

Minutes

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 3 October 2023, 10.00 am

Council Chamber – South Kesteven
House, St. Peter's Hill, Grantham.
NG31 6PZ



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Committee Members present

Councillor Ian Selby (Chairman)
Councillor Emma Baker (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Gloria Johnson
Councillor Bridget Ley
Councillor Charmaine Morgan
Councillor Murray Turner
Councillor Paul Wood
Councillor Paul Martin
Councillor Graham Jeal

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Patsy Ellis (Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste)
Councillor Rhea Rayside (Cabinet Member for People and Communities)

Other Members present

Councillor Phil Gadd
Councillor Tim Harrison

Officers

Graham Watts (Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer)
Nicola McCoy-Brown (Director of Growth and Culture)
Adrian Ash (Interim Assistant Director of Operations and Public Protection)
Ayeisha Kirkham (Head of Service - Public Protection)
Debbie Roberts (Head of Corporate Projects, Policy and Performance)
George Chase (Waste & Recycling Manager)
Heather Green (Licensing Team Leader)
Serena Brown (Sustainability and Climate Change Officer)
Amy Pryde (Democratic Services Officer)

14. Public Speaking

Anne Gayfer – question to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

“Will South Kesteven District Council please declare a biodiversity emergency and put policies in place to improve biodiversity?”

The Chairman confirmed that the Committee had an item on biodiversity on the agenda for the meeting in December 2023.

15. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mark Whittington.

Councillor Graham Jeal substituted for Councillor Mark Whittington.

16. Disclosure of Interests

No interests were disclosed.

17. Minutes from the meeting held on 11 July 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2023 were proposed, seconded and **AGREED** as a correct record.

18. Minutes of the Joint meeting of the Finance & Economic & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 July 2023

The minutes of the joint meeting of the Finance and Economic and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 July 2023 were proposed, seconded and **AGREED** as a correct record.

19. Announcements or updates from the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members or the Head of Paid Service

There were none.

20. Animal Welfare Policy

The Licensing Team Leader presented the report.

This policy covered the licensable activity of Animal Welfare. It set out the principles the Council will use when dealing with animal related licensing matters.

The purpose of animal licensing was to protect animals and ensure their health and wellbeing, those using the licensed facility as well as providing protection for the public within the terms of the relevant Acts and legislative Guidance.

There was no statutory requirement for a local authority to adopt an Animal Welfare Policy. However, the adoption of an Animal Welfare Policy would give clarity to the public, partner agencies and applicants. It also provided a framework for Officers and Members to enable consistent decision making and transparency. The Policy covers the areas of animal boarding establishment licences, horse-riding established licenses, pet shop licences, dangerous wild animal licences, dog

breeding establishments and keeping or training for exhibition licences and zoo-keeping licences.

There is a government proposal to require that primates are kept at zoo-level standards. Whilst within the current Animal Welfare legislation it is an offence to keep primates and not provide for their welfare needs or to cause them unnecessary suffering, if the legislation is enacted the keeping primates as pets would be banned as supported within the Policy.

Members raised the following points during discussion:

- The report was welcomed as an addition to the Council's regulatory process.
- How was the consultation to be undertaken?
- Would all parish and Town Councils be contacted for their feedback as part of the consultation?
- How would the policy be enforced, was it the role of the Council to enforce the legislation? What resources had the Council established to support this?
- Were Market and Fair Traders to be included within the consultation, with reference to the selling of animals as prizes?
- Was there a specific, different licence for travelling circus animals?
- Did the Deepings Pet Refuge require a licence under this policy?
- Could first tier tribunal system be explained in further detail?

The Licensing Team Leader informed Members of the Committee that the Team would primarily use social media and emails. Survey Monkey would also be available and in paper form for those who did not have access to the internet. Parish and Town Councils would be contacted for their feedback alongside anticipated consultees, including Lincolnshire Police, Fire and Rescue, Highways, Town Councils, the public, current licence holders and departments within South Kesteven District Council. The Officer confirmed that Market and Fair-Traders could be considered too.

It was confirmed that the Council did not issue licences for travelling circuses. However, it was confirmed that the Deepings Pet Refuge was subject to a licence under the policy.

A Member asked for written clarification on which authority issued travelling circus licences.

ACTION:

The Licensing Team Leader was to circulate an email to Members of the Committee confirming what authority issued licences for travelling circuses.

The Officer continued that the Licensing Team had already issued the licences. There were two Licensing Officers that went out to inspect and also to react to reports received. The policy would bring this work together under a framework. The tribunal system comprised of the first tier and the upper tier. The first tier heard appeals from citizens against decisions made by government departments or agencies as a civil matter.

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

That Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the draft South Kesteven District Council Animal Welfare Policy and agreed it, with the following amendment as the basis for a four-week public consultation:

- a) The five needs of animal welfare be inserted within the policy prior to the five additional principles.**

21. Climate Action Strategy Update - Post Consultation

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste introduced the report.

South Kesteven District Council made a formal declaration of climate emergency on 26 September 2019 with cross party support. Alongside this, the Council confirmed the political ambition to reduce the organisation's carbon footprint by at least 30% by 2030, and to endeavour to become net-zero as soon as viable before 2050.

On 14th March 2023, the first Climate Action Strategy document was presented to Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee recommended that the Strategy be put out for consultation to gauge public opinion, and for a revised Strategy to be brought back to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The consultation was open for just over 4 weeks from 10th July. As well as residents of South Kesteven, specific stakeholder groups identified included district Councillors for South Kesteven, Town and Parish councils, voluntary and community groups with an environmental focus.

The feedback from the consultation exercise had been very constructive. While there was a broad support for the eight Themes within the Climate Action Strategy, and for areas of focus and priorities, there were clear themes where respondents believed the Council could go further or improve the Strategy. In response to feedback on the length and format of the Strategy, a separate Climate Action Strategy Executive Summary document had also been prepared.

In depth detail of projects to be delivered across each of the eight Themes identified, including cost and payback, associated benefits and service area within the Council were to be presented as the Climate Action Plan once the full Climate Action Strategy was published.

Members raised the following points during discussion:

- The consultation indicated feedback that as a Local Authority, the Council needed to be considering our natural environment moving forward. These results should be integrated within our planning policies and Corporate Plan too.
- A Member noted that the Climate Change Strategy was introduced by the previous administration. The issue of climate change was too important not to be endorsed cross-party and promoted to the whole community. He considered that 176 responses was disappointing.
- The Chairman welcomed the report as exceptionally well-worded and thanked Officers for their hard work.
- Had enough consideration been given to local businesses?
- For the sake of the future, the Council needed to show how seriously it considered climate change to be. Responses were too low and further engagement with the public was essential such as talking in schools, for example.
- It was acknowledged that the climate may not be every resident's top priority in the current challenging financial times but more support was required.
- How was the strategy going to be achieved? What detailed actions were planned?
- Could the Council promote the Climate Action Strategy in the local press to gain extra response from the public?
- Had there previously been a successful Climate Action Working Group?

The Sustainability and Climate Change Officer confirmed that 176 responses were received during the consultation. There were also detailed and helpful responses received from the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership and from the Environment Agency. The consultation invited responses on the Climate Action Strategy specifically, quite a large, technical document, rather than climate change as a topic. The Committee were informed that when West Lindsey District Council underwent a similar exercise, the authority received 151 responses. The Grantham Journal and Stamford Press published the information on the consultation.

The Officer further confirmed that the previous Climate Action Working Group was a non-statutory group of 12 councillors supported by various officers. They would consider topics like how to support residents in fuel poverty in a more detailed setting than Committee.

The Head of Corporate Projects, Policy and Performance informed Members that the Draft Strategy was presented to the Committee in March 2023 after a working group met and discussed it. It was agreed by Members that the consultation included the themes as confirmed. The fantastic responses were wholeheartedly welcomed and the time taken to return them was acknowledged. Members received a link to the consultation along with the parish councils.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste clarified that the action strategy would inform the action plan in response to a question asked by a Member of the Committee.

It was **proposed** that a further, more widespread public consultation be undertaken before adopting the Climate Action Strategy.

A Member proposed an amendment, to recommend that a further consultation be undertaken following the proposed adoption of the Climate Action Strategy to inform the Action Plan.

It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED that the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

- a) **Noted the content of the revised South Kesteven Climate Action Strategy**
- b) **Recommended to Cabinet to approve the adoption of the revised South Kesteven Climate Action Strategy while undertaking a further consultation to inform the Action Plan.**
- c) **Delegated to the Climate Action Working Group and officers to progress the development of the Climate Action Plan and provide regular updates to the Committee.**

22. Corporate Climate Work Plan (Carbon Emission Reporting)

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste introduced the report.

In order to monitor and manage the Council's carbon footprint, it was recommended to publish an (at least annual) update on reported carbon emissions. This carbon dashboard included the full scope of South Kesteven District Council's carbon emissions for the 2022/23 financial year, against the Council's baseline year of 2018/19. The reported carbon emissions for 2022/23 show an overall reduction against the baseline of 1817 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e), or a 23.90% reduction from the baseline year.

The continued inclusion of the Deepings Leisure Centre facility in the baseline year had resulted in a significant reported reduction in carbon emissions for the 2022/23 year. The facility attributed in the baseline for 994 tonnes of carbon emissions, or 13% of the whole carbon footprint of South Kesteven District Council. A significant reduction in electricity use had contributed as well as the ongoing national decarbonisation of the electricity supply through renewable sources. Carbon emissions from the Council's vehicle fleet remain high.

The Sustainability and Climate Change Officer informed Members that this report referred solely to the Council's buildings and vehicles.

Members raised the following points:

- Was there an update on the position with solar panels on our public buildings?
- Why was there a low level of confidence in reference to water?
- How was the information obtained on carbon emissions of Members?
- Were the electric vehicles being used to their full potential?
- Train travel by staff had significantly reduced, what were the reasons for this?

The Sustainability and Climate Change Officer confirmed that the Council had solar panels on the three Leisure Centres at Bourne, Stamford and the Meres at Grantham as well as Bourne Corn Exchange. A number of buildings had been surveyed for the potential for solar panel usage and this was under review. The Council was to look for any grant opportunities to support with installation of solar panels but there were not currently any specific grant funds available.

The Officer continued that the water information was based on estimates rather than actual volume. This had been reviewed but there had currently been no means of improving the data. It was acknowledged that using data from expenses claims for the information on carbon emissions for elected Members was not entirely accurate as not all Members claimed travel expenses, however this had been the only data available. Electric vehicles were not included in any of the emission categories other than electricity within the report, although mileage comparisons could be included in future reports. Only staff business travel during the working day was considered within the report. The rise in online events had reduced the need for staff to travel. There were policies to encouraging car-sharing too.

It was AGREED that the Committee noted the reported carbon emissions for the 2022/23 period which cover operations from South Kesteven District Council buildings and vehicles.

23. Environment Act - Verbal Update

The Interim Assistant Director of Operations and Public Protection gave a verbal update on the implementation of the Environment Act 2021.

The Government published its Waste Strategy in England in 2018 which contained 3 interrelated projects:

- Extending producer responsibility
- Deposit return scheme
- Consistency in household recycling

The Act allowed the UK to enshrine these environmental protection objectives into law.

Following the publication of the Strategy, DEFRA undertook consultation on the policies during 2019 and 2021. Reasonably high levels of responses were received for extending producer responsibility and the deposit return scheme but limited responses for waste consistency in collections, leaving Councils awaiting clarity on the new service requirements.

On 28 July 2023, DEFRA wrote to all Councils advising that the extended producer responsibility for packaging payments would be deferred to October 2025 and would include a further consultation on the regulations to underpin extended producer responsibility. The 12-month deferral was hoped to provide industry with additional time to prepare for the new requirements along with the chance to review and improve their supply of recyclable packaging material.

The Prime Minister was due to make a speech on 25 September, expected to clarify plans around green initiatives. To date DEFRA had confirmed that the reforms would now be called simply recycling and were to focus on a list of material to be collected for recycling. Updates to food waste collections were still expected to be undertaken.

The following points were made in discussion:

- What impact was the lack of clarity on food waste collection likely to have on the new depot costs?

The Interim Assistant Director of Operations and Public Protection confirmed that no significant impact in terms of cost at the new depot was expected at this time.

24. Recycling of Batteries

The report was introduced by the Interim Assistant Director of Operations and Public Protection.

Currently Local Authorities were not required to collect used batteries from households and the Department for Environment & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) consultation (Environment Act 2021) on the separate collection of recyclables did

not propose to introduce this. South Kesteven Council's waste operations as with many local authorities did not directly collect batteries as part of their recycling initiatives, although, they were accepted at the local household waste recycling centres within the district.

Officers were tasked to look at a number of options in respect of safe battery recycling which also included reviewing the scheme of another local authority who are collecting directly from the householder.

The Chairman read out a statement from Councillor Ben Green who was unable to attend the meeting:

'... Had I been able to attend in person, I would strongly argue for option D on the recommendations – curbside collection with a one-off cost of retrofitting the fleet with the appropriate containers and residents supplying their own bags. This is very much less than the cost of a new refuse vehicle, potentially damaged by fire. Rushcliffe Borough Council lights the way in collecting one tonne of batteries annually as the report says. That is an amazing number – indeed, it is a tonne of batteries not going in the bin with potential to cause fire. So let's come together and make a low cost progressive stride forward. Doing nothing is not an option'.

During discussion the following points were raised by Members:

- For option 'D', was it practically viable to have residents supply their own bags?
- Was a promotional campaign included in the costings for option 'D'?
- Rushcliffe Borough Council's scheme was very positively received.
- Local radio may be able to assist in promotion.
- Would vapes be included in the recycling?
- Was there a value in collecting old mobile phones too?

The Assistant Director of Operations and Public Protection confirmed that freezer like bags would be supported for use so the operatives could see what was inside. Funding was included within option 'D' for promotion of the scheme. Promotion and community engagement was to be widespread and was to include the engagement of young people.

The Waste and Recycling Manager confirmed that one-use vapes could be dismantled and the batteries taken out but vapes were to be considered within the scheme. The best methods of collecting mobile phones was to be consulted on with partners and considered.

It was proposed, seconded and AGREED that the Committee:

- a) **Noted the contents of the report.**
- b) **Recommended that option D - Kerbside Collection -The implementation of a kerbside scheme with residents providing their own bags as the most cost efficient and sustainable method.**

25. Work Programme 2023-24

The Committee noted the Work Programme 2023-24.

A Member asked that consideration be given to the recycling of mobile phones.

The Chairman confirmed that it would be considered as a future agenda item.

The Head of Corporate Projects, Policy and Performance confirmed that the LED streetlights were to be considered in December 2023 following budget approval. Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee will receive a report on their Key Performance Indicators in the February 2024 meeting, to commence on 1 April 2024.

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

The Committee were reminded of the site visit taking place at Mid UK in Barkston on Monday 23rd October 2023.

27. Close of Meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 11:55.