



Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 2 March 2023.

PRESENT

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC
Mr. N. Chapman CC
Mr. B. Harrison-Rushton CC
Mr. D. Harrison CC

Mr. Max Hunt CC
Mr. B. Lovegrove CC
Mrs. A. Wright CC

In attendance

Mr. B. L. Pain CC – Cabinet Lead Member for Environment and Climate Change.

48. Election of Chairman for the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. N. Chapman CC be elected Chairman for the meeting.

Mr. N. Chapman CC in the Chair.

49. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2023 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

50. Question Time.

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

51. Questions asked by members.

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

52. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

53. 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.

54. Declarations of the Party Whip.

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

55. Presentation of Petitions.

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

56. Value of Trees on the Highway Toolkit.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport regarding the Value of Trees on the Highway Toolkit and the proposal to integrate the Toolkit into the Leicestershire Highway Design Guide. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussions the following points were noted:

- (i) Members particularly welcomed the species selection tool and valuation matrix and the consideration it gave to carbon storage, air pollution and flooding.
- (ii) Members noted that trees being too close to the curb and roads was a historical problem and were pleased that work was being carried out to tackle damage caused by tree roots to highways and nearby buildings. In response to a question about tree roots it was explained the council had guidance on street trees and how they could impact on underground services and adjacent assets. There was the potential for this information to be used as part of the species selection tool and valuation matrix and this would be looked at going forward.
- (iii) A member raised concerns that tree roots were also causing a hazard on bridleways and cycleways. In response some reassurance was given that the Toolkit was also applicable to bridleways and cycleways.
- (iv) The Council was developing its own tree nursery and would be looking at growing specific species that the Toolkit supported for planting on the highways. Traditionally there were 4 main species of trees in Leicestershire and the toolkit would allow scheme designers to select from a wider range of species that would improve resilience of the tree population in relation to issues such as climate change, ash dieback and other diseases.
- (v) A member expressed a belief that there was a lack of partnership working between District councils and the County Council in connection with landscaping and trees on the highways. In response assurance was given that going forward the County Council would work with District councils and particularly Planning Authorities.
- (vi) The toolkit was being promoted more widely in the hope that other authorities and organisations would start using it. In response to a question as to whether Leicestershire County Council would be able to receive an income for developing the Toolkit it was explained that although the County Council had invested in the Toolkit, the main works had been funded by the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund therefore the County Council could not charge for its use.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted and the use of the Value of Trees on the Highway Toolkit be welcomed.

57. Persistent Organic Pollutants in Waste Upholstered Seating.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which informed of the recently emerging issue of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPS) in Waste Upholstered Domestic Seating (WUDS). A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussions the following points were noted:

- (i) The exact nature of the issue was that chemicals used to make seating flame retardant resulted in the furniture exceeding safe limits of POPS. This was a national problem however it was not such a big problem in other countries as UK fire retardant regulations were particularly stringent.
- (ii) In response to concerns that the POPS were dangerous it was explained that it was not advisable for people to dismantle the sofas and remove the chemicals as this could lead to the chemicals escaping. The WUDS needed to be disposed of by incineration. In response to a suggestion from a member that the Council should be developing its own sites for disposing of the WUDS it was explained that this would be very costly and take many years to get planning permission. Furthermore, the Council had already made commitments regarding disposal of its waste. However, consideration did need to be given to how the Council dealt with the WUDS in the long term as they were expected to come forward as waste items for the next 20 or 30 years.
- (iii) In response to concerns raised about a lack of storage space for the WUDS reassurance was given that there was provision at some waste sites and the waste was kept moving through the system so it did not create blockages.
- (iv) A member suggested that Government needed to be lobbied to prevent furniture manufacturers from using the chemicals. It was also suggested that furniture manufacturers should be required to takeback furniture items that contained POPS.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted with concern;
- (b) That officers be requested to provide a further report to a future meeting of the Committee once further data and information was available.

58. Environment and Climate Change Performance Report to December 2022.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Environment and Transport which provided an update on the key performance indicators that the Council was solely or partly responsible for delivering against the Council Strategic Plan as well as the Environment and Waste performance framework. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 11', is filed with these minutes.

A member noted that nine of the Key Performance Indicators were in the 3rd or 4th quartile which meant they were below average. In response to a question as to what was being done to improve performance against these indicators it was explained that the action being taken depended on the nature of the indicator. With regards those indicators that related to waste work was taking place with the District Councils under the Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy 2022-2050. In relation to emissions, work was taking place under the Local Transport Plan and the Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan. With some of the indicators such as air quality and river quality the Council did not have direct control of delivery and tackling the issues required partnership working with other organisations.

It was noted that data was collected as to the amount of particulate matter in the air in Leicestershire and members welcomed the work that was taking place around this given the severity of illness that air pollution could cause. In response to a question as to whether this data collection took place next to the M1 motorway it was agreed that this would be checked and clarified to members after the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the performance update be noted.

59. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Wednesday 7 June 2023 at 2.00pm.

2.00 - 3.20 pm
02 March 2023

CHAIRMAN