

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

19th July 2022

Present: Councillor Andy Stafford in the Chair

Councillors Bisset, Cleary, Cookson, Cronin,
Hassan, Lewing (Vice-Chair), Norfolk,
Roberts and Udall

Officers: Lloyd Griffiths, Corporate Director –
Operations, Homes and Communities
David Sutton, Deputy Director –Corporate
Policy and Strategy
Sandra Green, Head of City Services
Kevin Moore, Head of Property and Asset
Management
Claire Neville, Environmental Sustainability
Officer
Mark Cox, Technical Services Manager,
Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Due to the extreme weather temperature, this meeting was held as an online briefing instead of in-person. This meant that the meeting was not a formal committee meeting under local government legislation. However, the Committee still discussed all the items on its agenda.

The Chair advised that any items on which the Committee were required to vote would be formally proposed for approval by the Policy and Resources Committee at their meeting on 25th July 2022.

10 Appointment of Substitutes

None.

11 Declarations of Interest

None.

12 Public Participation

None.

13 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 7th June 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

14 Proposal to Introduce a Subsidised Domestic Pest Control Service for Worcester City Residents

The Committee considered a report on the implementation of a subsidised domestic pest control service.

The Corporate Director – Homes and Communities presented the report and summarised the proposed scheme, as set out in Appendix 1, the eligibility criteria for those who qualify for the service and the pests to be included in the service provision. If eligibility and criteria is met, then a free pest control treatment is provided.

The Licensing and Environmental Health Committee at its meeting on 7th June 2022 agreed to recommend to this Committee the implementation of a subsidised service.

The proposed communication strategy and the financial implications were also highlighted. It was proposed to fund the new service for an initial 2-year period by utilising the remainder of the City Council's proportion of Worcestershire Regulatory Services underspend for 2021/2022, which had not been allocated for the current year.

In the ensuing discussion, the Committee considered the arrangements for oversight of the service. The Corporate Director explained that this is a matter for Members to determine. The proposal is that the operational aspect of the service will be monitored through Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board, although this Committee will have overall responsibility.

Members were advised that the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Annual Report is presented to the Licensing and Environmental Health Committee, and this includes element of pest control. Budgetary and public health aspects would fall within the remit of this Committee. No performance indicators have been identified at this stage, but can be considered for inclusion in the quarterly performance reporting to this Committee next year.

Committee Members concluded that there is a role for both Committees, as explained above. This Committee would have overall responsibility.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to recommend Policy and Resources Committee to:

- 1. approve the implementation of a subsidised domestic pest control service as set out at Appendix 1, for Worcester City residents at a cost of £20,000 per annum;**
- 2. approve funding of £41,000 to be taken from the Worcestershire Regulatory Services 2021/2022 underspend to cover the cost of the service between the period 1st September 2022 – 31st August 2024; and**
- 3. note that future costs of delivering the service will be built into future budgets via the review of the medium-term financial plan.**

15 Ward Bio-diversity Delivery Update

The Committee received a report on work which has been undertaken since 2019 to establish and develop wildflower areas under Worcester City Council's management.

The Head of City Services presented the report and summarised the main points, including the current situation by Ward, partnership work undertaken with Worcester Environmental Group Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, and proposals to further improve biodiversity on Council maintained land.

In response to questions, the Head of Service advised that she would welcome suggestions from Members for locations for new areas, including land in the ownership of partner organisations. More information can be provided to Members in writing about the native and non-native mix.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the content of the report and progress made to date.

16 Environmental Community Grants and Environment Summit

The Committee considered a report on the small grants scheme to support community projects that help to deliver the Environmental Sustainability Strategy. The Deputy Director – Policy and Strategy presented the report and highlighted how successful the scheme had been. It had attracted 21 applications and there were eleven awards to schools, five to community organisations and five to larger not-for-profit organisations. The original allocation of £20k has been used up by these grants. It was therefore proposed that the scheme be extended for a further year.

The report also informed Members of the annual summit to be held at the Guildhall in September. This is a significant event, which will bring together organisations and individuals from across the City to share experiences and discuss how to work together to address the climate emergency, alongside promoting and engaging others in the delivery of the Council's strategy. The scale of the event merited external support and would incur costs over and above those that can be covered from existing budgets. It was proposed that £5 be allocated for this purpose.

Members' attention was drawn to the allocations for the various projects which are being funded Environmental Sustainability reserve of £100k.

Officers responded to questions from Committee Members. In the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made:

- Successful applicants in 2021/22 can put forward a request for further funding in 2022/23.
- A request for the numbers of grant applications applied for and the number rejected was made, officers agreed to provide a written response.
- This is much smaller than the scheme for small grants to community organisations and the governance arrangements are intended to reflect this. The scheme has worked well to date, with only 3 or 4 applications being unsuccessful.

Committee Members expressed support for the proposals.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to recommend to Policy and Resources Committee:

- 1. an allocation of £20k to extend the Environmental Community Grants programme as proposed in this report; and**
- 2. an allocation of £5k to support the Environmental Summit planned for September.**

17 Wild About Worcester Wildlife Walking Route

The Committee considered a report on a proposal from Worcester Environmental Group (WEG), in collaboration with Onside Advocacy, to establish a way-marked route around Worcester, helping residents to explore green spaces in the city, learn about nature and to improve their physical and mental health. The Deputy Director – Policy and Strategy presented the report and referred to the presentation which had been given to the Committee by WEG in March 2022. Following on from this, WEG had presented a proposal to officers and it was recommended that the request be supported, to be funded from an additional allocation of £15k from the Environmental Sustainability reserve. The detail of the scheme would be subject to approval by the Corporate Director, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair.

The Deputy Director responded to questions from Members on the details of the scheme. Members discussed the proposed route and expressed the view that it should be more inclusive of the west side of the River. In conclusion, the Chair asked Officers to consider the potential for establishing an extension or secondary route that incorporates the west side.

Committee Members expressed support for the proposal, subject to the above comment.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- 1. agree to recommend to Policy and Resources an allocation of up to £15k to support the Wild about Worcester project, specifically for waymarking of the route and promotion of the initiative; and**
- 2. note that the specification for any works to be funded by the City Council will be subject to approval by the Corporate Director, Homes and Communities in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of this Committee.**

18 Potential for Investment in additional Photovoltaic (PV) Panels at St Martin's Gate Multi-Storey Car Park

The Committee considered a proposal to install approximately five times the number of existing solar panels at roof level. The Head of Property Services presented the report and explained that this could reduce the Council's energy bills by over £40k per annum at current prices. It was estimated that the cost of adding a further 250 kWp array would be approximately £400,000, which would give a straight pay-back period of 10 years at current prices, or shorter as energy costs continue to rise.

It was recommended that a multi-disciplinary consultant be procured to conduct a more detailed feasibility study and outline business case. This was estimated to cost up to £20k, including any further surveys, which could be funded from the environmental sustainability budget.

Committee Members expressed support for the proposal.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to recommend Policy and Resources Committee to:

- 1. approve the commissioning of an Outline Business Case for the installation of further Solar Panels at St Martins Gate car park;**
- 2. allocate up to £20K from the Environmental Sustainability budget to fund the development of the Outline Business Case and delegates the procurement of the business case and associated surveys to the Corporate Director Homes and Communities in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of Environment Committee; and**
- 3. in due course receive the Outline Business Case for consideration.**

19 Quarter 1 Performance Report for 2022/23

The Committee considered a report on the Council's Quarter 1 performance for Environment for 2022/23. The Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities presented the report and highlighted the main points. Specific reference was made to the percentage of overflowing litter/dog waste bins dealt with within time, which currently had a "red" rating. The Head of City Services explained that the main cause was a large turnaround of staff and delays in recruitment. A plan had been put in place to address the position by increasing capacity from existing resources, and this would be implemented over the next four weeks.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to note the Council's Quarter 1 performance for 2022/23.

20 Any Other Business

None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. – 8.10p.m.

Chair at the meeting on
1st November 2022