

CLEANER & GREENER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2023 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. McArthur (Chairman)

Cllr. Roy (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Alger, Clack, G. Darrington, Kitchener, Morgan, Varley and White

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Barker and Shea

Cllrs. Paul Darrington, Manamperi, and Manston were also present.

1. Appointment of Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr McArthur be appointed Chairman of the Advisory Committee for 2023/24.

(Cllr McArthur in the Chair)

2. Appointment of Vice Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr Roy be appointed Vice Chairman of the Advisory Committee for 2023/24.

3. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

5. Actions from Previous Meeting

There were none.

6. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder, and Chairman, presented an update on the services within her portfolio. Food inspections had occurred at 100% of High Risk establishments. A noise complaint case against a stud farm would be reheard in December. A review of the fees and charges for Environmental Health services would be undertaken in the future to ensure the service could recoup its costs.

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The Licensing Team was now fully staffed and performance was high against their indicators. The application to extend the operating hours of a restaurant and bar in Sevenoaks had been refused at a Licensing Hearing. A premises license had been granted to a new corner shop in Sevenoaks. A Licensing Hearing would take place on 20 June for the Knockholt Festival. New database systems for record keeping were being investigated. The existing pavement licensing scheme would be extended on a temporary basis.

Discussions were ongoing with the Kent Climate Group regarding encouraging taxis to move to electronic vehicles.

The Direct Services team were carrying out their annual review of parking services, which would be brought to the Committee in the future. An options report on paid pest control and cesspool services will also be brought to Committee. Refuse collection weights remained at a high level, but rounds were being completed within their target timescales. The Portfolio Holder read a letter from a resident near the Mill Pond, which thanked the Committee for their work in helping clear the pond of silt.

In response to questions, the Chief Officer for Planning & Regulatory Services clarified that an update on Net Zero progress would be brought to the Committee in the future. The Council had decided against having a dedicated Climate Change Officer because it was felt that Net Zero was the responsibility of every officer in every service.

7. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit committee

There were none.

8. Role of the Advisory Committee and Key Challenges

The Chief Officer for Finance & Trading and the Chief Officer for Planning & Regulatory Services gave a [presentation](#) on the role of the Advisory Committee and its key challenges. These included problems that had begun with the pandemic and not abated, such as increased amounts of waste for collection. Issues around recruitment and upskilling staff were also highlighted. The Officers highlighted some of the measures that had been already brought in to address these problems, such as altering the waste collection routes and increased training, but advised that further work would be necessary.

In response to questions, they advised the Committee that demand for the car parking services provided by the Council was growing, but had not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. Ensuring that the number of car parks and electronic vehicle charging points were balanced with the market was also a priority. The upturn in waste collection was likely due to a change in habits among customers in the District.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

9. Active Travel Update

The Chairman presented the report, which updated the Committee on the Council's work to provide safe and attractive walking, wheeling, and cycling routes across the District. The Principal Infrastructure Delivery Officer outlined the progress of the consultation on the Sevenoaks Town East-to-West route. The drop-in session on 6 June was well attended, and another would be held on 12 July, to which Members were invited to attend. Over 120 online surveys had been completed. The consultation would run until 14 July.

A further £184,000 of funding had been secured from Active Travel England for the Sevenoaks to Otford route. This would progress the scheme to the outline and detailed design stage, after the feasibility study had been updated. Sustrans had been appointed as consultants for the Swanley Urban Area Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). They previously completed the Sevenoaks Urban Area LCWIP, providing consistency across the schemes. They advised that walking would likely be the priority for the scheme, but that cycling and wheeling would not be neglected. Stakeholder engagement was planned for 29 June.

In response to questions, the Officer clarified that improvements to the roundabout near to the Quarry site were included in the planning permission for the site. Ongoing engagement between the developer of the site and the consultants would be necessary. The Sevenoaks Urban Area LCWIP aimed to be a foundation for a network to increase connectivity, but was entirely dependent on external funding. This meant that the scheme was reactive, but the completed routes would serve as hard evidence to help get further funding. The Officer agreed to provide a timeline of the plans and funding for the Active Travel scheme to the Committee.

Action: For the Principal Infrastructure Delivery Officer to provide a timeline for the Active Travel Scheme to the Committee.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

10. Update on Car Idling Campaign

The Chairman presented the report, which set out the Council's Vehicle Idling campaign. The campaign addressed Measures 11 & 12 of the Air Quality Action Plan. Every school in the District was approached, and 15 schools responded. The competition ran from October to December 2022, with 66 entries received. Posters of the overall winners were being produced to go out to schools, and visits were also planned to discuss vehicle idling.

The Environmental Health Manager outlined the Council's wider work to improve and monitor air quality. The Council was within DEFRA guidelines for PM2.5, but additional requirements to achieve targets and reduce population exposure by 2040 would come in. Domestic combustion was the primary source of PM2.5 within the District, accounting for 27% of emissions. A combination of monitoring and resident engagement work was planned to reduce this. No monitoring locations exceeded national objective levels in 2022.

In response to questions, the Officer explained that the uptake from schools had been relatively low, but that the scheme was ongoing; the Air Quality Promotions Officer would continue to visit schools to discuss vehicle idling, and it was anticipated that more schools would get involved in the future. The campaign was competing against other priorities at the time, but as it continues it was expected to reach a larger number of schools.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

11. Air Quality Assessment Swanley

The Chairman presented the report, which outlined the results from the Swanley Air Quality Assessment. The assessment validated the boundaries of the existing management area, but noted that this would be kept under review to ensure they were accurate. Consultants collected traffic data for the source apportionment exercise, and determined that diesel cars, light goods vehicles, and heavy goods vehicles were responsible for the majority of emissions in both air quality management areas. This supported the actions within the action plan, and integrated well with the LCWIP. Members for Swanley will be consulted on additional measures to further reduce emissions in the area.

In response to questions, the Chief Officer for Planning & Regulatory Services explained that the Environmental Health team were engaged in the planning process to provide technical expertise. The data that had been collected would be used to better inform recommendations to the Committee. He further explained that the Council took a holistic approach to reducing emissions. Work to reduce car journeys from residents was targeted at both directly encouraging people to walk, cycle, or wheel, and removing barriers to residents that might prevent them from doing so.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

12. Liability for Trees on Common Land

The Chairman introduced the report which updated Members on the current management of a number of Commons pursuant to a scheme made under the Commons Act 1899 and the extent of the Council's liability. The Head of Direct Services advised that the Council made a scheme for the regulation and management of any Common within the District, under Section 1 on the Commons Act 1899 which was approved in 1925 by the Secretary of State and amended in 1963 and 1966. The Scheme identified approximately 280 hectares of commons land.

Legal advice on the Council's liability for trees on commons land had significantly changed. The Council's primary obligation is to preserve and protect the trees from harm, such as stopping unauthorised felling, rather than to active arboriculture management. As there were identified owners of the Commons, the duty of care under the Occupiers Liability Act imposed a statutory duty on the occupier on visitors' safety. The Council should thus also change its working

practice, to reflect Counsel's advice and recent case law, as it was not reasonable to expect the Council to bear all costs for arboriculture works across the commons land scheme.

Members discussed the report. The Head of Direct Services explained that the Council could intervene in cases where land owners were not responding to health & safety issues, such as diseased trees. In these instances the Council would be able to recoup costs after the fact. This change would not affect any ongoing tree works.

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 report be approved.

13. Government's Resilience Framework

Members considered the report which provided an update on the UK Government Resilience Framework which had been published in December 2022. The new framework was built around three fundamental principles: a need for a shared understanding of the risks we face; focus on prevention and preparation; and that resilience requires a whole of society approach. The Government framework proposed a number of fundamental changes to the current local arrangements for resilience forums and accountability.

The Head of Direct Services advised that the framework was the first articulation of how the UK Government would deliver on a new strategic approach to resilience. He further highlighted to Members that the multi-agency work across planning, preparation, response and recovery at the local level would continue to be the building block of the UK's resilience. All risks and emergencies and their impacts were local; only some are regional or national.

In recognition of the central, and growing, role of Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and to ensure that all parts of England could anticipate, prevent, prepare for, respond, and recover from risks and emergencies, the UK Government planned to work to significantly strengthen LRFs. The Kent Resilience Forum had been recognised as current best practice. The three pillars to the reform were Leadership, Accountability, and Integration of resilience into the UK's levelling up and growth mission and wider local policy and place making.

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 report be noted.

14. Work Plan

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The Work Plan was noted, with the following additions:

10 October 2023

- Climate Change Update

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.03 PM

CHAIRMAN