

Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. McArthur (Chairman)

Cllr. Roy (Vice Chairman)

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

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Barker

Cllrs. P. Darrington and Robinson were also present.

Cllr. Manston was present via a virtual media platform which did not constitute attendance as recognised by the Local Government Act 1972.

28. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held 10 October 2023 be approved, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

29. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

30. Actions from Previous Meeting

There were none.

31. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder, and Chairman, gave an update on the services within her portfolio. The Environmental Health service had seen a reduction in the number of complaints received, but this had not lessened workloads as there were absences for long-term illness within the team. A contractor was providing responses to planning applications, which alleviated some of this pressure. A court case concerning a breach of an abatement notice for a farm in Horton Kirby would take place in December. An offer had been presented to an applicant for the Environmental Health Manager role, and it was hoped that they would join the Council by Spring 2024.

The Licensing Team had processed a number of applications for Temporary Event Notices in the run-up to Christmas and the New Year. The service was performing very well against its targets. The team were managing the consultation on the

Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee - 23 November 2023

council's Taxi Policy, which would be presented to the Licensing Committee in January. Pavement Licensing had been formally placed under the Council's remit, and a review of fees for this would be undertaken.

There were ongoing staff shortages due to sickness within the CCTV team. An external company was being considered to cover the Out-of-Hours service on an ad-hoc basis because of this. The team had received praise from the police recently after they tracked a perpetrator wanted for violence against a vulnerable female, who was later arrested.

The Safety Advisory Group had investigated the outbreak of norovirus at Hever Triathlon, alongside HSE. Current findings suggested that the virus was already present in the river silt, which had been disturbed by the triathlon. This would be a learning point for event organisers.

Direct Services had submitted a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £2.3million for the redevelopment of Bradbourne Lakes. New partners in Historic England, the Rivers Trust, Thames Water, and KCC's Floods team had come forward to support the bid. A new duck feeder has been installed in the area.

The Portfolio Holder shared [some pictures](#) of the newly refurbished Mill Pond, and thanked the team for their hard work in the area.

A consultation on Sunday parking charges would run from the end of November until the end of December.

The new waste collection routes, introduced last year, had produced a year-to-date fuel saving of 15%, or roughly £70,000. 13 old vehicles had been replaced over the past year, to reduce the carbon emissions of the fleet.

32. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit committee

There were none.

33. Budget 2024/25: Review of Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs)

The Chief Officer – Finance and Trading presented the report which set out updates to the 2024/25 budget process within the existing framework of the 10-year budget and savings plan.

Some changes had been made to future assumptions and they would continue to be reviewed during the budget process. The key cost driver continued to be inflation, with pressure coming through on service demand, the pay award and the cost of goods and services. The items listed in Appendix E reported a current annual budget gap of £1.368m. Members were advised that they were likely to have to make more difficult decisions during the 2024/25 budget setting process than they had had to make for many years.

Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee - 23 November 2023

Informed by the latest information from Government and discussions from Cabinet, it was proposed that the Council once again set a balanced 10-year budget and continued to aim to be financially self-sufficient with no direct funding from Government through additional Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus.

The report presented growth and savings items that had been identified which needed to be considered, and requested further suggestions from the Advisory Committee, before finalising the budget for 2024/25.

It was noted that the growth items SCIA 08 and SCIA 09 identified in Appendices G and H were considered in further detail in Minute 37 – Pest Control Service Review, and Minute 38 – Cess Pool Service Review, and consideration of these items would be better conducted separately.

The Committee considered the savings proposals set out in Appendices G and H, which were the removal of the supply of black sacks for residents, the provision of recycling “bags for life” in place of disposable recycling sacks, and the closure of the Bat & Ball and Greatness Air Quality Monitoring Stations. There was support for these proposals.

Members gave further consideration to additional suggestions for growth and savings which had been suggested by Members and required consideration of the Committee. Those suggestions relevant to this Advisory Committee were as follows:

- Reduce the number of refuse collections and street cleaning sessions per month by one.
- Issue sustainable, stronger waste bags to residents, and collect them fortnightly rather than weekly.
- Provide a new market in New Ash Green
- Reduce the Net Zero budget.

Following debate Members agreed that none of the suggestions would be recommended to Cabinet.

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) The saving proposal (SCIA 4) identified in Appendices G&H to the report applicable to this Advisory Committee, be considered; and
- b) That no further income or growth proposals were identified.

Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee - 23 November 2023

34. Scrap Metal Fees

The Head of Licensing presented the report, which outlined the proposed fees for applications for scrap metal licenses. Members' attention was brought to the supplementary agenda, which corrected an error in the original report. The fees for 2024/25 were proposed to include an inflationary cost of 7%. The officer explained that the fees were set out on a cost recovery basis, and provided the authority with the funding needed to administer the legislation and ensure compliance. Enforcement was an ongoing issue for the team, as there were legal barriers around stopping collectors on the street. The 7% increase in fees would come into effect in April 2024.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that the fees as below be approved:

Type of Application	2023/2024 Current Fee	2024/2025 Proposed Fee
Site Licence – Grant (3 years)	£532	£545
Site Licence – Renewal (3 years)	£449	£460
Collectors Licence Grant/Renewal (3 years)	£324	£332
Minor administrative change to licence	£36	£37
Variation – change of site manager	£193	£198
Variation from collector to site licence	£230	£236
Variation from site to collector licence	£149	£153

35. Review of Pre-Application Advice Charges & Other Admin Fees

The Head of Licensing Partnership presented the report, which set out the proposed fees for the pre-application advice service for 2024-25. Members' attention was directed to the Supplementary Agenda, which contained a corrected report and

Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee - 23 November 2023

appendix which indicated that the fees for 2024-25 would include an inflationary cost of 7%. These fees were rounded to whole numbers as there had been issues previously with payment systems losing the pence in the transaction, which then had to be chased.

Members discussed the report.

Resolved: that it be recommended to Cabinet that the appropriate fee levels as set out in Appendix A of the Supplementary Agenda be approved.

36. Animal Welfare - Review of Fees & Charges

The Head of Licensing presented the report, which set out proposed changes to the fees and charges for licenses relating to animal activities, to allow for full cost recovery. The current schedule of fees was from 2018 and no longer recovered the cost of operating the services. Members were advised that the A review was initially planned for 2021 when the licenses issued under the new Animal Welfare Regulations 2018 expired, but that changes in the Environmental Health service, such as the termination of the partnership with Dartford, had delayed it. The updated time and cost analysis indicated that there had been significant increases, as a result of the staff pay award, rises in the cost of administration, and the professional qualification of the Animal Welfare Officer.

In response to questions, the officer explained that the fees for licenses needed to cover the parts of the service that did not generate income, such as enforcement. Officers did not find that fees drove businesses to operate without a license; enforcement officers often found multiple other infringements when they investigated unlicensed businesses.

Resolved: That the adoption of the new fees for the licensing of activities under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018, the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 and the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 by Cabinet be supported.

37. Pest Control Service Review

The Head of Direct Services presented the report, which proposed the termination of the pest control service. This was a non-statutory service which operated at a market share of below 2%. In 2022/23, only 348 domestic jobs were completed. A single officer provided the service, meaning it had very little resilience. The officer explained that the business landscape for pest control services had changed; many home insurance policies now included pest control, and the service was not cost-effective. The council would work with the British Pest Control Association to source local accredited suppliers, to ensure that residents were able to access local businesses.

Members discussed the report.

Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee - 23 November 2023

Resolved: that it be recommended to Cabinet that Option 2, as detailed within the report, be approved.

38. Cess Pool Service Review

The Head of Direct Services presented the report, which set out the service review of the cess pool emptying service, and recommended its cessation. This was a non-statutory service for domestic and commercial customers, and had historically struggled to generate profit, despite frequent usage. The service was unable to secure profitable jobs in competition with the private sector. The service consisted of a single cesspool tanker, one driver, and one operator. A pre-MOT test investigation had shown that the tanker would fail in nearly every area, and would require significant investment to remain operable.

In response to questions, the officer explained that there were a number of private cesspool services within the district, so the termination of the service would not negatively impact existing customers. Only one other local authority across Kent, Surrey, and Sussex maintained a cesspool service, though they were also reviewing the service with a view to end it. Communications would be issued to existing customers to help them migrate to new providers. These would focus on promoting local services.

Resolved: that it be recommended to Cabinet that Option 2 - Cease the Cesspool Service, as detailed in the report, be approved.

39. Work Plan

The Work Plan was noted.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.23 pm

CHAIRMAN