

## **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**21st July 2020**

**Present:** Councillor Joy Squires in the Chair

**Councillors Allcott, Altaf, B. Amos, Biggs, Collins, Griffiths, Laurenson, Roberts, Stafford (Vice-Chairman), Stalker and Udall**

**Officers:** Andrew Round, Corporate Director – Place Lloyd Griffiths, Corporate Director – Homes and Communities  
David Sutton, Deputy Director – Corporate Policy and Strategy  
Sue Horrobin, Head of Environmental Operations  
Tim Allen, Environmental Operations Project Manager  
Ruth Corral, Environmental Sustainability Officer  
Mark Cox, Technical Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services

### **1 Appointment of Substitutes**

None.

### **2 Declarations of Interest**

The following declaration of interest was made:

Councillor Collins – item 9 (Worcester City Heat Network Feasibility Study) – as an employee of Bosch Thermotechnology Ltd.

### **3 Public Participation**

Mr Snookes, a co-founder of a group call WEG – Worcester Environmental Group – (previously called VEG - Villages Environmental Group) in Warndon Villages, updated the Committee on the work of the group since he last addressed Committee in March 2020. He informed Members of the city-wide opportunities to help the people of Worcester and nature to flourish together. His address to Committee was supported by slides which were shared with Members on screen.

Mr Snookes was aware that the City Council had declared a Climate Emergency but asked if they had declared a Biodiversity Emergency?

The Chairman thanked Mr Snookes for updating the Committee on the work of the group. She informed him that the Council had not specifically declared a biodiversity emergency but the draft Environmental Sustainability Strategy does have a section on the Natural Environment and that talks about biodiversity, she stated that the Council would be keen to look at this in the near future and thanked Mr Snookes for raising the question.

#### 4 **Minutes**

**RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed remotely by the Chairman.**

#### 5 **Annual and Quarter 4 Performance Report for 2019/20**

The Committee received a report on the Council's Annual and Quarter 4 performance for Environment for 2019/20.

The Corporate Director – Place explained that, due to COVID-19, and the subsequent changes to the committee schedules, the Quarter 4 reports for all committees had previously been reported to Policy and Resources Committee on the 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

The Corporate Director – Place and the Corporate Director – Homes and Communities responded to questions from Committee Members.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee note the Council's Annual and Quarter 4 performance for Communities for 2019/20.**

#### 6 **Quarter 1 Performance Report 2020/21**

The Committee considered a report on the Council's Quarter 1 performance for Environment for 2020/21.

The Chairman informed Committee Members that where projects were delayed an explanation had been given as to the reason why.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee note the Council's Quarter 1 Performance for 2020/21.**

#### 7 **Street Scene Excellence**

The Committee considered a report on Street Scene Excellence. The Head of Environmental Operations and the Environmental Operations Project Manager presented the report in conjunction with a powerpoint presentation which highlighted the key points.

The Head of Environmental Operations informed Committee Members that the report brought together all work streams over the last 3 years, background to this was provided at paragraphs 2.1 to 2.6 of the report. 'Clean streets' were identified as a key work stream in the Council's Transformation programme, Appendix A, attached to the report.

Alongside delivery of Street Scene trials, a set of Street Scene Standards have been developed which would be used for Place and City-wide working, these were attached as Appendix B to the report. Each service task is divided into four assessment criteria of Excellent; Acceptable; Poor and Unacceptable/hazardous. Examples of these were shown via the powerpoint presentation.

A suite of new performance indicator's (PI's) had been developed for monitoring Street Scene performance, these were attached as Appendix C to the report. The new PI's were agreed at Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 which were quality; response and satisfaction. Details of each of the PI's were outlined in paragraphs 3-6-3.11. Members were informed that these PI's were scheduled to be brought in by October but due to the impact of Covid-19 the programme will need to be updated and will be reported to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee.

Trials have helped to assess the impact on resources and demand and on the quality of the Street Scene Vision (established by the street scene team itself): Making the Worcester City Street Scene 'Tidy, Colourful and Safe'.

The Environmental Operations Project Manager presented each of the trials as set out in paragraphs 3.13-3.57 of the report, which were accompanied by Appendices D-G, attached to the report. With regard to Litter and recycling bins in the City Centre the Committee's attention was drawn to paragraph 3.57 of the report which identified that the original option had changed.

Members of the Committee thanked Officers for an excellent and informative report and presentation. Members were pleased to see the place teams come to fruition and also welcomed the installation of the recycling bins.

Reference was made to the service standards and what was meant by excellent and unacceptable. Unacceptable and biodiversity can go hand in hand. It was felt that this area needed a re-think and an engagement exercise with the public on what the City Council's aims are. The Chair stated that in terms of standards there was still work to be carried out in some areas, nothing is set in stone, but have the basis to engage with the public more as there will be dedicated teams.

The Head of Environmental Operations, in response, fully supported the comments made with regard to biodiversity and referred to the speaker saying that this needs to be encouraged. With regard to the service standards she stated that if these need to be developed or changed to support this then it will be carried out.

On being put to the vote it was unanimously agreed and

**RESOLVED: That the Committee:**

- 1.1 approves the new service standards and response times for Street Scene services;**
- 1.2 adopts a Place and City-wide model of delivering street scene services and notes the boundaries of four new Place areas plus the City Centre;**
- 1.3 agrees that the maintenance of 'Premier Parks' will be delivered by a dedicated Parks team;**
- 1.4 agrees that the wildflower sites (including both 'seeded' and 'natural' areas) will continue to be provided and developed across the City;**

- 1.5 delegates authority to the Corporate Director - Place in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Environment Committee to make operational decisions as needed to move to Place and City-wide working; and**
- 1.6 notes that discussions are being held with Warndon Parish Council and St Peter the Great County Parish Council to negotiate revised Service Level Agreements for maintenance works using Environmental Operations resources.**

## **8 Worcester City Urban Gull Population Study 2020**

The Committee considered a report on the Worcester City Urban Gull Populations Study 2020. The findings of the survey were attached as appendix 1 to the report. The Technical Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services in presenting the report highlighted the main points.

A programme of gull control activities to be undertaken by the Council during 2020 was approved by Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2019. A comprehensive gull population survey was considered essential to support this work.

A professional and experienced contractor was procured to undertake a Worcester wide gull survey in order to establish a total gull population figure and to also identify how that population was distributed across the whole City. All locations identified and organised by Worcestershire Regulatory Services Technical Officer (Gull Control) in collaboration with the contractor, in order to ensure that local knowledge was built into the process. The survey was undertaken over three consecutive days from 29<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

It was noted that the survey results will shape the design of the 2021 Workplan and provide an ongoing opportunity to compare and contrast the effectiveness of the measure chosen to deploy to manage urban gull numbers across the City.

The Chair informed Committee Members that it was hoped to reinstate the gull briefing that was cancelled earlier in the year.

Committee Members thanked Officers for the report and the survey which they found interesting and hoped that everyone that had read it had learnt something from them. It was asked that the report to Committee in October would integrate the learning from this as to what happens next.

It was agreed that engagement with the public was important to identify what can and cannot be done, as some have unrealistic expectations.

### **RESOLVED: That the Committee:**

- 1. note the contents of the report and in particular, the findings of the 2020 gull population survey at Appendix 1; and**
- 2. note that the findings of the survey will be used to develop the 2021 Gull Workplan which will be reported back to Committee in October 2020.**

## 9 Worcester City Heat Network Feasibility Study

The Committee considered a report on the Worcester City Heat Network Feasibility Study. The Environmental Sustainability Officer in presenting the report highlighted the main points.

To build on previous work and take this forward, the Worcestershire LEP has proposed procurement of a holistic city-wide heat network feasibility study and detailed energy masterplan to assess various opportunities. Funding for such studies is available to present through the Government's Heat Networks Delivery Unit (HNDU). This fund provided up to 67% funding for each stage of the project. Only local authorities can apply for this funding.

The Environmental Sustainability Officer drew the Committee's attention to Appendix 1, attached to the report, which explained What is a Heat Network, appendix 2, also attached to the report, provided a briefing note Worcester City Heat Network with geothermal and River Source Input.

The preferred option for the proposal was set out in paragraphs 3.1-3.6 of the report, which includes the submission of an HNDU funding application and provide match funding to procure a feasibility study to assess the viability of a heat network in the City. The study for Worcester would provide greater detail into the viability of the options for the City and provide a masterplan for further investigation.

The Environmental Sustainability Officer responded to Committee Members questions and comments on detailed aspects of the proposal, which related to the following:

- the impact on traffic and businesses, which were not included in paragraph 3.6 of the report of what the consultant's feasibility study should address;
- the environmental impact on the River Severn in Worcester and other areas;
- concerns about potential costs and contributions from partners, consider that the Council's contribution is less than recommended and
- the need to be cautious.

The debate led to amendments to the recommendations, as set out in the report, as follows:

- 1.1 Add the wording 'in principle'
- 1.2 Amend the figure of 'up to £10k' to 'up to £7k'
- 1.3 Add the wording 'to seek final approval'

It was also requested that paragraph 3.4 of the report be removed, under the preferred option heading, which related to industrial waste heat. The Environmental Sustainability Officer agreed that this would be removed from the specification.

On being put to the vote the proposal, as amended, was unanimously agreed and

**RESOLVED: That the Committee:**

- 1. approve in principle the submission of a bid to the Heat Networks Delivery Unit for funding for a heat network feasibility and energy masterplan for a Worcester City Heat Network;**
- 2. approve a budget of up to £7k, subject to contributions from relevant partners, as match funding to support the bid; and**
- 3. delegates authority to the Corporate Director - Finance and Resources, to prepare the bid and seek final approval from the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee.**

## **10 Any Other Business**

### Use of Pesticides on Allotments

The Chair informed Members of the Committee that the issue of the use of pesticides, particularly Jeyes Fluid, had been raised with her by allotment holders and had asked Officers if this could be looked at. Other Members also raised concerns on this matter, particularly as the allotment shop was selling the product and it was being used inappropriately on allotments. It was suggested that a report about the review of allotments, particularly around governance issues, be brought to a future meeting.

The Chair agreed to discuss this with the Vice Chair and Officers at their next briefing.

### Investment Strategy for Playgrounds

Reference was made to the second part of the Investment Strategy for Playgrounds and the concerns that there would not be the capacity for a report to be made available for the October meeting. It was asked if this could be given further consideration.

The Chair also agreed to discuss this with the Vice Chair and Officers at their next briefing.

**Duration of the meeting: 7.00pm to 8.55pm**

Chairman at the meeting on  
27<sup>th</sup> October 2020