

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee. held at County Hall, Glenfield on Monday, 11 March 2024.

PRESENT

Mr. M. Frisby CC (in the Chair)

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC  
Mr. N. Chapman CC  
Mr. D. Harrison CC

Mr. M. Hunt CC  
Mrs. R. Page CC  
Mrs B. Seaton CC

In attendance

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

46. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2024 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

47. Question Time.

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

48. Questions asked by members.

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

49. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

50. Declarations of interest.

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

No declarations were made.

51. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

52. Presentation of Petitions.

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

53. Recycling and Household Waste Sites Consultation Outcome, Recommendations and Further Consultation.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport concerning the outcome of the Recycling and Household Waste Sites (RHWS) consultation and informing of the revised proposals that would form part of a secondary consultation. The report also sought the Committee's views as part of the secondary consultation. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8, is filed with these minutes.

In presenting the report, the Director highlighted that 5,638 responses had been received to the online questionnaire. The findings of the consultation showed that there was strong opposition to the proposal to close some sites, especially Market Harborough and Shepshed. However, there was less concern about a proposed reduction in the days that the Bottesford site would be open, and there was broad support to reduce summer opening hours and to close on Christmas Eve at all RHWS. Feedback from focus groups, which was more detailed and was set out in the report, broadly reflected this view. Neighbouring authorities were concerned about displacement impacts should the proposals lead to residents using RHWS outside of the county boundary. As a result of the outcome of the first consultation, a second consultation had begun on revised proposals to keep Market Harborough RHWS and Shepshed RHWS open part-time and to reduce the opening days at Kibworth RHWS. This started on 21 February and would run for four weeks.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. A traffic impact assessment had been completed during the first consultation at the Kibworth RHWS, as part of the proposal to close the Market Harborough RHWS and the impact of the potential displacement of traffic to Kibworth. This showed that the junction on the A6 to the Kibworth RHWS could tolerate any potential displacement as a result of the proposal.
- ii. Should the Cabinet approve the proposed closure of the Somerby RHWS, Members were assured that those staff affected were being fully supported and would be offered transfer to other sites where possible. Members were assured that officers were seeking to avoid redundancies. There was a high level of vacancies across the service, some of which were filled by agency staff. Officers would work with colleagues in the Council's Strategic Property Unit to ascertain the site's future should the waste service declare it surplus to operational requirements. This was currently not defined until the Cabinet decision was known.
- iii. Regarding the demographic data for online questionnaire respondents compared to the general population of Leicestershire, it was suspected that the percentage of respondents aged 45-75 was higher than that shown for the county as this was reflective of the demographic of site users. However, officers agreed to look further at the data to provide a written explanation to the Committee where additional data was available. Additionally, members were informed that younger

people usually did not engage in consultations which may have contributed to the difference in the data.

The Committee commended officers for such thorough consideration of the proposals and the feedback from residents to arrive at the proposals contained within the second consultation which they agreed were a good compromise. Members recognised the level of work that had been put in to determine the best approach for the service in light of the Council's challenging financial position.

The Cabinet Lead Member for the Environment and the Green Agenda echoed the comments made and added that the additional funding from the Government had helped with revising the proposals and had meant that less RHWs needed to close.

RESOLVED:

That the outcome of the Recycling and Household Waste Sites consultation and the revised proposals that would form part of a secondary consultation, be noted.

54. Environment and Climate Change Performance Report to December 2023.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Environment and Transport which provided the latest performance update on the key performance indicators that the Council was responsible for delivering against the Council's Strategic Plan (2022-26). A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9, is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. The report was a snapshot of all performance indicators at this time although the Director's reporting to the Committee focused on those indicators where larger changes in performance were evident. Some reporting frequencies were linked to how often the data was available to the council, for example quarterly or annually, so some indicators would not be updated in this report.
- ii. In response to Members concerns about how indicators could be determined as locally generated or statutory in the report, they were informed that an asterisk was used to identify those indicators that were statutory. Local indicators were classified as countywide or internal (local) and these were identified in the right-hand column of the data report. This also showed which data was coming from other partners, for example, government departments and the 'period' column showed when the latest data was available, and which was in arrears. Members were assured that the report presented included the latest data available to officers. At the end of the financial year, all data would be included in the annual report/Performance Compendium, so members could see the full performance for the department for the year.
- iii. Indicators were reviewed cyclically, to determine whether they were still needed, or new ones needed adding. Performance was reported against the indicators and outcomes included in the Strategic Plan and were not specific to the wider portfolio of the Cabinet Lead Member, which was cross-cutting across all council departments.
- iv. Members expressed concern about the nine performance indicators that were in the third and fourth quartile which showed that the Council performed below average and were informed that action was being taken to address those indicators, but that this often took time to show results in the performance report.

For example, action taken to reduce waste going to landfill could take years to show results. The Director explained that the banding of the quartile also affected where the Council's performance was shown and added that action taken needed to be costed in view of the Council's financial challenges. She assured members that action was being taken for those indicators where the Council was responsible for that activity to try to move the trajectory away from the fourth quartile but cautioned that this was not something that could be addressed quickly, or without cost. Officers agreed to provide details to members in writing on the action being taken to improve the performance of those indicators which were in the third and fourth quartile.

- v. Regarding electric vehicle charging points per 100,000, the performance data came from the National Charge Point Registry and related to the publicly funded charging points. The data did not include domestic chargers.
- vi. The collection of food waste would be included in the performance report under the indicator '% of household waste sent by local authorities across Leicestershire for reuse, recycling, composting etc'. Further detail on how this will be managed would be provided to the Committee at its meeting in June in a report on the Collection and Packaging Reforms.
- vii. Regarding the locally determined indicator 'Hectares of LCC land in better management for nature' the Director explained that this had been introduced in advance of changes proposed related to nature, for example, the Biodiversity Duty and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Both of these could potentially include performance indicators that supersede the Council's local indicator in the future. The Director agreed to provide a more detailed written explanation to Members on the current local indicator, how the land was managed, whether it was set aside, what was expected of the Council. A report would be presented to the Committee later in the year on the new Duties being introduced.
- viii. Regarding the use of the new incinerator for the disposal of waste, the Director explained that once a contract was awarded not all waste would be moved there rather than be sent to landfill. A number of contractual options were available for the management of waste, but specific details could not be shared with the Committee as the contracts were commercially sensitive. Officers worked with the market to utilise the disposal facilities available, in conjunction with district councils, to determine how waste would be handled and directed to appropriate disposal. However, not all waste could be incinerated; an element of waste would still be sent to landfill.

The Cabinet Lead Member for the Environment and the Green Agenda recognised the importance of the role of the County Council in reviewing and reporting performance against this agenda. He highlighted that for some indicators the Council had little influence over the performance achieved, for example, those indicators influenced by Local Planning Authorities or the Environment Agency, or those determined by ownership of electric vehicles.

Members agreed that a future report to the Committee on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Biodiversity Duty / Reporting with links to those indicators related to nature and the local environment would be beneficial.

**RESOLVED:**

That the update on performance to December 2023 be noted.

55. Revised Approach for Charging for Construction and Demolition Waste at Household Waste Recycling Centres.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport concerning the revised approach to accepting construction and demolition waste from households at the Council's Recycling and Household Waste Sites (RHWS) following the Government's legislative change. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10, is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. It was not cost effective to recycle the builders' waste deposited at RHWS into hardcore as the cost of processing it was greater than the cost of disposing of it. Additionally, the waste deposited was usually of poor quality so the cost of converting it into a product for onward sale would be greater. This was a vital consideration in view of the County Council's financial challenge in managing budgets.
- ii. There were four RHWS where asbestos could be deposited, detailed in paragraph 22 of the report and a permit was needed to do so. Guidance was included on the County Council's website. Disposal of asbestos was included in the 'free allowance' for households under the government's revised legislation, and quantities over and above this limit would be charged at £10/sheet.
- iii. Staff at the RHWS were well trained to support and guide the public with appropriate sizes and limits that were included in the 'free' allowance, to avoid ambiguity. Additionally, a reference bin was used at each site for measuring quantities.

The Cabinet Lead Member for the Environment and the Green Agenda recognised the impact of the revised legislation on residents. He emphasised that the changes were due to new national legislation introduced by the Government and asked residents to be kind and respectful to staff who were ensuring that the law was adhered to.

RESOLVED:

That the revised approach to accepting construction and demolition waste from households at the Council's Recycling and Household Waste Sites following the Government's legislative change, be noted.

56. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday 13 June 2024 at 2:00pm.