

Friday, 15 March 2024

CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY & IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Climate & Environment Scrutiny & Improvement Committee was held on Friday, 15 March 2024 at the Civic Centre, Ridley Street, Redcar, TS10 1TD.

PRESENT Councillor J Joy (Chair)
Councillors P Thomson (Vice-Chair), J Craven, M Fairley, B Hunt, J McCue, P Salvin, Stuart Smith and J Symon.

OFFICIALS B Archer, L Case, R Hoof, A Lynch-Brown and C Moon.
P Corbett
Representing Beyond Housing: D Chadwick, R Cooper, S Hall, M Maeve and R DuRose

IN ATTENDANCE Councillor A Brook, G Cutler, M Head and C Quartermain.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors I Attwood, C Cawley, N Hargreaves and T Learoyd.

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78 **TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2 FEBRUARY 2024 AND NOTE THE ATTENDANCE MATRIX**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Climate & Environment Scrutiny & Improvement Committee held on 2 February 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record, and the attendance matrix be noted.

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79 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Brook declared an interest in the Library Review as founder of Grangetown Generations.

Councillor Thomson declared an interest in all matters relating to Saltburn as chair of Saltburn CIO.

80 **BEYOND HOUSING**

Representatives from Beyond Housing were in attendance at the meeting and gave a presentation which updated members on:

- Actions being taken to identify and address damp and mould including the creation of a dedicated team;
- Sustainability strategy with one target to improve the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating to at least 'C' by 2030. Homes at EPC C or above will be more suitably prepared for the roll-out of low carbon heating systems;
- Sustainability current position and plans laid out;
- Key repairs data, key improvements and customer satisfaction; and
- Engagement programme, including the 'Feet on the Street' initiative, Neighbourhood Action Partnership meetings, customer care visits, neighbourhood improvement projects, and the Dormanstown locality plan representing a new approach to place-based, community-focused regeneration.

As part of the ensuing discussion the following questions/comments were made:

- A member asked about the actions being taken to address mould and requested a regular 6-monthly update presentation to the committee. The Chair requested that this be added to the action plan for Beyond Housing to report every 6 months to this committee.
- A member asked if perceptions of the severity of mould and damp may differ between the public and the organisation and if there was a long-term plan to address the issues. Officers advised that this issue was a big concern across the sector, Beyond Housing had a long-term plan, and additional resources were in place.
- A member asked if there were specific areas across the borough that were below EPC-C and if insulation was the cause of mould. Officials confirmed that properties below the EPC-C threshold were spread around the borough. Officers confirmed that insulation was not a root cause but water ingress to insulation an issue.
- A member asked if properties were having non-carbon using heating alternatives, EV charging points, and solar panels installed. Officers responded that EPC-C would prepare properties for heating sources of the future. Due to costs, it was not currently sustainable to install air heat pumps but there were different versions of potential heat sources. Installations of EV charging point were low. The focus was on achieving EPC-C although Beyond Housing were extending this in their commercial buildings and for new builds. External funding was being sought to reach

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targets and Wave 3 funding was expected to be an opportunity going forward.

- A member raised concerns around the number of properties being left empty. Officers responded that the majority of properties were let without delay and would provide data on turnaround times
- A member asked about the protocol for monitoring the quality of work having received a number of complaints regarding poor quality workmanship in new builds. An officer responded that they were unqualified to answer this and would take away to provide an answer.
- A member asked about responsibility for carrying out work on boundary fences. An officer responded that Beyond Housing had responsibility for specific boundaries and was also able to support where issues arise.
- A member asked what was being done about flood prevention. An officer responded that they were unable to answer this and would take away to provide an answer.
- A member raised a concern that a vulnerable adult had been placed in a property without sufficient furnishings or adequate support. How was this decision arrived at and how were these placements managed. An officer responded that this was a matter for housing policy but would share concerns with relevant colleagues.
- A member praised the improvements made to enable people to contact Beyond Housing and would welcome a Ward Representative meeting.
- A member asked what Beyond Housing were doing about minimising or eradicating the use of pesticides and the adoption of "No Mow May". An officer responded that this information would be provided in due course.

RESOLVED that:

1. The information in the presentation be noted.
2. That the actions requested from members comments be included in regular updates from Beyond Housing.

81 **RELEVANT CABINET REPORTS**

Libraries Service Report

This report set out the proposals that would enable the Council to realise the significant budget savings required of the Library Service. It also enabled the delivery and development of a fit for purpose Library Service for our residents and communities.

The report gives a summary of the work undertaken to date and an overview of the Phase 2 consultation. It detailed the final proposals and referred to any changes made from the consulted-on proposals. The final proposals were to implement the new vision and priority areas, to close Roseberry Library and Brotton Library, to progress new management and operational arrangements for Grangetown Library retaining a slightly reduced statutory library offer, progress to voluntary

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ran venues in Dormanstown and Laburnum but aim to keep a reduced statutory book lending offer within them, introduce the new opening hours and remove late fees and in-service book reservation fees.

As part of the ensuing discussion the following questions/comments were made:

- A member raised concerns over the stability of opening hours of the Saltburn library and welcomed the decision on Saturday opening. It was suggested that officers revisit consistent hours, aligning with the Barclays Bank arrangement, and suggested times that could be considered. Officers responded that they have tried to be consistent across all libraries at each tier looking to expand use.
- A member suggested that in addition to Barclays there was a Lego club that took place which may influence opening times. The member asked if 8 staff was enough for the call centre and if that would impact on staffing in the library. An officer responded that there was a decision to split the service as a combination of the roles put pressure on services. The contact centre had more than 8 staff and they have a full-time focus. Public facing portals will be enhanced going forward and it was the intention to bring contracts in-house. Two member sessions were held albeit with a low take-up and staff also had a number of opportunities to engage. Separate specific sessions were also held with members as part of the consultation.
- A member pointed out that there was strong opposition to replacing Laburnum library staff with volunteers and using the digital system to borrow books. Officers responded that we had listened to users and Friends to retain book borrowing. We are meeting statutory service requirements but finding cost savings through a voluntary and community run service where there was a strong appetite. The current views being expressed seem to be based on an old proposal.
- A member said it would be useful for communications to be updated to address these concerns. An officer responded that a social media campaign was being prepared.
- A member wanted to acknowledge the work put in by all concerned to save libraries. The Chair stated that it was a comprehensive piece of work.

Review of Vegetation Management Report

This report advised that the Council undertakes vegetation management on Council owned land to ensure that it meets its duties to maintain adopted highways and public open spaces to a standard that ensures the health and safety of the public, and to maintain expected standards for the appearance of the borough.

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The report advised Cabinet of the Council's duties relating to vegetation management, and its current approach. It also presented the regulatory position on glyphosate and alternative options for vegetation management, to facilitate an informed decision on future vegetation management across the borough.

As part of the ensuing discussion the following questions/comments were made:

- A member raised concerns from residents that spraying glyphosate herbicides had a detrimental effect on pets. An officer responded that the product being used and how it was deployed would not harm pets. A study undertaken by a London borough was referenced as an example of public perception relating to the use of herbicides.
- A member asked how the product was contained and what training staff undertook. An officer responded that operators are trained and certificated with further training undertaken on an ongoing basis. Officers will advise members in due course.
- A member asked when will councillors be consulted. Officers responded that "No Mow May" was being promoted and work on the timings of the cabinet report and biodiversity strategy was being undertaken. There was a commitment to working with ward councillors and also engaging with Beyond Housing on joint approaches to environmental issues.

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QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE/FINANCE REPORT

The Assistant Director of Environment gave a presentation on Q3 Performance for Climate Change, Health and Environment and the following questions and comments were made.

- A member asked where the money was coming from to address climate change and that it would be helpful to have the source and amounts. An officer responded that there was a small pot of capital funding available.
- A member suggested that work on assets needs to reflect future use with Seaford House and Redcar House appearing half empty and Saltburn library is not energy efficient. The asset review should align with the forward look. An officer responded that asset management and the forward look are aligned, and officers are currently looking at the portfolio, prioritising work based on the size and use of buildings.
- A member asked for an update on the Cliff Lift and the reasons for the fire.
- An officer responded that most of the issues to be resolved were due to the measures take to put out the fire and subsequently

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identifying asbestos. Routine safety checks are being carried out on the cabling and a timescale for reopening is still being developed. The fire service has not been able to give a reason for the fire.

- A member reiterated a request made seven years ago for the release of the report on overspend during the 2017/18 restoration.
- A member requested a breakdown of fly tipping locations to facilitate an upcoming Skip Day.

RESOLVED that the information in the report be noted.

83 **SALTBURN VALLEY GARDENS**

Councillor McCue was invited by a resident to visit Saltburn Valley Gardens to inspect the work that had been done to clear the ground, including the removal of holly and other plants that contribute to the ecology of the woodland. A presentation of images captured by Councillor McCue was given and items of interest pointed out with comparisons to other local areas where the environmental management was understood to be better.

Officers gave a verbal update including the rationale for the programme of works undertaken including the removal of some holly which was required to mitigate against development of a monoculture. The process was jointly managed by Streetscene and Countryside Services with a strong reliance on volunteers. Ecologists were satisfied with approach.

A member declared an interest as Saltburn Valley CIO and stated that there was no Green Flag for Saltburn Valley Gardens and no management plan. The Volunteer Strategy facilitates support from the local authority and requested that the council had greater involvement – **NOTED.**

84 **WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24**

Waste Management Presentation

The Waste and Fleet Services Lead Officer presented results of the recently completed tagging trials and details of the third trial taking place in March and April.

An update of the Alley Scheme in Brotton was given and the approach to Saltburn's Alley Scheme was outlined.

An update of recycling schemes including remedial action to prevent further waste contamination and recycling roadshows.

Officers concluded with an update of the roll out of the garden waste programme.

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Flooding Presentation

The Transport, Engineering, and Highways Lead Officer presented a Flood Management Update covering the maintenance programme and flood response. Details of the drainage improvement programme and flood defence schemes alongside as part of the wider Northumbria Integrated Drainage Partnership and Environment Agency programmes.

A member suggested that recycling roadshows would be an opportunity for members outside of the committee to participate,

A member expressed concern that when Hartlepool Council introduced charges there was a reduction in green waste. Officers responded that the 40% target sign up will account for 60% of the waste and expect a minimal impact. There is also guidance around composting at home –

NOTED.

85 **OUTSIDE BODIES UPDATE**

The Chair invited updates from Members who had attended meetings of Outside Bodies that were relevant to the Climate and Environment Scrutiny and Improvement Committee.

Cllr McCue advised that an update on the work of the North Yorkshire Moors National Park Authority would be provided at a future meeting of this Committee – **NOTED.**

86 **ACTION UPDATE**

- Flooding working group to be developed
- Overnight parking update – Cat Nab car park
- Site visits by members

87 **ANY ITEMS THE CHAIR CERTIFIES AS URGENT**

No items