

Executive Advisory Panel: Climate Change, Environment & Growth

21st July 2021 – 09:30am – Remote Meeting Via Zoom

PUBLIC MINUTES

Attendees: Councillor Harriet Pentland (Chair), Councillor Jennie Bone, Councillor Dez Dell, Councillor Graham Lawman, Councillor Anne Lee, Councillor Jan O'Hara, Councillor Elliot Prentice, Ian Achurch, George Candler, Beth Gordon Rob Harbour, Graeme Kane, Carol Mundy, Simon Richardson, Iain Smith, Raj Sohal, Jonathan Waterworth

1. Apologies for non-attendance

- Apologies for non-attendance were received from Councillor Tim Allebone.

2. Members' Declarations of Interests

- None received.

3. Strategy for Litter

- The Chair invited Graeme Kane (Assistant Director of Highways & Waste) and Beth Gordon (Operations Manager – Environmental Care) to introduce the report, who highlighted:
 - The purpose and objectives of the strategy.
 - The current service provision and consequences of littering.
 - The invention activities that had been undertaken by the local authority to support the strategy.
 - Work with partners and communities.
 - Infrastructure provision and enforcement.
 - The action plan of the strategy and next steps – the strategy would go to the executive committee for approval.
- Councillor Anne Lee acknowledged that the service was carrying out valuable work in Kettering, with its successful multi-agency approach, and questioned whether collaboration was taking place with fast food chains. Councillor Lee also raised that there had been successful schemes in other authorities, tackling littering by using

drones and artificial intelligence. She posited that North Northamptonshire should also seek to adopt such innovative methods to combat littering. Beth Gordon responded by explaining that the authority had done various work with fast food restaurants, such as sponsorship for litter bins, however; this presented time efficiency issues due to having to approach individual restaurants. Beth Gordon suggested that it would be interesting to analyse the results of innovative methods utilised by other authorities, such as Bournemouth, and possibly seek to apply it to future work in North Northamptonshire.

- Councillor Dez Dell remarked that due to the COVID-19 lockdowns, there had been a considerable reduction in littering, supported by valuable work by volunteers. Regarding mechanical sweeping, Councillor Dell questioned whether this was something residents could request to be done on their streets. Recycling bins had also been trialled previously in Kettering town centre however, these were often contaminated by other waste and would have to be sent to landfills. Councillor Dell questioned whether these bins would be reintroduced, accompanied by an educational campaign; so people would be aware of what not to put in them. Beth Gordon responded by explaining that residents could request mechanical sweeping and that the Council would evaluate each individual situation, as well as place signage so that vehicles could be moved from the street. She also explained that enforcement of punitive measures for fly tipping could take up to 18 months, depending on the complexity of each case. The authority was exploring the possibility of the reintroduction of recycling bins in Kettering - potential locations were being assessed. Nevertheless, she acknowledged the need for this to be accompanied by a public educational campaign.
- Regarding the £3M cost incurred by the local authority to clear fly tipping per annum, Councillor Elliot Prentice questioned how much of this cost had been recouped via enforcement of punitive measures. He also enquired whether changes had been made to the action plan of the strategy, as a result. Beth Gordon explained that fines generally did not cover the cost incurred as a result of fly tipping but were instead primarily used as a deterrent. The action plan of the strategy for litter had been developed continuously and comprised a mix of existing and new strategy, brought together cohesively.
- Councillor Jennie Bone expressed disappointment at the number of fixed penalty notices issued for fly tipping and stated that she would like to see an increase in fixed penalty notices, to serve as a greater deterrent.
- Councillor Graham Lawman acknowledged that greater education would be required around recycling and that the council's corporate plan would drive targeted spending. Therefore, he urged the members of the EAP to influence priorities to reflect combating litter.

ACTION: The EAP noted the report.

4. Bus Strategy Briefing Note

- The Chair invited Graeme Kane and Chris Wragg to introduce the report, who highlighted that:
 - The bus strategy was a commitment local authorities needed to make if they wished to receive central government funding in this area. The report set out the timescales for doing this.
 - The timescale presented would be a challenge as a bus service improvement plan would have to be drafted by October 2021. An enhanced partnership plan would have to be drafted by April 2022.
 - The enhanced partnership plan required extensive consultation with stakeholders, including formal objections - first draft would have to be completed by the end of October 2021, to meet the April 2022 deadline.
- Councillor Graham Lawman urged all members to get involved in the consultation of these plans, as wider engagement across North Northamptonshire would allow the authority to gain greater insight into its bus services.

ACTION: The EAP noted the report.

5. Climate Change Action Plan

- The Chair invited Rob Harbour (Assistant Director of Growth & Regeneration) to introduce the item, who highlighted that:
 - A number of actions from the climate change framework, from the task and finish group, were underway and being enacted.
 - Despite climate change lacking some resources, activities would be undertaken across the authority to support this issue.
 - The authority was in the process of declaring a climate emergency, which would be taken to the executive in due course.
 - A cabinet member would be appointed to deal with climate change matters specifically – a chief officer with lead responsibility.
 - Climate change would be at the heart of the new strategic plan for North Northamptonshire - this plan was currently in the evidence gathering stage of its formulation.
- Councillor Anne Lee emphasised the significant need for specific resources to be obtained in the area of climate change and that this would be a shared responsibility across services. Councillor Lee suggested that much educational work around climate change was required and that in order for this to be carried out, the authority would need dedicated resources for public campaigns. Rob Harbour acknowledged the need for specialist resources to drive the climate change agenda forward. He explained that the authority would embed climate change responsibilities in the job descriptions of vacant posts going forward and seek to recruit people into a team structure, providing specialist knowledge and expertise.

- Councillor Jan O'Hara raised that aiming to build ecologically sound homes in North Northamptonshire, for 'healthy lives' should be considered in planning stages, to achieve targets in planning policy. She suggested that workshops with contractors would be helpful for educational purposes and in raising awareness.
- Councillor Dez Dell proposed climate change training for all councillors and questioned whether North Northamptonshire Council was a member of the UK 100 organisation. Councillor Dell also enquired whether there were priorities in the action plan and if so, how these priorities were determined. Rob Harbour expressed awareness of the issue around member training and explained that this training would be carried out when the correct resources were in place. North Northamptonshire Council was not a member of the UK 100 as this would be another thing requiring dedicated resources to be pushed forward. Rob Harbour also explained that short, medium and long-term prioritisation had been carried out across the action plan, with detailed timeframes to ensure that the right resources were in place to complete work.
- Councillor Elliot Prentice questioned whether the authority was proactively seeking to replace lost resources. Rob Harbour confirmed that there was ongoing consideration of how the authority could most appropriately re-resource in a realistic way, against budget across growth and regeneration. Climate change remained a significant priority. Rob Harbour explained that the authority would require a team with broad experience and expertise across the climate change agenda. Nevertheless, this would be a relatively short term issue as resources should be established and in place within a matter of months. This sentiment was echoed by George Candler, who emphasised the authority's commitment to forming a multi-skilled resilient team for climate change. This would remain at the forefront of the climate change agenda.

ACTION: The EAP noted the update.

6. Environmental Principles of the ARC

- The Chair invited Simon Richardson to introduce the report, who highlighted that:
 - The purpose of the report was to seek endorsement of the shared environmental principles for the Oxford to Cambridge Arc.
 - It was recommended that the Executive:
 - a) Endorsed the shared environmental principles set out in the report.
 - b) Supported the development of an Arc Environment Strategy, which would provide further guidance on how the principles could be delivered.

ACTION: The EAP noted the report.

7. Additional Restrictions Grants

- The Chair invited Ian Achurch (Head of Development, Infrastructure and Funding) to introduce the report, who highlighted that:

- The report set out the Additional Restrictions Grant, which had started prior to the Council's inception in April 2021.
 - The report looked forward to potential top-up funding, which the authority would be able to receive and set out the details.
 - 36 local businesses had received the hardship Grant however; these figures could potentially change as the cut off for this Grant would occur on 22nd July.
 - The authority would need to submit a final return to central government on Monday 26th July to solidify its claim, which would release a further £2.9M of funding in this area.
 - The appendix of the report set out different structures and options for how additional funding may be allocated/developed.
- Councillor Jan O'Hara thanked the officers and acknowledged that their fast work had helped businesses throughout pandemic. Councillor O'Hara questioned whether the Council would have to continue to assess businesses' viability for support and carry out checks to see if they were still trading? Ian Achurch confirmed that checks were carried out to assess whether businesses were still operating, by checking ingoings and outgoings going back to assess impact and determine requirement for grants.

ACTION: The EAP noted the report.

8. WNorse: Overview of Options

- Exempt item – not for publication. (See private minutes)

9. Next meeting date

- The next meeting of the Climate Change, Environment and Growth Executive Advisory Panel would be held virtually, via Zoom, on Wednesday 18th August at 09:30am.