

**ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY
 COMMITTEE
 14 OCTOBER 2016**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR C L STRANGE (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors Mrs V C Ayling (Vice-Chairman), A M Austin, C J T H Brewis, M Brookes, J R Marriott, N M Murray, C R Oxby, C Pain and R A Renshaw.

Councillors: C J Davie (Executive Councillor Development (Economic Development, Environment, Planning and Tourism)), R G Fairman and W S Webb (Executive Support Councillor Development (Economic Development, Environment, Planning and Tourism)) attended the meeting as observers.

Officers in attendance:-

Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Andy Gutherson (County Commissioner for Economy and Place), Sean Kent (Group Manager, Environment Services), Neil McBride (Planning Manager), Chris Miller (Environmental Services Team Leader (Countryside Services)), Douglas Robinson (Environmental Services Team Leader (Sustainability)), Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer), Adrian Winkley (Principal Planning Officer), Olivia Kendall (Graduate Management Trainee), Mark Schofield (Conservation Officer, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust) and Caroline Steel (Head of Conservation, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust).

12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor A Bridges.

13 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no interests declared at this point in the meeting.

14 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 JUNE 2016

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee held on 10 June 2016 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

15 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND SENIOR OFFICERS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting; and extended thanks on behalf of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee to staff from the Energy from Waste facility for their hospitality, and for their informative tour of the plant.

The Executive Councillor for Development made the following announcements to the Committee:-

- That the new Gibraltar Point Visitor Centre had been officially opened on Friday 7 October 2016 by Simon King (TV wildlife presenter, photographer and cameraman). The event had been very successful and thanks were extended to the Lincolnshire Wildlife Team, and to the Group Manager Environmental Services and his team. The Committee noted that since May 2016, some 50,000 visitors had visited the Centre. The Committee were reminded that the Centre was one of a series of investments on the coast, which would help to attract visitors to the coastal area. The Committee was advised that piling work had been completed on the North Sea Observatory at Chapel St Leonards, and that contractors were just waiting for steels to arrive;
- The Committee noted that Officers had responded to the Viking Link Consultation concerning the cable route. The preferred route of the Council was the purple route; and this had been confirmed to National Grid; and
- That some Anderby residents had raised concerns regarding the potential breach of existing sea defences with regard to the Triton Knoll Wind Farm. A further update would be provided, once further information was received from RWE Npower Renewables, as to when the proposed works would be completed. Some reference was also made for the need for there to be a suitable compensation package for residents, particularly if works took place during the summer season. A further concern was raised that works should not be completed during the autumn/winter months when there was risk of high tides.

The County Commissioner Economy & Place advised the Committee that the contract had been awarded for the Lincoln Eastern Bypass and that this would be considered by the Highways Scrutiny Committee, prior to the Executive making the final decision at their meeting scheduled for 1 November 2016.

The Committee noted that all local plans were progressing through the various decision making routes.

Members of the Committee were also advised that an invitation had been extended to all members to attend a Coastal Management Consultation Workshop on 4 November 2016 at 10.00am, as the Environment Agency would be launching a stakeholder consultation in late November to develop a future approach to managing sea defences on the east coast from Saltfleet to Gibraltar Point.

The Executive Councillor Development encouraged all coastal members to attend the said workshop.

16 LINCOLNSHIRE MINERALS AND WASTE LOCAL PLAN: SITE LOCATIONS DOCUMENT (PRE-SUBMISSION DRAFT)

Consideration was given to a report from Neil McBride, Planning Manager, which provided the Committee with an opportunity to consider the Pre-Submission Draft

version of the Site Locations Document, which was to be considered and approved by the Executive at their meeting on 1 November 2016, to publish the plan and undertake a further period of consultation in November/December 2016, with authorisation being granted to the Planning Manager in consultation with the Executive Councillor, to prepare any necessary modifications to address issues from the consultation exercise.

It was then proposed that the plan would then be considered by the County Council at its February 2017 meeting, prior to being submitted to the Secretary of State for examination in the spring of 2017.

The Committee noted that the Minerals and Waste Local Plan was being prepared in two parts, the first part the "Core Strategy and Development Management Policies" had been completed; and had been formally adopted by the County Council on 1 June 2016. The Committee noted that the second part of the plan comprising of the "Site Locations Document" was at an advanced stage of preparation; and contained specific proposals and policies for the provision of land for minerals and waste development.

It was further noted that the Pre-Submission Draft version of the Site Locations Document was the version intended to be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination. The above said document took into account representations received on an earlier version of the plan, which had then been the subject of public consultation between 4 December 2015 and 29 January 2016.

The Committee was advised that there was two typographical errors within the report presented, one at paragraph 1.18, fifth paragraph, on page 21 of the report presented reference to Manor Farm, Baston needed to be changed to Manor Farm, Greatford. Also, in Appendix A, Table 6, page 18 that Manor Farm, Baston needed to be changed to Manor Farm, Greatford.

RESOLVED

The Committee expressed their unanimous support to the recommendations as detailed below:-.

- Endorse the Site Locations (Pre-Submission Draft) document for public consultation for a six week period commencing on 7 November 2016;
- Authorise the Planning Manager in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee to make changes to the Site Locations (Pre-Submission Draft) document prior to consideration by the Executive where these are necessary to amend any minor areas;
- Consider and endorse the proposal that authorisation be sought from the Executive for the Planning Manager in consultation with the Executive Councillor (Development) to recommend to the County Council any modifications necessary to address issues that arise through the consultation exercise;

- Recommend that the County Council approve the Site Locations (Pre-Submission Draft) for submission to the Secretary of State for examination together with any recommended modifications referred to above; and
- Consider and endorse the revised programme set out in this report for the completion of the Site Locations document through to adoption.

17 HARVESTING VERGE BIOMASS

Consideration was given to a report from Doug Robinson, Sustainability Team Leader, which invited the Committee to consider the progress of a pilot project, which had taken place during the summer to harvest verge biomass; and then use it as feedstock in an anaerobic digestion plant producing energy and digestate (fertiliser).

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting two representatives from the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, who were working in partnership with the Council on this item.

It was noted that as a Highways Authority the Council maintained 8,750 kilometres of roadside verges, of which 6,173 km were termed as being 'rural' and largely bounded by grass verges. It was highlighted that the Local Authority was required to keep verges in a safe and unobstructed condition. The Committee noted that the current practice was to flail mow a 1.1m strip of the verge, and wider swathes around visibility zones at road junctions, leaving the mown vegetation in situ. As a result of recent budget pressures, the Council policy had been changed which had resulted in a reduction of the frequency of cuts from three to two. The Committee noted further that work had been carried out over the last 18 months to evaluate more sustainable ways to maintain verges whilst meeting other objectives i.e. such as ensuring appropriate management of Lincolnshire's road verges designated for wildlife conservation value. The final evaluation of which would be completed by early 2017.

Details pertaining to several significant opportunities for a wider uptake of innovative road verge management strategies were set out in the report presented. The report also highlighted that in theory the Low Input High Density biomass resource available from verges alone could annually provide sufficient electricity for about 4,500 homes, or gas for 1,100 homes. The Committee noted that there were also other potential sources that could be used, such as watercourses, public open spaces, parks and commons, golf courses, MoD sites etc.

Officers advised the Committee that the Lincolnshire study had received national attention and as a result some discussion had been had with relevant government departments and industry bodies concerning the study.

In conclusion, the Committee was advised that from the work done to date, and the analysis of the research so far had reinforced initial indications that there was a significant opportunity in harvesting verge biomass, and using it as feedstock in Anaerobic Digestion. The potential benefits of the scheme were detailed on page 131 of the report represented.

The next steps highlighted were to complete and publish research information, and consider the conclusions reached; continue the development of potential business

models; and to continue to lobby with others for an appropriate regulatory and support framework.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- The potential start date of the scheme. The Committee was advised, that there was still lots of planning and development to do, and therefore no definite date could be given at this time;
- Some members agreed that the scheme was a wonderful opportunity and that it should be pushed forward; as the County would be tidier, which would help the County promoting tourism; and it would also improve road safety;
- One member enquired as to how many Anaerobic Digestion plants were in the County and their location. Officers advised that there were 15/16 plants throughout the County; and that most of the plants were able to store materials on site;
- The potential for contamination in grass verges. The Committee was advised that Leeds University screening process had identified an undetectable amount of contaminants. It was highlighted that there was however more litter in verges on busier roads, and this would be one of the challenges in the process;

The Committee was advised that the grass verges through Lincolnshire were very important for wild flowers; and that harvesting the verges was a way of improving them and working in partnership would benefit Lincolnshire as a whole. A Wild Flower Identification Guide publication was circulated to all members of the Committee for their information.

The Committee expressed their support to the project and hoped that the project would be starting as soon as practically possible.

RESOLVED

The Committee welcomed the report, and expressed their support for the project.

18 CARBON MANAGEMENT PLAN 2015 - 16 PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee gave consideration to a report from Doug Robinson, Sustainability Team Leader, which provided details as to the progress made on the Carbon Management Plan to cover the period 2013 – 2018.

Appendix A to the report provided the Committee with a briefing on what was known currently in relation to the government's proposals on carbon emissions reporting, and tax. And, Appendix B to the report provided the Committee with a progress report on the Carbon Management Plan for 2015/16.

In guiding the Committee through the report presented, particular reference was made to:-

- The proposal to move to a single business energy tax from April 2019; this would mean that the public sector would be subject to the same tax and reporting requirements as the private sector;
- The proposed increase in main rates of Climate Change Levy from April 2019. It was noted that as a result of the proposal there would be an increase of £312,870 on the 2015/16 payment;
- It was highlighted that some progress had been made with regard to ICT. A remote storage solution had been implemented and the Council was awaiting performance data from the supplier, but it was expected that the report would show a reduction in emissions. It was noted further that a Service Plan would be prepared which would establish ICT baselines, and proposed schemes to reduce emissions further;
- The Committee noted that the new contract with VinciMouchel was in its second year and that energy and environmental management was a key requirement;
- It was reported that significant investment in street lighting and traffic signal upgrades had taken place over the last five years had led to a 9.9% reduction in carbon emissions from the 2014/15 figure; and
- The Committee was advised that the SCoRE programme was now complete, with 260 of the Lincolnshire's 360 schools having completed the programme. The programme for technology investment had had £1,978,552 worth of equipment installed in 343 schools; and the 'invest to save' element had resulted in 50 projects valued at £1,180,810 being installed. Overall, there had been some significant success stories from schools.

In conclusion, it was reported that progress had been made in line with the trajectory requirements to meet the Council's five year target, reducing base energy costs by £2,000,000.

Some members felt that education regarding energy saving initiatives for young people should continue, as it was felt that this knowledge was very important; and that funding should be made available for this to happen. Officers advised that they were currently looking into a new European funding initiative called Low Carbon. The Committee extended their support to the preparation of the Carbon Management Plan three; and agreed that the Chairman should write to the relevant Executive Councillor and highlight the Committees support for Carbon Management three.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Committee supported the continuation of education to young people regarding energy saving initiatives and agreed that the Chairman should write to the relevant Executive Councillor and highlight the Committees support for Carbon Management three.

Consideration was given to a report from Chris Miller, Team Leader, Countryside Services, which highlighted the potential opportunities and constraints regarding the future management of the Environmental Services property portfolio.

The report highlighted that the property portfolio had evolved; and that current management costs to the County Council were approximately £180,000 per annum, excluding staff time. Appendix A to the report provided the Committee with site locations of Environmental Services Property; and Appendix B provided a case example with regard to the Stickney Picnic Site for consideration by the Committee. Some initial considerations of the various sites had indicated that some sites no longer met the strategic needs of the County Council, or were an unsustainable drain on the reducing budgets of Environmental Services.

During discussion, particular reference was made to the following issues:-

- Stickney Picnic Site (As detailed in Appendix B). It was noted that there was going to be a local referendum within the parish as to whether the toilets should be demolished, or whether they should be taken on as an amenity for the local people. Confirmation was given that there was no intention for the site to be used for housing;
- That there was a need for picnic sites, as a local amenity as there was for public conveniences, especially when the County was trying to encourage tourism; and
- A suggestion was made for officers to explore joint working arrangements with district councils and other organisations within the local community regarding the principle of taking on public conveniences within their area.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That support be given for the Executive Member for Development to investigate the future options as outlined in the report for each site, taking into account the suggestions made by the Environmental Scrutiny Committee, as detailed above.

20 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE - 1 APRIL TO 30 JUNE 2016

The Committee gave consideration to a report from Sean Kent, Group Manager Environmental Services, which provided key performance information that was relevant to the work of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee.

Appendix A to the report provided the Committee with a list of measures contained in the Council Business Plan that were within the remit of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee. Appendix B to the report provided Quarter 1 Customer Satisfaction information for the Committee to consider.

In guiding the Committee through the report, particular reference was made to the following points:-

- Flood alleviation schemes supported by the County Council - The Committee noted that this measure was currently being revised;
- Household waste recycled - It was reported that the quarter 1 figures were estimates until the final figures had been received from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. It was noted that the Joint Waste Management Strategy was in the process of being refreshed and that the Strategy was being discussed with the Districts;
- Green Waste – The Committee noted that the tonnage composted depended on how much green waste was presented by the public; and that this varied due to external factors such as the weather. It was highlighted that the second quarter would provide a different set of figures; and
- It was highlighted that there had been 11 complaints received during this quarter, this had been an increase of 5 complaints from the previous Quarter. The report identified that out of the 11 complaints, 10 had been recorded as being not substantiated; and 1 complaint had been recorded as being partly substantiated. The Environmental Management had also received 12 compliments, 11 compliments regarding footpath restoration; and 1 compliment regarding helpful and friendly staff at the Market Rasen household waste recycling centre.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Charging for green waste - The Committee was advised that the Districts were able to charge for green waste and that this was something the County Council had no influence over. Some members felt that the introduction of charges had had an impact on the amount of fly tipping. Officers advised that there was an educational need, as there was a small minority of contractors who did not have a Waste Carriers Licence; and
- The need for the mixed recyclables contract to work better; and for all Districts to work together to enable this to happen.

RESOLVED

That the Quarter 1 Performance report presented be noted.

21 ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report which enabled the Committee to consider and comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year to ensure that scrutiny activity was focussed where it could be for the greatest benefit. Members were encouraged to highlight items that could be included for consideration in the forthcoming work programme.

The Committee was reminded that on 2 December 2016, there would be an Environmental Scrutiny Committee meeting commencing at 10.00 a.m., this would then be followed by an informal Budget Workshop at 11.30 a.m. for all members to attend.

RESOLVED

That the work programme as set out in Appendix A of the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 12.45 pm