes of future meetings reflect that the location of the meeting be detailed, including those that were held virtually, via Skype.

ACTION

That the location of the meeting be detailed on all action notes.

6. Updates from the previous meeting

The Committee were provided with an update on actions agreed. The document provided at agenda item 6., detailed each action, who they assigned to, the deadline and what was their progress. Providing a written update was to assist members and give the public full transparency on the work of the Committee.

A member requested an update on previous action notes, the examination of other potential re-wilding schemes. The member was advised that an update

would be provided, when the review had been undertaken. The Strategic Director, Commercial and Operations advised members that alternative sites were being explored and an update on re-wilding would be provided in the December meeting.

A member expressed concerns that Jubilee Park was not going to be considered, as part of the consultation. The Chairman proposed that Jubilee Park site, be part of the consultation with residents. After a vote, the Committee agreed with the proposal.

ACTIONS

- 1. That an update on the potential re-wilding schemes be provided at the 8 December 2020 meeting of the Committee**
- 2. That the Jubilee Park site, form part of the consultation with residents, on potential re-wilding sites.**

7. Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Annual Statement

The Committee were provided with the draft annual report on Climate Change and Carbon reduction and were asked to suggest items to be included.

The annual report highlighted key achievements and activities around climate change, since the Council had declared a climate emergency at Council in September 2019. The Sustainability and Climate Change Officer provided a brief overview of areas that could be considered for inclusion.

Members asked for clarity on the item, if they were considering the report or making suggestions for its content. It was advised that the Committee consider items to be included, both things the Council has done well and what needed to be improved. The Chairman agreed that the agenda was not entirely. It was requested that the agenda be amended for inclusion in the notes, to reflect that the item was to consider potential contents of the annual report.

ACTION

That item 7., be amended to state that it was for proposed items to be included within the annual report and this change be reflected in the notes.

Suggestions for inclusion were made by a member:

- Targets to be tracked be broken down into categories such as; transport, buildings, fleet emissions etc
- The Council's wholly owned companies be included
- Tracking the progress of planning decisions and policy
- Benchmarking against similar size local authorities and nationally

Members asked if they were able to see the draft report, prior to its consideration at Cabinet. Due to timescales involved members were advised that a draft would not be forwarded to the Committee. It was requested that all future reports be considered by the Committee, before approval by Cabinet.

Members expressed their disappointed of not being able to see the report, prior to the Cabinet meeting. They requested that in lieu of the tight timescales that the draft report be shared via email to the Committee, at the earliest opportunity, prior to Cabinet.

Following a unanimous vote, members agreed the following actions:

ACTION

- 1. That future Annual Reports be considered by the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, prior to its approval by Cabinet**
- 2. That the current Annual Report be shared, via email, to the Committee prior to its consideration at Cabinet**
- 3. That suggestions made by members during the meeting, be included within the report.**

8. Climate change reserve fund

A report was presented to the Committee on the Deployment of the Climate Change Reserve Fund. The report provided an overview of projects considered for the Fund, which were proposed by the Climate Change Action Task and Finish Group.

After consideration of the Climate Change Reserve of £20,000 at the meeting of the Task and Finish Group held on 11 September 2020, the following recommendations for the fund were made as follows:

1. Climate Change Reserve Fund be directed towards an upgrade of light fittings at the Guildhall Arts Centre
2. The remainder directed towards the acceleration of the existing upgrade of streetlights project.

Additionally, the Task Group recommended that another Climate Change reserve of at least £20,000, be considered in the 2021/22 budget.

Members considered the report and the recommendations made by the Task Group, which they supported.

It was requested that the Committee be provided with an update on the schedule of the street lighting upgrade project. The Strategic Director, Commercial and Operations explained that a number of options for the project were being explored, which had led to a slight delay in progress. An update for members would be provided at a future meeting of the Committee.

Following a vote, the committee unanimously agreed to support the recommendations of the report.

ACTIONS

- 1. Climate Change Reserve Fund be directed towards an upgrade of light fittings at the Guildhall Arts Centre**
- 2. The remainder of the reserve be directed towards the acceleration of the existing upgrade of streetlights project**
- 3. Another Climate Change reserve of at least £20,000, be considered in the 2021/22 budget and the Climate Change Task and Finish Group be considered at its earliest opportunity**
- 4. An update for members on the Street Lighting upgrade project be provided at a future meeting of the Committee**

A member asked if the information had been compiled in-house or if an external source had been used. The Sustainability and Climate Change Officer advised that the Carbon Trust, as external consultants assisted with report and provided a number of tools. The cost of the work was approximately £18,000, Members felt that the content of the work reflected value for money.

It was also queried if work was being undertaken with sheltered housing and the contribution towards emissions they were making. It was advised that the report only included communal properties, not individual ones. Sheltered Housing buildings were being discussed with the Housing Team, looking at what improvements could be made.

9. Review of Statement of Licensing Policy

The Committee received a report, presented by the Head of Environmental on the Review of Statement of Licensing Policy (Licensing Act 2003).

The report included an updated draft Statement of Licensing Policy 2021-26, which the Council, as Licensing Authority had a statutory duty to produce at least every five years. The policy set out the functions under the Act, with a view to promoting the licensing objectives. The update reflected the latest changes in legislation and statutory guidance, which was published in April 2018. A two-week public consultation of the draft Statement would be undertaken, along with comments from the Licensing Committee, prior to its adoption.

It was queried why the consultation period was for only two weeks. Members were advised that there was no statutory period of consultation set by Government, therefore the Council set their own period, which was felt appropriate considering the types of changes.

A member asked for clarification on the steps of consideration of the draft and if the Licensing Committee had yet seen the draft. Members were reminded that the Licensing Committee considered applications but did not determine policy. The Licensing Committee would have the opportunity to comment on the draft, that was yet to take place. It was felt that it was important for the Licensing Committee to have the opportunity to comment on the Policy, prior to any public consultation. The intention was that the Licensing Committee would be consulted after consideration by the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, should it receive the Committee's support.

The District's population of around 142,000 was noted within the report, a member asked if this was necessary to include, especially as that could change throughout the 5-year life of the policy. Members were advised that although it was not specifically required to include population figures, it was required that there be an indication of the extent of the District's population.

The recommendations of the report, subject to a minor amendment, were proposed and seconded by the Committee. Following a unanimous vote, the following actions were approved:

ACTIONS

- 1. Considered the draft Statement of Licensing Policy 2021-2026 and did not wish to propose any amendments**
- 2. That the draft Statement of Licensing Policy 2021-2026 be supported and proceed to public consultation.**

10. Environmental Performance Indicators

The Committee were provided with a report of Environmental Performance Indicators. The report included an overview of the performance dashboard development work, which had been undertaken to date. It also looked at the

next steps which could be developed on future performance reporting to the Committee.

On 21 July 2020 the Committee requested a report which provided information on seven measures detailing; utility usage, waste disposal and environmental enforcement activity. The initial proposals were then developed further at a workshop held on 15 September 2020, at which recommendations were made. There were seven streams of data to be presented to the committee:

1. Energy consumption and cost (for the Council)
2. Water consumption and cost (for the Council)
3. Overall domestic waste arisings (for the District)
4. Percentage domestic waste recycled (for the District)
5. Percentage domestic waste diverted from landfill/incineration (i.e. to include food waste and green waste)
6. Percentage contamination of silver bins
7. Number of fixed-penalty notices issued by enforcement teams

Appendices to the report detailed performance for the period April 2020 to June 2020. Following feedback from the Workshop the reports would be developed to provide further clarity to the Committee.

A member noted that the information detailed in the reports were very thought provoking, however concerns were raised regarding a shift in the type of enforcement notices that were being raised. It was felt that there was considerable room for improvement to the dashboards, which should show more details of data comparisons to previous periods.

Members requested that the data should be provided back a number of years, that would then inform the committee on yearly/seasonal trends. The officer advised that with going beyond two years, there was the risk that the data was not be as reliable. This was due to a combination of factors, such as collection formats. It was more reliable to compare data collected in the same format, which was for the reported two-year period.

A member requested that the information on street lighting be improved. The details should show how the figures were reached on usage, what were the types and numbers streetlights.

The recommendations were discussed by members, following a vote they were agreed unanimously.

ACTIONS

- 1. To note the content of the report and support the continued transformation of performance reporting**

2. To agree the dashboard development timeline and amendments proposed following the performance workshop

11. Work Programme

The Chairman invited the Scrutiny Officer to discuss the contents of the Committees Work Programme.

Items had been added to the Work Programme during the meeting. Those items were to be added to the December meeting, as follows:

- Re-wilding update
- Performance Dashboard update
- Update on street lighting
- Carbon reduction plan update
- Update on the cycling programme and Sustrans provide a presentation

A member noted the Committee could look at the impact Covid-19 had on the Council; it was proposed that be considered at the April meeting of the Committee.

ACTIONS

- 1. That the items discussed during the meeting be added to the Work Programme**
- 2. The Committee to consider the impact of Covid-19 on the Council at its April meeting**

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

A member reminded the Committee regarding the Taxi Policy review, which was currently going out to Consultation.

The Head of Environmental advised that earlier in the year members had seen the Taxi Policy review. After members consideration of the Policy, the Government that issued statutory taxi standards in June, which the Council must have due regard to when formulating the Policy. There were several minor amendments associated with the new standards and the revised Policy was due to go out to consultation, then for consideration at Cabinet.

13. Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 13:06.