

## Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2024 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Roy (Chairman)

Cllr. Bayley (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Alger, Bayley, Bulford, Clack, G. Darrington, Gustard, Kitchener, Manston, Roy, Shea and White

Cllrs. Lindop and Robinson were also present via a virtual media platform which is not recognised as attendance under the Local Government Act 1972

### 1. Appointment of Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr Roy, be appointed as Chairman of the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee for 2024/25.

(Cllr. Roy in the Chair)

### 2. Appointment of Vice Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr. Bayley be appointed Vice Chairman of the Advisory Committee for the year 2024/25.

### 3. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Advisory Committee meeting held on 22 February 2024, be approved and signed by the Chairman as correct record.

### 4. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

### 5. Actions from Previous Meeting

There were none.

### 6. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Chairman and Portfolio Holder started her update by paying tribute to her predecessor, Cllr McArthur who had held the role for over 5 years and detailed some

## Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee - 16 July 2024

of her achievements. Since taking up the role in May, The Portfolio Holder had met with all the key officers and Managers in her portfolio to discuss priorities and challenges and how she could add value. Time had also been spent in the CCTV room and at Dunbrik Depot. She was delighted to share that without exception the team were passionate about what they did and extremely dedicated.

Moving on to updates following the last meeting of Cleaner & Greener the Committee were advised that the Council had been successful in its National Lottery Heritage Fund bid for £1.6m for major improvements at Bradbourne Lakes in Sevenoaks, the biggest overhaul of the Lakes since they were built nearly 300 years ago. In July the project was formally started with the initial payment of £227,000. This will be spent on employing a Project Manager to oversee the works, setting up the project, tendering and getting the site works and surveys underway.

A number of fly tipping incidents had been brought to the attention of the Direct Services Environmental Enforcement team, who were busy investigating a growing number of fly tipping incidents across the District and were actively issuing Fixed Penalty Notices of £400 to offenders for smaller quantities of rubbish being dumped. Currently there were over 15 active prosecutions underway.

Residents were encouraged to be vigilant and to report any suspicious activity to our Enforcement Team using the online reporting tool on the Council's website – or dialling 101 if witnessing incidents taking place.

### 7. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit committee

There were none.

### 8. Active Travel Update

The Chairman presented the report which updated Members on the active travel projects being pursued by the District Council to provide safe and attractive routes for walking, wheeling and cycling across the district in partnership with Kent County Council (KCC).

The active travel projects were largely secured utilising external funding from Government (Active Travel England) in partnership with KCC to investigate and where possible deliver routes for walking, wheeling and cycling across the District. The main objective was to create safer and more attractive environments to encourage people to leave their cars at home for shorter journeys.

Appendix A set out each of the active travel projects being undertaken through the secured funding. Key projects were highlighted which included the completion of local cycling and walking Infrastructure plans (LCWIPS) for Sevenoaks and Swanley Urban areas. These identified improvements at the local level and could be used as evidence to help secure further funding. The Sevenoaks east to west wheeling and

## Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee - 16 July 2024

cycling route had recently been consulted on for a second time following revisions to design in response to comments made. The scheme was supported by 67% of respondents and it was anticipated for construction to begin over the summer and to be completed by the end of the year.

Stakeholder engagement had allowed the Sevenoaks to Otford route design work to be nearing completion however public support would be required to progress the scheme to 'Construction Ready' Status to enable officers to apply for funding.

Stakeholder engagement was undertaken for the Sevenoaks to Seal to Otford route which highlighted a request to encompass Kemsing into the route to enhance connectivity with Seal and Otford. This would utilise funding from Community Infrastructure Levy receipts and officers confirmed they would be continuing to pursue all funding options.

Members asked questions of clarification with a focus on joining up proposed cycle routes.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

### 9. Recycling Reusable Sacks Update

The Chairman presented the report which updated Members on the current domestic waste and recycling collection service for recycling and the agreed process for the introduction of reusable recycling sacks for life across the district which would be rolled out from September. A zonal approach using the existing collection rounds would be used, and the entire zone would be supplied before moving onto other areas. The current clear recycling sacks could continue to be used whilst waiting for delivery of the new reusable sacks, and once received they could be used immediately. Members were further advised that 57,000 sacks had been ordered which included 5,000 sacks as stock for residents who may require additional or replacement sacks, free of charge.

A cross departmental officer project group to manage all aspects of the reusable recycling sacks rollout had been set up and a full communication plan to ensure residents were ready for the new arrangements. Around 5% of residents would continue to use the clear sacks going forward due to logistical issues but mostly were restricted to New Ash Green, Mobile Park homes and a small number of flats. All residents would be notified in writing during the roll out stage if they were to continue using clear sacks and these would continue to be provided free of charge.

Members discussed the report, asking questions of clarification of the Head of Direct Services. In response to questions Members were advised that the new reusable recycling sacks were not an 'opt in' service option, although clear sacks would still be collected. The new reusable recycling sacks needed to be used and were larger so held more recyclable materials than the clear sacks. It was stressed that should residents use their own sacks, they needed to be clear so the refuse teams could see what was inside the sacks to-check for any cross contamination. If this was the case it

## Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee - 16 July 2024

had to go into the black residual waste side of the freighter. It was also clarified that residents did not have to put the new reusable recycling sacks out every week and thus it was not expected to take any longer to collect the recycling bags overall. It was highlighted that the importance of the larger sacks was to encourage recycling and reduce black sack residual waste.

As recycling were mostly lighter materials, it was not anticipated that there would be any manual handling issues. Many other local authorities also used this method for collecting recyclable materials and so the council was in a position to learn from their experiences. A lot of communication would be carried out in educating and reassuring residents over the new collection.

In response to a question regarding finances Members were advised that the purchase price of the bags were included in the budget and would create a saving of £200,000 from year 2 (2025/26.) The sacks were expected to last around 7 years before they would need to start to be replaced.

### Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the progress and update as detailed in the report, be noted.

### 10. Domestic Waste and Recycling Update

The Chairman presented the report, which updated Members on the current and future domestic waste and recycling challenges and proposed a number of new opportunities for the District. It was vital that the Council actively planned to change and improve weekly waste collection services, due to the Government regulations to deliver on its environmental targets. The priority was to increase efforts to recycle more and lower black residual waste, which was key to deliver greater value to taxpayers, as well as working towards the climate change ambitions. The Chairman also highlighted to Members that a training session for Members on Government Regulations and the challenges being faced on waste and recycling collections would be arranged.

Members discussed each of the recommendations as set out within the report in turn. Whilst discussing recommendation (a), although the desk top review was welcomed, some Members expressed concern that there were no timings or smart targets and whether some of the other recommendations could be linked together. In response to concerns raised Members were advised that there was an opportunity for other recommendations to be started in advance of the desk top exercise, and where possible to avoid delaying small changes which could have a positive impact relatively quickly. It was not possible to put a timescale on the desk top exercise as statutory guidance had not been received from Government. Therefore, the Council was reliant on DEFRA for what would happen and when. However, by carrying out the review this would allow all options to be considered whilst further information was waited

## Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee - 16 July 2024

for. Further discussion took place on increasing recycling rates and its inclusion within the recommendation to Cabinet.

Members considered recommendation (b) for a residents' survey and what this would include and the type of questions to ensure meaningful information was received. Members discussed recommendation (c) 'fair use' and what this could involve. The Head of Direct Services advised that it was not about limiting the number of bags, but rather to educate those households who were regularly putting out overfilled and high levels of black sacks with no recycling. Enforcement was always a last resort but there were powers to assist should education not be sufficient. Members discussed the wording of the recommendations. Members were supportive of recommendation (d) and in regard to any changes to fees, these would have to be agreed by Members.

Discussion moved onto recommendation (e) regarding obtaining legal advice on the Environment Act 2021.

In response to questions, Members were advised that a lot of the act was open to interpretation and in order to ensure decisions regarding waste collections were made lawfully by seeking Counsel advice it would benefit the long-term review. In response to concerns raised regarding the regulations and Statutory Instruments which were still awaited, Members were advised that the legal advice would be on the primary legislation which would not be changed by further regulations as these were there to support it.

Members considered the recommendation (f) for a Member Working Group and the Membership of the Group. It was noted that there was a focus within the draft terms of reference of communication and educating. Members discussed whether the terms needed to be wider, to incorporate some further discussion of points raised earlier in the meeting. Members were advised that due to the short time frame available before the roll out of the reusable recycling sacks the Working Group needed to focus on customer communications and resident feedback and to widen the terms of reference would not be pragmatic. The Chairman advised that if necessary, further working groups could be set up as information comes through from government, desk top exercises and surveys.

### 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

- a) an internal desktop review, exploring service opportunities, costs and increasing recycling rates for new waste collection options that include food and glass collection, be undertaken;

## Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee - 16 July 2024

- b) a waste & recycling resident's survey, following the roll out of the new reusable recycling sacks, be undertaken in 2025;
- c) fair use waste rules and education to help reduce residual waste where excessive and constant high volumes of waste were presented, be developed;
- d) a new booking system and review of the fee to reflect the service offered for garden wastepaper sacks, be introduced;
- e) legal advice on the new requirements of the Environment Act 2021 on other waste collection opportunities under the legislation, be obtained; and
- f) a Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee working group be set up with a Membership of Cllrs. Bayley (Chairman), Alger, Clack, Manston, Roy, and Cllr Horwood (consultative member), with the terms of reference as set out in the agenda pack.

### 11. Work Plan

The work plan was noted with the following additions:

- Working Group Report
- Climate Change Update
- Trade waste update.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.42 pm

CHAIRMAN