

Thursday, 24 October 2024

CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY & IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Climate & Environment Scrutiny & Improvement Committee was held on Thursday, 24 October 2024 at the Civic Centre, Ridley Street, Redcar, TS10 1TD.

PRESENT Councillor J Joy (Chair)
Councillors P Thomson (Vice-Chair), C Cawley, J Craven, M Fairley, B Hunt, J McCue, M Ovens, C Pugh, P Salvin and S Smith.

OFFICIALS B Archer, R Hoof, C Moon, J Lee, G Shaw and P Shaw.

IN ATTENDANCE Councillor A Brook, C Quartermain and C Richardson.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Lavan.

40 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Lavan and Officer J Hosie.

41 **TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2024 AND NOTE THE ATTENDANCE MATRIX**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Climate & Environment Scrutiny & Improvement Committee held on 12 September 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record, and the attendance matrix be noted.

42 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest; noted.

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43 **ASSET STRATEGY**

The Assistant Director for Environment, Sustainability and Culture presented the Asset Strategy.

Areas highlighted within the report included:

- The four principles to be addressed were:
 - Principle 1 - Establish a strategic use of all Council assets whether this be via Council business or through effective lease management.
 - Principle 2 - To facilitate modern, flexible ways of working by maximising access for hybrid working across the council's operational estate.
 - Principle 3 - Reduce carbon emissions from the council's asset portfolio, in line with the Council's climate change policy.
 - Principle 4 - To ensure that the Council's assets are well maintained, reducing the costs associated with any unplanned repair or maintenance work.

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

- A Member observed that the strategy was less substantial than prior versions, noting fewer items were included and a full list of assets was omitted. Members were advised that the strategy overarched numerous strategies and policies, and the document which contained lists of assets was no longer produced for this purpose. All strategies and policies were reviewed annually, and assets reviewed critically and reported to the Executive Management Team (EMT) Meetings which were then presented to Cabinet. This would include proposals for which assets should be retained, disposed of, or used in an alternative way; this report will be presented at a future Climate Scrutiny meeting.
- A Member queried the sale of buildings and how pricing is sought. Members were advised that the Council were held responsible via the Local Government Act to obtain best value for the sale of all assets.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

1. The information in the report be noted; and
2. The report reviewing all assets which is due to be presented at Cabinet, be presented at a future meeting.

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44 **DELEGATED DECISIONS**

The Chair informed Members this item had been included by request of a Member to allow another avenue for the review of Delegated Decisions.

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

- A Member noted that Officers details were included within each delegated decision therefore Councillors could contact Officers direct should they wish to obtain additional information.
- A Member noted that Cabinet papers were a standing item on all scrutiny agenda's, whereby questions arising from Cabinet papers could be asked to Officers or Cabinet Members present at each scrutiny meeting.
- A Member noted that questions could be raised within the Cabinet papers agenda item however, it was raised at the Corporate Resources Scrutiny Committee to be included as a separate item on agendas. It was further noted that previously, Democratic Services Officers highlighted Councillors Cabinet papers to indicate which items pertained to which Scrutiny Committee.
- A Member noted that Delegated Decisions are grouped within Directorate responsibility areas, and it was the duty of each Councillor to read and understand all meeting papers.

RECOMMENDED that:

1. The information discussed be noted; and
2. Delegated Decisions would not be a separate agenda item.

45 **FLOOD MANAGEMENT STRATEGY: TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT - TO FOLLOW**

Preliminary recommendations from the Flood Management Task and Finish group were shared including a letter drafted to local MPs listing the task and finish groups findings and recommendations. A Member suggested the addition of financial information regarding what funding was available and what funding would be required to address the recommendations.

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

- Officers advised that the Biodiversity Strategy would be presented at the next meeting.
- A Member raised concerns regarding recent flooding at Skinningrove and the lack of communication between Northumbrian Water and the Council. This included trees that had fallen but had not been cleared away which would put residents' houses at risk of further flooding. Furthermore, Members were

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informed that funding had been set aside to address reducing the flooding risks at Skinningrove but the funding and work had not been allocated. Members were advised that a meeting of Members and Officers would be convened whereby the £50,000 funding allocation would be allocated to relevant work and Members would be notified of the timescales.

It was **RECOMMEND** that:

1. The information discussed be noted; and
2. To present the Biodiversity Strategy at the next meeting of this Committee in December 2024,
3. Officers to convene a meeting with Members to discuss the Skinningrove funding allocation to reduce the risks of flooding.
4. The letter to MPs be amended and circulated at the earliest convenience,
5. The recommendations from the Task and Finish group be presented in a report at a future Climate Scrutiny Committee,
6. To reconvene the Task and Finish group in six months-time.

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WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Waste and Fleet Services Lead Officer informed Members that the contaminated waste video was not available to be presented at the meeting.

Areas highlighted in the presentation included:

- An update was received regarding the Environment Act 2021, including the implications and actions upon the Council. This includes supplying all households with a separate weekly food waste collection by 31 March 2026. Examples of prototype bins/caddies for households were presented.
- A Member asked what preparation, and communication would be in place to help residents prepare for the changes. Members were advised that Redcar Council have worked with Tees Authorities on a joint marketing campaign, to ensure messages are consistent across the Tees.
- Members were advised that capital funding had been obtained for the purchase of the new household bins and waste collection vehicles. A Member asked if electric vehicles would be purchased. Members were advised the capital funding was not sufficient to purchase electric vehicles at this time however Officers are researching the use of alternative, environmentally friendly fuels.
- A Member asked if enforcement would be undertaken for non-compliance. Members were advised that the service would be offered to all residents on a phased roll out and a discussion ensued regarding compliance and potential roadside issues.

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Residents, if they wish, will be offered the opportunity to home compost if they do not wish to participate in the home bin/caddy system for food waste.

- Members were advised that household waste vehicles with Routeware systems were able to log real time information from collections such as, contamination and no bin presented. Members noted Cleveland Fire Brigade's campaign advising residents to take their bins back in at the end of the collection day to reduce the number of potential bin fires. Information on Routeware would be available regarding residents who registered for assisted collections.
- Members asked what training had taken place with staff. Members were advised that all staff had or are due to receive training and managers were mindful that one training package would not benefit all staff, therefore a phased training programme was taking place and would be fluid depending on requirements.
- Members queried buildup of litter in some back alleys and how this would be addressed. Members were advised that any concerns or issues can be reported to the relevant teams and a supervisor would attend the address or street and look to engage with residents.
- Members asked what opportunities were available for the Council to gain income from selling materials such as rubber, and what opportunities were available to donate materials such as, offering rubber to companies for groundworks on playgrounds. Members were advised that the Council would look at this however, waste collection teams may not have sufficient storage capacity.
- Members were informed that the Waste Management Task and Finish group would commence in November 2024 and an invitation would be sent to all Members.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

- The information in the presentation be noted; and,
- Officers to research ways to sell or donate materials, including the use of storage,
- An invitation to the Waste Management Task and Finish group be circulated to all Members.

47 **TREE UPDATES/PRESENTATION**

The Arborculture Officer gave a presentation to Members regarding work undertaken by the arborist team, current challenges, strategies and commercialisation potential.

Areas highlighted within the update included:

- Additional capacity had been added to the team in June 2024 and capital investment of £250,000 to purchase equipment.

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- Ash Die back had been a significant issue and concern. Other areas of the country had seen die off within a year, this had not been the case in Redcar and Cleveland. Work continued to identify ash tree locations, and the trees would be added to a monitoring programme.
- The team had worked through the backlog of requests, however the two weeks of storms put that work on hold due to clean up work taking priority. The team continue to ensure residents and landowners were aware of their responsibilities with regards to tree maintenance.
- A tree strategy would be devised and presented in early 2025, this would include addressing resident's concerns, future plans and planting more trees. This would include consideration to plant hardy trees native to the British Isles and addressing potential die off risks to other native trees such as the sycamore.
- The service would consider income generation and what services could be chargeable, such as selling surplus timber, equipment hire and commercial work.

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

- A Member queried if spare timber could be repurposed for flood defences. Members were advised that timber from certain trees could be used, for example if a tree had been affected by ash die off that timber would turn to dust and would not be suitable. There could be issues regarding transporting the timber and access to the proposed site.
- A Member queried the use of contractors, costs and if this would continue. Members were advised that the use of contractors was being reduced due to significant high costs, however, contractors would be used for emergency work or when deemed necessary.
- A Member queried if the tree strategy could coincide with the housing strategy and if there would be strategic planting of trees across the borough. Members were informed that within new housing developments trees with restricted root growth could be planted and willow trees have been used in boggy or flood prone areas because they grow quickly and require little maintenance. The arborists are feeding into the biodiversity strategy.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the information presented be noted.

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48 **WARD WALKS PROPOSAL/PRESENTATION**

An Officer from Streetscene informed Members of a proposal to reintroduce Wards Walks (formally patch walks) across the Borough which includes engaging more frequently with Members and addressing issues in a timely manner. The initial proposal is to select one ward from each geographical area to view concerns, devise a response plan of action and provide regular updates on the progress of actions. The focus of ward walks will be identification and addressing current issues, the scope will not include future plans or capital investment.

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

- A Member noted previous infrequencies of visits which led to frustrations from residents and asked how Officers plan to address this. Members were advised that Officers understand the frustrations from residents and hope the frequency of Ward Walks and seeing issues first hand would assure residents that the Council do wish to address issues where possible and support residents.
- A Member queried the frequency of the proposed Ward Walks and how they would be prioritised. Members were advised that three Ward Walks would be planned before March 2025 and following that a formal plan would be proposed.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

1. The information in the presentation be noted; and,
2. The proposal for Ward Walks be circulated to all Members.

49 **WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25**

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the work programme be noted.

50 **OUTSIDE BODIES UPDATE**

There were no outside bodies updates, noted.

51 **ACTION UPDATE**

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the action log be noted.

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

There were no items certified as urgent by the Chair.