

Place and Environment Scrutiny Committee

At 7.00 pm on Tuesday 31st October, 2023

Held as a

Present:-

Shadow Members

Councillor Gill Mercer (Chair)
Councillor Valerie Anslow
Councillor Melanie Coleman
Councillor Emily Fedorowycz

Councillor Kevin Watt
Councillor Philip Irwin
Councillor Geoff Shacklock
Councillor Lee Wilkes

Officers

Also in attendance – Councillor

The Chair welcomed members and the viewing public to the meeting.

12 Apologies for absence

Resolved to note that an apology was received from Councillor Pengelly.

13 Non-Executive Members' Declarations of Interest (if any)

The chair invited those present, who wished to do so, to make a declaration of interest.

Councillor	Item	Reason	Interest
K Watt	17 – NN Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy	Non-Executive Director of Electric Places	Personal

Resolved to note the above declaration.

14 Approval of the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 August 2023

15 North Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme

The circulated report of the Executive Director of Place & Economy was received to consider the revised North Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme prior to it being presented to the Executive.

The draft revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) was appended to the report.

The Head of Policy & Placemaking, Growth & Regeneration, Simon Richardson, presented the report to the committee.

He explained that the council, must, in accordance with legislation, prepare and publish a LDS, which is a project plan providing a timescale for the preparation of documents that make up the area's development plan. The current LDS was adopted on 31 March 2022 and is being revised to ensure it is up to date.

The LDS provided a detailed timetable, which Mr Richardson expanded upon, for the programme of documents and provides updates on the title and nature of the documents, including the North Northamptonshire Local Plan, a Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan, and the remaining stages of the East Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2.

Also provided in the LDS was additional information regarding Neighbourhood Plans, some were being made, whilst others were being reviewed and the service area would provide support to parish councils with this work.

Discussions were ongoing about the NN Minerals and Waste Local Plan and therefore would not be included in the review of the LDS.

The chair thanked Mr Richardson for the detailed report and presentation and opened the discussion to the committee.

In summary, comments were made in relation to the following:

- Whilst appreciating that this was a lengthy piece of work, and that the process for making the plan would take a long time, the committee considered the timescale of 30 June 2025, being the deadline for the submission of the plan, as being ambitious. It was noted that there would be several outside elements that could control the timescale which would be out of the authority's hands. It was, however, noted that it was important to keep to the timescale and the officer hoped this would be achievable.
- Consultation Process – a request was made for any consultations to be publicised and widely disseminated to ensure that data collected was from all sources. It was suggested that workshops with members would help frame the new plan. Reference was made to town and parish councils' involvement in all consultations.
- Regarding Gypsy and Traveller sites it was suggested that ward councillors and town/parish councils were best placed to provide input into the location of the best and most appropriate sites.
- Green spaces – the importance of allocating plenty of green space and trees to provide open parkland and recreational land within development areas was stressed as being of particular value to communities.
- In relation to the Minerals and Waste timescale it was expected that this would feature in the LDS Shared Service for North and West Northants. Whilst this did sit with North Northants Council, the service was also provided by NNC for the West and consultations and agreement would need to be reached by both councils.
- Reference was made to the recent planning training and it was noted that further training would be offered to planning committee members in due course.
- Issues in relation to the cutting back of trees were raised and whilst appreciating that sometimes this had to happen due to health and safety issues the committee was keen to ensure that where necessary Tree Preservation

Orders (TPO) were in place with there being reluctance to cut back unnecessarily. It was clarified that trees with a TPO were a material consideration and as such this would be considered when determining an application.

- It was considered imperative that when employment areas or housing were being placed near to each other that consideration be given to the local community to ensure that where and how they lived was enhanced with the option of buffering to avoid undue noise and light.
- Enforcement issues, such as fly tipping should be dealt with efficiently, effectively and promptly.
- The committee suggested that a policy could be added to specify the amenity space required for new dwellings.
- It was noted that the Government is proposing to make changes to the planning system.

The chair thanked the committee for the good discussion and referenced the recommendation contained within the report, which required an amendment to read as follows:

It is recommended that members of the Place & Environment Scrutiny Committee consider the draft revised Local Development Scheme and subject to any comments agree a recommendation that the Executive be presented with the LDS for adoption.

The above recommendation was proposed by Councillor Wilkes and seconded by Councillor Coleman. On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried.

Resolved that the committee recommend that the Executive be presented with the Local Development Scheme for adoption.

16 Proposed Scoping for Developer Contribution Scrutiny Panel

The circulated report of the Executive Director for Place & Economy was received in relation to the formation of a Developer Contributions Scrutiny Panel.

The Assistant Director, Growth & Regeneration, Rob Harbour, presented the report to the committee explaining that there was a need to form a Scrutiny Panel to review the council's Developer Contributions function. Appended to the report was the scoping document for the panel. This indicated that there would be a focused piece of work undertaken between December 2023 and March 2024 with a report returning to the committee in April 2024.

The chair informed the committee that the membership of the panel would be made up of members of the committee, or other members, though not the Executive. The Head of Democratic Services recommended that there be between five and seven cross-party members, with no more than seven in total. Interest in sitting on the panel was registered by Cllrs Anslow, Coleman, Mercer, Watt and Wilkes. Details of the membership would be circulated in due course.

It was proposed by Councillor Fedorwycz and seconded by Councillor Wilkes that the recommendation within the report be approved. On being put to the vote this was declared carried.

Resolved that:

- (i) Approval be given to the formation of a Developer Contributions Scrutiny Panel;
- (ii) The scoping document, as appended to the report, be approved.

17 North Northamptonshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy

The circulated report of the Executive Director of Place & Economy was received to inform the committee of the formulation of the North Northamptonshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy.

The Head of Economic Growth & Sustainability, Ian Achurch, presented the report to committee.

He explained that in order to meet government targets to reduce greenhouse gases, improve air quality and in response to climate change, the UK is transitioning to electric vehicle transport, resulting in a requirement to formulate strategy documents to facilitate the delivery of electric vehicle ChargePoint infrastructure (EVCP).

A strategy would create a framework for developing an EVCP infrastructure network, serving the needs of North Northamptonshire residents and includes a series of policies and actions along with targets and key performance indicators that allow the council to measure progress. It will also help to secure funding to support the delivery of EVCP infrastructure.

A consultation on the strategy had taken place between 23 August 2023 and 11 October 2023, with responses currently being analysed, with a view to the strategy being adopted by the end of the year.

The report also detailed the work that had been ongoing to install EVCPs in a total of 36 locations in Corby, Desborough, Higham Ferrers, Kettering, Rushden Thrapston and Wellingborough, which serve residents without off-road parking. Further installations would be taking place through to Summer 2024.

The chair thanked the officer for his presentation and opened the report for discussion.

Members considered the report and made the following comments:

- Issues were raised about the speed of the charging points, with faster chargers preferred; and the cost of a charge, with on-street charging costing significantly more than charging at home.
- It was noted that it should be cheaper to charge vehicles overnight in car parks as electricity costs less off-peak.
- Supermarkets were suggested as ideal locations for faster charging and 'super-hubs' as the charging time could be in the region of 40 minutes.
- The security of existing car parks for those charging overnight and safety of users was raised. The officer clarified that this would be an important consideration for the location EVCPs and to ensure that appropriate surveillance and lighting is available for enhanced security.

- Assurances were sought that local knowledge would be ascertained before installing charging points, particularly in rural areas.
- Town and parish councils should be approached to recommend where best locations were, along with consultation with nearby residents.
- It was indicated that relatively few responses to the consultation had been received and it was suggested that other ways to consult should be considered in future such as speaking directly to residents, ward councillors and the use of workshops.
- It was noted that some disabled bays had been removed in certain locations and replaced with EVCP's and this removal was of concern; removal and replacement should be considered carefully.
- Enforcement should be enhanced, where a vehicle was parked in an EVCP bay but was either not an electric vehicle or the charge was not being used.
- Moving forward to when electric vehicles were in use by more people, questions were raised over how, practically, chargers could be provided for those without drives or allocated parking spaces and what the long-term solution would be. Terraced streets would become a particular issue.
- Reference was made to new homes and how planning regulations should include facilities for electric charging.
- It was also considered that Employers should be encouraged to provide fast charging points for their employees during working hours. It was confirmed that business events would be held to encourage participation.

The chair thanked members for their comments and input.

The recommendation to note the publication of the strategy was put to the vote and declared carried.

Resolved that the scrutiny and publication of the North Northamptonshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy be noted.

18 **Delivery of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) from April 2025**

The circulated joint report of the Assistant Director Highways & Waste and Business Support Manager (Waste) was received to review the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) operations ahead of the current outsourced arrangements ending on 31 March 2025.

Appended to the report was the HWR Options Appraisal undertaken during the Summer of 2023.

The Assistant Director Highways & Waste, Steve Smith, explained that the four household HWRC's were currently operated on a legacy Northamptonshire County Council contract which would end on 31 March 2025. A new contract would need to be put in place from 1 April 2025.

An options appraisal was undertaken by SLR Consulting. This identified that the existing network capacity was acceptable based on current demand and the HWRC's were located within a good travel distance. The facilities, however, required updating to better maximise the waste collection and maintain customer satisfaction and meet future demand.

The appraisal also looked at the options of bringing the service in-house or maintaining an out-sourced service. Taking everything into consideration the recommendation was for an outsourced service delivery model as the preferred approach to the next phase of service delivery.

The reasoning behind the recommendation was:

- Based on the options appraisal, as there is insufficient time to put in plan an in-house model by April 2025;
- An insourced service is likely to cost between 5-7% more per annum than an outsourced service which would be in the region of £140,000 more expensive to the council and would place greater pressure on council budgets.

The report therefore recommended that NNC secure a new contracted service with at least the same service level as is currently in operation. This would maintain the same opening hours, days, access and material accepted. Utilising the procurement process it is recommended that the council seek to enhance customer satisfaction while ensuring affordability, with the overall objective to provide reliable and efficient services.

The options appraisal reviewed each of the sites against good practice guidelines and whilst all sites could do with some improvement significant limitations were found at the Corby and Wellingborough sites, mostly due to constraints with the footprint.

Mr Smith clarified that an HWRC Strategy would be brought to a future committee to ensure the provision of HWRCs would meet population growth and would take into consideration members suggestions for a future service.

The chair thanked Mr Smith for his presentation and opened the report to the committee for discussion.

A summary of the points made are listed below:

- Whilst there was initial preference for the service to be operated in-house, the pressure of providing appropriate sites was understood, along with the acknowledgment of a potential annual increase in costs.
- The aim was to increase recycling and encouragement to do so, along with improvements to the existing sites was deemed to be of high importance.
- Concern was raised over the Corby site and the extension to the current lease for a three-year period. Comments about the site needing to be improved were considered and this would be something that be investigated.
- A question was asked about whether there was enough encouragement by site operators to re-use and how was this monitored. Officers clarified that 2.25% of items were re-used and the highest rate for this was in Corby. More opportunities for re-use would also be encouraged.
- Some concern was expressed that the renewal of the contract had not been looked at earlier, to give more opportunity to explore in-house options but the expertise found by out-sourcing was noted.
- It was asked if benchmarking comparisons with neighbouring, similar sized authorities, had been made. Officers confirmed that a benchmarking exercise had resulted in the findings that most authorities outsourced the provision.

- It was considered that consultation with users was necessary to encourage more use of the sites
- It was noted that many of the sites were closed for example on Mondays, including bank holidays, when users would wish for them to be open.
- Finances had to be carefully considered and the outsourcing option appeared to be cheaper but there was an understanding that the costs would depend on the market at the time of the tendering process.
- The committee raised concern that the cost could escalate, and that the decision was to be delegated and not brought back to the Executive. The officers assured the committee that there were spending limits that would need to be adhered to, if changes in terms of a reduction in services was needed to keep within budget, this would also be brought back for consideration.

The chair thanked the committee for its useful contributions, with discussions concurring that a new contract be procured with the service being outsourced.

It was proposed by Councillor Wilkes and seconded by Councillor Irwin that the motion within the report be put to the vote. The motion was declared carried with one abstention.

Resolved that the Executive be recommended to approve:

- (i) the commencement of the procurement of the council's future HWRC contract;
- (ii) the operation of the HWRC facilities in North Northamptonshire be delivered under an outsourced operating mode for a duration of 15 years;
- (iii) an extension to the current lease for the Corby HWRC for three years to enable a review to be undertaken for alternative provision in the area;
- (iv) that officers undertake a review of alternative provision of a HWRC facility in the vicinity of Corby, and to consider the sourcing of a new lease for, or purchase of, new or existing land, or utilisation of existing council owned land, dependent on which provided the greatest value to both the council and delivery of the service;
- (v) that delegated authority be given to the Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets, in consultation with the Executive Director of Place & Economy, the Executive Member for Finance and the Executive Director for Finance, to take any further decisions and/or actions required in connection with the procurement and award of the HWRC contracts, without the need to return to the Executive.

19 Close of meeting

There being no further business the chair declared the meeting closed at 9.55pm.

Chairman.....

Date

The meeting closed at Time Not Specified