

Minutes of a meeting of the EAP Sustainable Communities

Held at 9.30 am on Wednesday 11th October 2023 as a virtual meeting, via Zoom

Present:-

Members

Councillor Harriet Pentland (Chair)
Councillor Jennie Bone
Councillor Mark Pengelly

Councillor Tim Allebone
Councillor Jan O'Hara
Councillor Sarah Tubbs

Officers

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| Ian Achurch | Interim Head of Economy and Strategy |
| Lesley Elkington | Business Support Manager |
| Liam Faulkner | Grounds Services Manager |
| Lucy Hawes | Community Development Officer |
| Greg Haynes | Climate Change and Sustainability Officer |
| Rebecca Jenkins | Woodlands Manager |
| Graeme Kane | Interim Director – Place and Economy |
| Kerry Purnell | Assistant Director – Housing and Communities |
| Raj Sohal | Democratic Services Officer |
| Lauren Toll | Waste Performance Officer |
| Jonathan Waterworth | Assistant Director – Assets and Environment |

Also in attendance – Councillor Graham Lawman

32 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alison Dalziel and Dez Dell.

Councillors Mark Pengelly and Sarah Tubbs were in attendance, as substitutes.

33 **Members' Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

34 **Minutes from Meeting held on 9th August 2023**

RESOLVED that: The minutes of the meeting held on the 9th August 2023 be approved as an accurate record.

35 **Pollinator Strategy Update**

The Panel considered a presentation by The Grounds Services Manager, which provided an update regarding the North Northamptonshire Pollinator Strategy.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- Members expressed concern that in certain areas, grass had been allowed to grow and was not collected once cut. One member queried what could be done in future to ensure that this green waste would be collected.
- Members queried whether the local authority could influence land developers to plant more sustainable plants in open spaces, to provide additional habitats for wildlife.
- Members queried where existing 'Butterfly Banks' were located and requested additional information regarding planned sites for future implementation.
- Members queried whether the local authority had utilised alternatives to herbicides, in the treatment of weeds.
- One member queried whether it was possible for residents to 'opt out' from areas being mowed or sprayed (for example, to prevent wild flowers being destroyed).

In response, The Grounds Services Manager clarified that:

- The cutting of verges was carried out in collaboration with Highways and disposal costs of green waste were significant. Nevertheless, officers would assess how many prescribed cuts were to be scheduled for the next year, to mitigate the consequences of the over-growing of such spaces.
- The sustainability of planting in new developments was an issue for the consideration of planning.
- Two Butterfly Banks were located in Corby (Bonnington Walk and Collier's Avenue) and one more at the Kettering Leisure Village (Thurston Drive). A minimum of three additional sites were planned for Wellingborough in 2023/24, the location of which would be determined by net biodiversity gain.
- The use of various herbicide alternatives had been explored, such as hot foam however, these presented other adverse side effects. Glyphosate remained the most cost effective solution in treating weeds. Nevertheless, the usage of herbicides had been reduced considerably.
- The local authority would continue to communicate openly and work with North Northamptonshire residents regarding the mowing and spraying of certain spaces.

RESOLVED that: The report be noted.

36 Woodland Management Update

The Panel considered a report by The Woodlands Manager, which outlined North Northamptonshire Council's Woodland Project.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- Members commended the work of the Woodland Project, particularly in transforming woodland areas in Corby.

- One member encouraged officers to visit local allotments, which they suggested could potentially be utilised as ‘tree nurseries’.

In response, The Woodlands Manager clarified that:

- Officers would carry out a site visit to the allotment suggested by the member. Through the project, the local authority sought to reinstate some of the lost allotments across North Northamptonshire.

RESOLVED that: The report be noted.

37 HWRC Options Appraisal Feedback from Workshops

The Panel considered a report by The Business Support Manager, which outlined feedback received from the local authority’s Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) options appraisal.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- One member expressed concern regarding the size of the Corby HWRC and its ability to handle large volumes of visitors and traffic, particularly on weekends. The member queried whether it might be necessary to acquire another site for an additional, smaller HWRC.

In response, The Business Support Manager clarified that:

- It would be unlikely for the local authority to acquire an additional site for a HWRC, due to the significant cost it would pose.

RESOLVED that: The report be noted.

38 North Northamptonshire Greenway Strategy

The Panel considered a presentation by The Assistant Director of Housing and Communities, which outlined the North Northamptonshire ‘Greenway Strategy’ project.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- Members queried how the Greenway Strategy would be funded, if not through the Capital Programme, and what the local authority’s long-term aspirations for funding this project were.
- One member queried how routes for safe walkways would be prioritised, through the Greenway Strategy.

In response, The Assistant Director clarified that:

- Detailed cost plans would be required at each phase of project implementation. Having the strategy in place, as well as carrying out early feasibility studies, would allow the local authority to determine appropriate sources of funding (e.g. bidding for grants from organisations such as “Active Travel England”). Section

106 funding would also remain a significant contributory factor, though it would not account for funding the entirety of the project.

- Additional walkway routes could be added to the project plans, where demand for them existed. Officers emphasised the local authority's intention to promote active travel.

RESOLVED that: The report be noted.

39 Close of Meeting

The meeting concluded at 11:08am.

The next meeting of the EAP Sustainable Communities would be held at 9:30am on Wednesday 29th November 2023.