

CLEANER & GREENER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2024 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Roy (Chairman)

Cllr. Bayley (Vice Chairman)

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

An apology for absence was received from Cllr. Abraham

Cllrs. P. Darrington, Hogarth and Robinson were also present.

Cllr. Clayton was also present via a virtual media platform which was not recognised as attendance under the LGA 1972.

20. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2024 be approved, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

21. Declarations of Interest

For transparency reasons Cllr Clayton declared for Minute 29 - Budget 2025/26: Review of Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs) that he was Chairman of Sevenoaks Town Council.

For transparency reasons Cllr Shea declared for Minute 29 - Budget 2025/26: Review of Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs) that she was a member of the Town Council who operate the markets.

22. Actions from Previous Meeting

There were none.

23. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder gave an update on the services within her portfolio. 25,000 reusable recycling bags had been delivered across the district. There had been some teething problems but feedback from crews had been positive, and requests for additional bags had been received. The Council would continue to collect feedback from residents to inform the new Waste & Recycling Strategy. The residential waste collection survey was being drafted for this purpose and would run for 6 weeks from 6 January 2025.

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A new project manager had been appointed to oversee the Bradbourne Lakes improvements. The Council had also agreed to fund a dedicated countryside ranger to work with Westerham Town Council and Seal Parish Council on the project to restore and enhance lowland heath and wood pasture in Greensands Commons.

The CCTV service continued to support the Sevenoaks District Community Safety Partnership through providing evidence to Kent Police. Anti-social behaviour and theft continued to be the most common crime recorded by the service, though shoplifting had also increased. The service also monitored parks and play areas throughout the district, and had dealt with 135 child related incidents this year. The service had further dealt with 11 domestic abuse incidents, 8 unauthorised encampments, 2 mental health safeguarding cases, 179 incidents of missing and vulnerable persons, and 2714 emergency out-of-hours calls this year.

24. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit committee

There were none.

25. Climate Change Strategy Action Plan

The Principal Infrastructure Delivery Officer presented the report, which set out the new Climate Change Action Plan following the adoption of the Climate Change Strategy by Cabinet on 14 March 2024. There were a number of actions for each priority identified in the Strategy, and each action had a delivery project. These would be delivered through both internal work and external partners, and were fully funded where possible. The Plan would be reviewed annually with internal monitoring, and was a live document.

In response to questions, the Principal Infrastructure Delivery Officer clarified projects were delivered where possible in line with viability.

Action: For the Principal Infrastructure Delivery Officer to discuss the replanting regime with a focus on declining species with the Countryside Manager.

The Principal Infrastructure Delivery Officer clarified that tackling Climate Change was an aim for all Council officers and check-in's would take place on a quarterly basis to assess where, if any, intervening action was required. A quarterly update would seek Portfolio Holder involvement, and a yearly update would go to the Committee.

With regards to timescales, these were defined as short, medium and long term and the flexibility would allow for annual reviews. It was explained that the Principal Infrastructure Delivery Officer sought to use smart indicators where possible. Undeliverable projects would be removed from the list. The Officer elaborated that there would be internal quarterly monitoring and the Committee would receive yearly updates.

Questions were raised regarding Green Leases. The Policy Officer clarified that the Council had not implemented Green Leases yet as there had been no new tenants.

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It was explained that the Leases may include clauses regarding green energy suppliers.

In respect of new development, the Principal Infrastructure Officer explained the Council would be looking to make new developments as climate friendly as possible. This would be included in the emerging Local Plan.

The Head of Finance further confirmed that SDC4 was included in the Treasury Management Plan and ensured that all financial aspects considered the climate change impact.

Questions were asked regarding emissions and the Policy Officer explained that the Council publish annual reports on their own emissions. She explained it was harder to provide actions for the Council to take against district wide emissions, due to different factors which may have an impact on the reduction of emissions, and this was acknowledged by the Department for Energy and Net Zero.

Resolved: That the

- a) Climate Change Strategy Action Plan, be noted; and
- b) Climate Change Strategy Action Plan, be monitored annually.

26. Annual Review of Parking Fees & Charges

The Head of Direct Services presented the report, which set out the annual review of parking management for 2025/26. The service budgeted for an inflationary increase of 2.5%, and the requirement to offset the assumed 25% reduction in parking in 2021/22, improving by 5% per year. This totalled an assumed parking increase of £306,000. Of this, £206,000 was adjusted for exceeding budget performance, efficiencies, and increased usage and enforcement. It was proposed that the remaining £100,000 be offset through a 3% increase on all parking fees and charges.

In response to questions, the officer explained that, should the inflationary increase be agreed, the service would undertake work to create an average 3% uplift across all parking fees and charges, to ensure the increases are sensible and easily payable. Cash payments for car parking were in decline, and accounted for roughly 20% of the service's income. The increases would be distributed across all fees, including season tickets.

Members discussed the proposed increases, and emphasised that the increases should be sensible and to round numbers. They further discussed the comparisons between the prices of the district's car parks and those in other districts. They expressed concern that the premium car park in Blighs was more expensive than premium car parks in other, larger, towns, noting that it may have a negative effect on local businesses. They further expressed concern that increases in parking fees may negatively impact people that travel into town centres for work. The officer explained that demand had increased by 8% since the last annual review, and that on-street parking was free in many areas close to the town

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centre. Permits were also available for people that required daily parking in towns.

Members further discussed the possibility of a park-and-ride scheme for the major towns within the district. They were advised that one such scheme had previously been operated in Sevenoaks during the redevelopment of Blighs, but that it was largely unviable, as travel into the town centre did not come from one direction on the whole.

Members expressed a desire for a holistic parking management strategy, considering economic development and residents' needs as well as revenue generation. The officer advised that this was already in development, and that it would be presented to the Advisory Committee in March 2025. It was moved and duly seconded that it be recommended to Cabinet that a comprehensive Car Parking Strategy be created. The motion was put to the vote and it was

Resolved: That

- a) it be recommended to Cabinet that Option 1 - an average of 3% increase in parking fees and charges, be approved; and
- b) it be recommended to Cabinet that a Car Parking Strategy be created.

27. Trade Waste Update

The Head of Direct Services presented the report which set out the business review of the commercial trade waste service. He advised that the commercial waste collection service had been run providing local business with a fairly priced transparent and flexible service. During recent years, a number of challenges has impacted the service and it was now being subsidised from other direct services budgets, and thus was not generating the required surplus. Following the business review undertaken there were three options available to Members regarding the service. Members considered the options which included, continuing the service as is, ceasing the service or reviewing the service to reinvent the service as a more compact commercial entity.

In response to questions, the officer explained that the service was currently too intermingled with the statutory service, and that the reinvention of the service would allow the service to be separated from and support domestic waste collection. Should the service be reinvented, but prove unviable within 12 to 18 months, the service would likely be recommended for termination. The number of customers for the service had grown beyond pre-Covid levels and it was anticipated that it would be viable. The reinvention of the service would not involve the creation of a separate company; there would be no change in ownerships or liabilities for the service. High disposal costs prevented the service from collecting glass, plastic, and metal recycling, but it was anticipated that operating as a more compact commercial entity may allow the Council to better

negotiate this issue. The Council would investigate having the service support the statutory domestic waste collection service where possible, such as through bulk bin collection.

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 Option 3 - Reinventing the service as a more compact commercial entity to deliver an income surplus - be approved.

28. Waste & Recycling Strategy

The Head of Direct Services presented the report, which set out the new domestic waste and recycling strategy for the District. The draft strategy set out the proposed approach to managing waste and recycling collections in a more sustainable way, with the aim of reducing the environmental impact of waste in the District.

The officer advised that following Cabinet's recommendations the internal review was undertaken which explored service opportunities, costs and increasing recycling rates for new waste collection options that included food and glass, as the current collection system did not meet national recycling targets, nor it was in line with forthcoming legislation. The new strategy would include a glass and food waste collection.

In response to questions, the officer explained that the monitoring of the carbon footprint of the strategy was included in the Climate Change Action Plan. Cost saving had not been included as an objective of the strategy as it was intended to be a top-level document indicating the direction of the service, though cost savings were implicit within the strategy. Fixed targets had not been included as improvement in recycling was linked to funding from the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs and were set by government. The review of the service would work to the strategy objectives and establish costings, options, and further targets. All operational and logistical changes would be presented to Cabinet and the Advisory Committee for approval. Market research companies and a Member Working Group were being consulted to ensure the survey was appropriate. Work was ongoing regarding kerbside glass collection arrangements for converted flats.

Members discussed the report. They noted the importance of the public consultation to inform the delivery of the strategy. They further noted that the council's national standing in relation to recycling rates would improve once glass collection commenced. They raised the inclusion of value for money as an objective within the strategy, as waste collection was a significant expenditure for the council, but expressed that it should not undermine service provision. They were further concerned that some of the objectives, such as regulatory compliance, aimed too low, and expressed desire for the strategy to go beyond

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compliance. The officer advised members that the service was not currently compliant with occupational safety and manual handling legislation.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That

a) Members comments on the proposed Waste and Recycling Strategy are noted and are submitted to Cabinet for consideration;

b) it be recommended to Cabinet that a public consultation on the delivery of the Waste and Recycling Strategy, be approved, delegating responsibility to the Portfolio Holder for Cleaner & Greener to agree the survey approach and questions; and

c) It be noted that a further report to Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee will be presented in March 2025 setting out options to deliver the Strategy, following the public consultation.

29. Budget 2025/26: Review of Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs)

The Head of Finance presented the report which set out updates to the 2025/26 budget process within the existing framework of the 10-year budget and savings plan. The position in the report set out an annual budget gap of £297,000 but recognised that this was likely to change as more information became available and options for further savings may be required.

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.

As part of the feedback received last year, all Members had been invited to make suggestions which related to the relevant Advisory Committee and would be set out in Appendix K. The appendix would form the basis to report to Cabinet all suggestions that were received even if not taken forward by the Advisory Committee. The Head of Finance also highlighted that budget training had been offered to all Members and two training sessions had been provided.

The report presented growth items that had been identified which needed to be considered, and requested further suggestions from the Advisory Committee and from members attending the meeting, before finalising the budget for 2025/26.

The Committee considered the growth proposal set out in Appendix H, which was an increase to the Direct Services budget for the replenishment of reusable

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recycling bags and a small amount of clear recycling sacks. The Head of Direct Services explained that there was demand for additional reusable bags from some residents and the service needed to hold a stock for replacements, and it was thus required that the growth item be agreed. There was support for the budget proposal.

Members gave further consideration to additional suggestions for savings which had been suggested to the Advisory Committee. Those which were relevant to the Advisory Committee were as follows:

- Reduce Street Cleaning by a quarter.

Members considered the suggestion. It was raised that the shortfall could be met by liaising more with community groups to reduce the burden on the council. The Head of Direct Services explained that the council did work with Town and Parish Councils and community groups but that it had a statutory duty as the street cleaning & litter authority, and the team were already very agile in their working depending on the time of year and service needs. Discussion continued on maximising opportunities to work with community groups.

It was also noted that work was being undertaken separately to look at fortnightly waste collections and communal points for waste collection.

- Cease the CCTV Service

Members discussed other suggestions which had been put forward, which included stopping CCTV or to receive external funding to support the service. Consideration was given and it was noted that the Council had a statutory requirement under the crime and disorder act and it was likely that the Police would argue that the CCTV service contributes to the reduction. It had been made clear that the Police and Crime Commission would not fund the CCTV service.

It was highlighted that full removal of CCTV from the towns would not be supported by members as it had a key role in crime reduction as well as assisting efficient deployment of assistance for homeless individuals. However, there was a suggestion to remove CCTV from car parks. The Head of Direct Services explained that 40% of the CCTV cameras were in car parks and the Council had won Safer Parking Awards as a result of car parks being covered by CCTV and the Council had the biggest request of footage from car parks.

- Solar Panels on SDC property and also across the District.

Members considered the suggestion of adding solar panels to Argyle Road Offices. It was raised that solar panels could be added to other buildings owned by the Council in addition to Argyle Road. It was considered that the panels could provide cheaper renewable power however there were some concerns whether this would

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provide savings within the discussed timescale. The Principal Infrastructure Delivery Officer explained that solar power was itemised on the action plan for council properties and formed part of the SDC1 Action to reduce carbon. They highlighted there was no budget for the cost of installation of the panels. The Head of Direct Services further explained that some locations were not suitable for solar panels as the energy generated would not be sufficient to power the location they were situated on. It was agreed that where required, the officers would liaise with other Local Authorities who had implemented solar panels.

There were no further suggestions received by writing.

The Chairman asked Members if they had any further suggestions.

Members suggested more efficient use of the Council offices and the possibility of condensing the useable area and leasing the remaining space. It was discussed that lights appear to be left on in unused areas during evening meetings. The Principal Infrastructure Delivery Officer confirmed this was being reviewed.

A further suggestion was made by a visiting member to increase revenue from local Markets. The Head of Direct Services confirmed that the success of markets was dependant on the traders attracted to the venues and that some traders preferred to sell online. There was limited success of markets in Sevenoaks and Edenbridge due to a lack of footfall and traders however the Council was trying to expand the markets.

The visiting member also asked whether the Council has use of the income provided from on-street parking. The Head of Direct Services explained that the Council had an integrated agreement with the County Council which allowed the Council to spend the income generated but this was governed by section 55 Transport Management Act. Any surplus was reported in the Annual Parking Report and this could then be used for other means.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that

- a) The growth proposal- reusable recycling sacks and clear sack stock (SCIA R13) identified in Appendices G & H to the report applicable to this Advisory Committee, be considered; and
- b) No further income or growth proposals were supported relevant to this Advisory Committee.

30. Work Plan

The work plan was noted with the following change:

March 2025

- Parking Strategy

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 9.53 PM

CHAIRMAN