

CLEANER & GREENER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2021 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. McArthur (Chairman)

Cllr. Carroll (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Andrews, Bayley, Carroll, Collins, G. Darrington, Griffiths, Raikes and Roy

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Barnett, Dr. Canet and Firth

Cllr P. Darrington was also present.

11. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee held on 29 June 2021 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

12. Declarations of Interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

13. Actions from Previous Meeting

There were none.

14. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder, and Chairman, gave an update on services within her portfolio. The restoration and de-silting of Mill Pond was ready to start, but due to a sewage leak the silt was now contaminated and a new licence from the Environment Agency needed to be applied for. It was hoped work would start this month. Members were also advised that unfortunately during lockdown the Heritage lottery fund changed the criteria for bidding for funding to enable works at Bradbourne Lakes. This resulted in the bid the Council had put in was now invalid. Working with additional partners going forward it was anticipated that the new bid would be submitted by the end of the month. A full update would be presented to the Committee in January.

A new compactor bin for Town Centres was being trialled and 50 of the new smart bins were in place in some of the more rural areas of the District. Along with more people returning to commuting and offices the business development team were looking at making parking season tickets more flexible.

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The Facilities Management Team were continuing to look after the offices and were keeping them Covid secure especially with the office moves. Members were advised that many other local authority staff had not yet returned to their offices as they were not Covid safe.

Emergency planning had been proactive ahead of winter to arrange sandbags supplied and the CCTV Team recently received its annual accreditation and had supplied information to the Police which had resulted in excellent preventative action and arrests. Members were also advised that she had attended the Scrutiny Committee and the CCTV Service had also been scrutinised by a Scrutiny Working Group.

Members expressed their thanks for the smart bins and the de-silting of the northern lake at Bradbourne Lakes.

15. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit committee

There were none.

16. Budget 22/23: Review of Service Dashboard and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAS)

The Chief Officer - Finance and Trading presented the report which set out updates to the 2022/23 budget within the existing framework of the 10-year budget and savings plan. The report presented growth and savings/additional income proposals that had been identified which needed to be considered, and requested further suggestions from Members, before finalising the budget for 2022/23.

Informed by the latest information from Government and discussions with Cabinet, it was proposed that the Council continued to set a revenue budget that assumed no direct funding from Government through the Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus. This would result in the Council continuing to be financially self-sufficient. To achieve this aim and to ensure a balanced budget position over the next 10-year period would continue to be challenging due to the ongoing financial impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, homelessness and inflationary pressures.

The budget process would be the same as two years ago as opposed to the shortened process last year, but streamlining the process in future years was being investigated.

No changes had been made to the assumptions at this stage, and the annual budget gap included in the report was £100,000 which related to the annual savings target. It was expected however, that the gap would increase.

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Members discussed the report and it was confirmed that the growth proposal was for investigation management software to enable the Environmental Enforcement team to prosecute offences more effectively.

It was suggested that Members consider moving to electronic agendas.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that the growth proposal identified in Appendices E & F to the report (SCIA 06 (22/23)) applicable to this Advisory Committee, be considered.

17. Net Zero 2030 Update - October 2021

The Principal Planning Officer (Policy) presented a report which outlined the progress on the Net Zero 2030 Actions, which had been agreed in spring 2021. Good progress on achieving the Net Zero 2030 actions had been made, with the majority of actions ongoing until 2030.

Member's attention was brought to seven areas of interest from Appendix A which was a summary of progress for all the actions. The majority of actions would remain longer term and ongoing. Officers continued to work closely on the Air Quality Action Plan and other corporate documents. Partnership working across Kent continued particularly through the Climate Change Network.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the public sector equality duty.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

18. Service Update: Environmental Health

The Environmental Health Manager presented the report which provided a service update on Environmental Health. The Council had recently brought the Environmental Health function back 'in house' as of 1 July 2021. The Team undertook a variety of statutory functions across a wide range of disciplines, which had a significant influence on public health and community wellbeing.

It was highlighted to Members that although the change from the Partnership had resulted in some disruption and a number of challenges, including loss of experienced staff, short term resilience and skill gaps; there were some exciting opportunities which included focussing on the Council's priorities, increased visibility of the Team and accountability, as examples. Members' attention was also brought to the Team's priorities for the next 12 months.

Members discussed the report, noting in particular the wide variety of areas which the Team covered, and the small team to carry out the number of different statutory and non-statutory duties. Members asked questions of clarification in regards to animal breeding, light pollution and the public health duty. In response to Members questions, the Environmental Health Manager advised that if a nuisance complaint was made, the Team has a statutory duty to make initial enquiries and information gathering before progressing further.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

19. Tree Management Strategy 2021 - 2031

The Head of Direct Services presented the report which set out the draft 10-year Tree Management Strategy for the Council. The aim of the strategy was to assist and inform residents, Council officers and Councillors of the Council's responsibilities and strategy regarding its own tree stock. There was over 7,000 hectares of woodland that covered across Sevenoaks District. This equated to over 19% of the district being covered by woodland. The Strategy linked strongly to the Council's Plan, and Net Zero 2030 commitment.

Members discussed the report and in response to questions Members were advised that a future open spaces strategy would be brought for consideration by Members, and there was external funding available to help assist with dealing with Ash Dieback. Under the traffic light code the Team had responsibility to make the tree safe within 24hours and then two weeks for remedial work.

Action 1: For Head of Direct Services to provide details of the trees planted to replace those removed during construction of the new White Oak Leisure Centre.

Action 2: For Head of Direct Services to share details on external funding available to assist with dealing with Ash Dieback.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that the draft 10-year Tree Strategy 2021-2021, be agreed.

20. Work Plan

The work plan was noted with the following additions:

18 January 2022

- Bradbourne Lakes
- Net zero 2030 update
- Review of Direct Services

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- Review of Animal Welfare Licensing Regime

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.57 PM

CHAIRMAN