

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee. held at County Hall, Glenfield on Tuesday, 1 March 2022.

PRESENT

Mr. T. J. Pendleton CC (in the Chair)

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC

Mr. N. Chapman CC

Mr. M. Frisby CC

Mrs. A. Hack CC

Mr. B. Harrison-Rushton CC

Mrs. R. Page CC

In attendance

Mr. B. Pain CC, Lead Member for the Environment and Green Agenda.

40. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2022 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

41. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 34.

42. Questions asked by members.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

43. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

44. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

With regard to Agenda Item 8 – Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy, Committee members who were also members of district councils declared an Other Registerable Interest (namely, Mr. G. A. Boulter CC, Mr. N. Chapman CC, Mr. B. Harrison-Rushton CC and Mrs. R. Page CC).

45. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

46. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 35.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 35.

47. Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy - Public Consultation.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which presented the Leicestershire Waste Partnership's draft Resources and Waste Strategy for comment. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

In presenting the report, the Director of Environment and Transport set out the following:

- The draft Strategy had been drafted by the Leicestershire Waste Partnership, which comprised the County Council, the seven district councils and the City Council (as an associate member). The Partnership was asking for views and feedback from residents and communities as part of the consultation which would end 25 April 2022.
- The Partnership had modelled nine options which looked to reflect potential forthcoming legislative changes by the Government, such as weekly food waste collection and extended producer responsibility. Of the options presented, Option 5a, the revised baseline with the anticipated Government measures and the inclusion of restricted residual waste collected fortnightly in a 140 litre wheeled bin, scored best.
- Findings from the consultation would be used to inform the development of the final Strategy, prior to approval by the County Council and all district councils.
- Any recommended future waste service which followed the consultation and adoption of the Strategy would be subject to separate business case and any service changes would be subject to the relevant council's approval processes.

Arising from the discussion the following points were made:

- i. Members commented that references to fly-tipping and litter within the Strategy needed strengthening, highlighting the significance for residents and costs to authorities. While it was recognised that the waste arising from incidents formed part of the general waste tonnage addressed within the Strategy, members felt it needed to be addressed clearly within the Strategy. Members further commented on the importance of enforcement. By way of example, a member highlighted increased prosecution activity by Harborough District Council through its 'Tip Off' campaign, which had resulted in reduced fly-tipping and littering.
- ii. A Member questioned why only two waste collection authorities had litter strategies. It was suggested that through the Leicestershire Waste Partnership partners be encouraged to consider opportunities to collaborate to ensure a consistent approach across the county, it was felt this would also assist with communication messages more generally. In terms of the County Council's responsibility, while it was recognised the Authority had funded litter wombles groups across Leicestershire, ultimately litter and collection of fly-tipping were the responsibility of district councils. The Assistant Director for Environment and Waste agreed to pass on comments to the Partnership.

- iii. A perception that the closure of Recycling and Household Waste sites for a time during the pandemic had increased fly-tipping incidents, was acknowledged. Members recognised that the causes for fly-tipping incidents were complex and that there was no direct correlation with their closures.
- iv. A Member challenged how authorities worked together to encourage behaviour change and whether the options modelled were enough to increase recycling, as it appeared previous changes to Blaby District Council's kerbside collection service had not enhanced recycling rates in the area. In response the Director set out that initiatives such as weekly food and garden waste collection or fortnightly bin collection would encourage residents to think more about the composition of their waste and support behaviour change.
- v. Members recognised differences between district kerbside collection and noted for example that only North West Leicestershire District Council included battery collection. It was hoped the outcome of the consultation could look to encourage districts to have a common collection regime, to make county wide education and communication easier. In the meantime, it was noted that the County Council Recycling and Household Waste Sites allowed for disposal of batteries.
- vi. The Lead Member emphasised the routine work undertaken by the County Council in continued engagement with the public and schools through workshops and talks. He highlighted in particular the work by Gazebo Productions a theatre company that provided interactive workshops for school children on waste awareness, recycling and prevention initiatives.
- vii. The Committee agreed that it was key for the Strategy and the Partnership to focus on consistent joined up continual education and communication from a young age, which needed to be supported by strong enforcement campaigns, and challenged authorities and the Partnership to do more.
- viii. Members agreed that while residents could recycle in good faith, unintended contamination could sabotage waste collection, thus it was especially important to educate the public on what could be recycled through communications. It was hoped potential forthcoming legislation on extended producer responsibility would result in easier and clearer recycling, as well as the government proposed weekly food waste collections that would improve waste separation and reduce contamination.
- ix. A view was expressed that a food waste trial at Harborough District Council had been unsuccessful, and that re-introducing it would be a risk especially if Government was yet to set in place regulations around new waste arrangements. In response the Lead Member assured the Committee that even if Government were to change their view, or shift their stance it was necessary for the Leicestershire Waste Partnership to adopt a collaborative approach which the Strategy would allow for. The Committee noted that the pledges within the strategy were worded in a way to reflect that authorities were reliant on financial support expected from Government to fund new commitments.

The Lead Member for Environment and the Green Agenda concluded by encouraging residents to engage with the consultation which could result in significant changes to waste and behaviour in Leicestershire.

RESOLVED:

That officers be requested to consider the comments now made in respect of the draft Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy.

48. Environment and Waste Performance Report to December 2021.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and Director of Environment and Transport which set out performance of environment and waste to December 2021. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

The Director set out the report and highlighted the twelve indicators that had been updated as at December 2021, with six having improved, two declined and four remained the same as previously updated.

Arising from the discussion the following points arose:

- i. Total fly-tipping incidents per 1,000 population had increased from 5.5 to 8.86 during 2020/2021, the Committee recognised from previous discussions that factors were complex, and that enforcement was key to reduce incidents. It was noted that the Council remained in the second quartile for performance in comparison to other councils.
- ii. A Member questioned whether the County Council monitored hybrid vehicles, given the indicators related to Electric Vehicle (EV) ownership and charging locations. The Director of Environment and Transport confirmed that the Authority did not monitor the number of hybrid vehicles, but that the outcome and impact would be reflected in emission data included within the report.
- iii. A Member questioned the availability of EV charging for those within terrace housing or without assigned parking. The Director informed the Committee that the Council was in the process of updating its Highway Design Guide to take into account the best options to enable home charging as part of its policy. It was anticipated that residents would need to seek approval from the County Council for permission to use a cable over a footway. Arising from a further question the Director informed the Committee that there was no intention to allow charging from street lighting.
- iv. The Director added that it was important for the County Council to take into account installation of EV charging points, as energy companies looked to provide rapid charging stations in petrol stations. It was recognised that the Council should augment the provision by private sector providers to ensure any infrastructure was as comprehensive as could be
- v. A Member questioned whether the County Council was too narrow minded in its focus on EV's, given other technologies and the cost of EV's and insurance. The Member further highlighted that Harborough District Council had looked at Electric Vehicle charging points but found difficulty in rural areas as it appeared that the infrastructure could not support it. In response the Lead Member assured Members that the County Council was technologically neutral and that it was not bound to specific solutions, highlighting its transition of some of its fleet to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil for fuel. Members were assured that as a public authority the County Council was pragmatic with its working processes and any technology solutions.

- vi. In reference to the 'annual percentage of municipal waste sent to landfill' it was questioned how the Authority intended to reach Government's recycling targets by 2025, given performance remained within the fourth quartile. The Director informed the Committee that the completion of the ongoing waste procurement exercise would allow for a step change in its disposal with creation of alternative disposal points to reduce the waste sent to landfill.
- vii. A Member questioned the two indicators for Leicestershire rivers which had not been updated. The Director informed the Committee that data was expected in the next six months from the Environment Agency. In response Committee requested, that an invite be extended to the Environment Agency, as well as Severn Trent and Anglian Water to understand information related to river water quality, storm overflows and what they were doing to achieve Government's objective of all rivers being in good quality status by 2027. The Committee agreed to share questions in advance with the organisations

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. That the Environment Agency, Severn Trent Water and Anglian Water be invited to a future meeting to discuss issues related to river quality.

49. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 14 June at 2.00pm

2.00 - 3.05 pm
01 March 2022

CHAIRMAN