

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

20th July 2021

Present: Councillor Andy Stafford in the Chair

Councillors B. Amos, Cleary, Collins (Vice-Chair), Cronin, Ditta, Griffiths, Norfolk, Roberts and Udall

Officers: Lloyd Griffiths, Corporate Director, Operations, Homes and Communities
Phil Gilmour, Head of Environmental Operations
Nick McGowan, Street Scene Supervisor (Trees and Conservation)
Ruth Corral, Environment Sustainability Officer

Apologies: Councillors Altaf and Laurenson

11 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor Ditta for Councillor Altaf.

12 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Cleary and Griffiths – Review of the Delivery and Management of Allotments (Minute No. 16) – As allotment holders in the city.

13 Public Participation

Paul Snookes, representative of Worcester Environmental Group (WEG) addressed the Committee on the opportunity to manage the city's verges and grassland spaces for biodiversity and for the residents. Reference was made to the pilot scheme carried out in Dugdale Drive and invited Members of the Committee to meet with a WEG member to look at opportunities to carry out similar schemes in their wards.

The Chair gave thanks to Paul Snookes and recommended that Members pay a visit to Dugdale Drive to see what has been created, just by changing the mowing methodology.

14 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 25th May 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

15 Environmental Community Grants

The Committee considered a report on Environmental Community Grants.

The Action Plan for 2021/22 was agreed by the Environment Committee on 16th March 2021. A specific objective of the plan was to develop and deliver a small grants scheme to support community projects that help deliver the Environmental Sustainability Strategy.

The Action Plan suggested an initial sum of £20,000 be allocated to this grants scheme, to be funded from the previously agreed £100,000 enabling budget for the Strategy.

The Environmental Sustainability Officer, presented the report and provided details of the Environmental Community Grants, as set out in the report. The Committee's attention was drawn to paragraph 3.4 of the report which highlighted the criteria to be met in order to apply for a grant. It is proposed that grant awards will be between £500 and £1,000, organisations will be able to receive up to two grants in a financial year, but only one grant per project.

The Environmental Sustainability Officer responded to questions from Committee Members.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- 1. agree a budget of £20,000 for the Environmental Community Grants Programme as proposed in the report; and**
- 2. delegates authority to the Corporate Director – Finance and Resources to agree the process for assessment and approval of grants.**

16 Review of the Delivery and Management of Allotments

The Committee considered a report on the review of the delivery and management of allotments.

Following a report to Environment Committee on 25th May 2021 (attached as Appendix 1) it was agreed that further work in respect of Option 2 would be undertaken by officers, this work to include further engagement with key stakeholder and interested parties.

The Head of Environmental Operations presented the report and confirmed that engagement with stakeholders is still being progressed but not yet complete. Work is currently in progress to update the Tenants Agreement and Handbook, and to create role profiles for the Allotment Officer, Site Representatives and Forum.

Allotment holders have been contacted and they have been updated on progress with the allotments review and provided with a redacted copy of the NAS report. The preferred option was outlined in paragraphs 3.1-3.5 of the report which included the recruitment of an Allotment Officer. It is intended to bring a report back to the Committee in November 2021.

In referring to the recommendation in the report, the Head of Environmental Operations stated that this had been amended since the report was published and handed over to the Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities to provide the detail.

The Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities drew the Committee's attention to the proposed amendment to the recommendation, which had been circulated to Committee Members and now read as follows:

- 1. approve the allocation of up to £35,000 from the Transformation Fund which, subject to Managing Director approval, would be utilised to recruit a dedicated Allotment Officer resource, for a fixed term;*
- 2. note that further engagement with key stakeholders and interested parties had commenced and is ongoing; and*
- 3. note that a further report will be presented to this Committee in November 2021 detailing the outcomes of this further work and making a recommendation for future resources, as appropriate.*

Committee Members were informed of the reasons for the change in the recommendation by the Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities. He explained that the responsibility of recruitment to posts sits with the Managing Director and not policy committees and that the fixed term is related to the allocation of the funding for the rest of this year, with future resources to be part of the budget setting process in the Autumn. He confirmed that the Managing Director was aware of the project and was fully supportive.

The recommendation, as amended, was agreed by Committee Members.

Officers responded to questions from Committee Members on points of clarification.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- 1. approve the allocation of up to £35,000 from the Transformation Fund which, subject to Managing Director approval, would be utilised to recruit a dedicated Allotment Officer resource, for a fixed term;**
- 2. note that further engagement with key stakeholders and interested parties has commenced and is ongoing; and**
- 3. note that a further report will be presented to this Committee in November 2021 detailing the outcomes of this further work and making a recommendation for future resources, as appropriate.**

17 Lyme Disease Update

The Committee received an updated report on Lyme Disease.

Following a question raised at Council in September 2020, it was agreed by the Chair of the Environment Committee that a report would be brought to a future meeting.

The Street Scene Supervisor (Trees and Conservation), in presenting the report, provided Committee Members with background information on the disease. Appendix A attached to the report provided infection rates for the illness. Mediums used will include educational posters, shown in appendix B, provided by the charity Lyme Disease Action. These posters will feature on pre-existing site notice boards, social media communications and press articles during peak visit times such as hot weather and school holidays.

Committee Members were pleased to see the report and the proposed installation of educational signage which was seen as a good first step. A proposal was made to amend the recommendation to include a report back to the Committee to see how successful the campaign has been and to take further action if needed.

The Chair did not feel it appropriate to amend the recommendation and stated that he would use the Chair and Vice Chairs briefing with Officers as to whether this requires a further report back to Committee.

Following some debate on the matter the proposal to amend the recommendation, to bring back a report to the next meeting, was seconded and on being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

The Chair informed Committee Members that he would ask Officers to provide a Members Brief to identify where and when the educational signage has been installed, so that it can be demonstrated that the commitments made in the report have been met.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the contents of the report outlining plans of installing educational signage to be displayed at Laugharne Brook Nature Reserve (and any other locations of concern) to raise awareness of potential contraction of Lyme Disease from tick bites.

18 Quarter 1 Performance Report 2021/22

The Committee received a report on the Quarter 1 performance report for the Environment Committee for 2021/22.

The Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities responded to questions from Committee Members, in particular grass cutting standards and measures and the addition of an environmental project on the performance scorecard; it was noted that the Strategic Play Area Development original due date was 2019 and not 2025 as listed and it was hoped that this comes forward to Committee soon; confirmation that Ward Members will have input into the action plans for the public bin investment programme.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the Council's Quarter 1 performance for 2021/22.

19 Any Other Business

None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. to 7.55p.m.

Chair at the meeting on
2nd November 2021