

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

25th May 2021

Present: Councillor Stafford in the Chair

Councillors Altaf, B. Amos, Cleary, Collins
(Vice-Chairman), Cronin, Griffiths,
Laurenson, Norfolk, Roberts and Udall

Officers: Lloyd Griffiths, Corporate Director – Homes
and Communities
Phil Gilmour, Head of Environmental
Operations
Nick McGowan, Street Scene Supervisor
Trees and Conservation

Also in Attendance: Liz Bunting and Colin Bedford, National
Allotment Society

1 Appointment of Substitutes

None.

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Cleary and Griffiths – Review of the Delivery and Management of Allotments (Minute No. 5) – As allotments holders in the city.

3 Public Participation

Chris Thorp, Site Representative at Northwick Road Allotment Site, addressed the Committee in respect of the allotment review.

He made comments and raised points regarding the National Allotment Society (NAS) report and the recommendations outlined in the officer's report. He felt that the Council should have been able to have liaised with the Site Representatives rather than the need for an independent review. He found both reports disappointing.

Mr Thorp commented that there were a number of fundamental elements missing from the reports. He commented that the full report from NAS was currently unavailable and it was difficult to comment any further without it. He referred to the role of the Site Representatives and the Forum and the relationship between these and the Council which he felt was not working as well as it could be.

In referring to the options considered in the reports he felt that Option 1 should be reconsidered in a detailed discussion with the Site Representatives before looking at the option to bring in a full-time officer. He considered that Option 1 would be a starting point for a refreshed relationship.

In response, the Chairman thanked Mr Thorp for his participation in the meeting and stated that Officers would provide a formal response in respect of comments and points raised. Mr Thorp agreed to provide the Chair with his detailed address to Committee.

4 **Minutes**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 16th March 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising:

Minute 34 – Minutes

Any Other Business – Lyme Disease

Members asked for reassurances that a report on this matter would be brought to the next meeting. The Corporate Director – Homes and Communities confirmed that the report was almost complete and would be ready for the meeting in July.

Minutes 36 – Action Plan for the First Phase of Delivery of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy

In referring to the last paragraph it was stated that a report regarding the impact of the action plan in terms of carbon emissions would be prepared for Committee. Members asked if this report could be presented at the next meeting. The Corporate Director – Homes and Communities agreed to speak to the officers concerned.

5 **Review and the Delivery and Management of Allotments**

The Committee considered a report on the Review of the Delivery and Management of Allotments.

At its meeting on 27th October 2020 the committee agreed that an independent organisation be commissioned to help the City Council review the purpose of and undertake a review of council allotments. The review would include how the management of the council allotments currently work and recommendations for improvement.

This area of work has been supported by a Task and Finish Group, who agreed that the piece of work undertaken should be a comprehensive review of the way allotments are managed and should take into account Governance; Data and Performance; and Good Practice, as outlined in paragraph 2.2. of the report.

The Task and Finish Group, at its meeting on 20th April 2021, were presented with the National Allotment Society (NAS) review report, who were chosen to undertake the review, and it was agreed that a report would be presented to the May 2021 meeting of the Committee to share the reviews findings and options considered by that Task and Finish Group.

The Head of Environmental Operations in presenting the report introduced the representatives from the National Allotment Society, Liz Bunting and Colin Bedford. The Executive Summary of the NAS review report, dated March 2021, was attached as Appendix 1 to the report, the representatives from NAS presented an overview of their findings, identifying the methodology used and management options recommended for the Council to consider.

Those Members on the Committee and who were part of the Task and Finish Group spoke in support of their endorsement to progress further work in respect of Option 2 and confirmed that all options had been discussed at length. It was pointed out however that raising the issue of the provision of allotment land for new developments with planning needed to be included as demand for allotments was high but availability low.

The Chair reminded Members of the work trying to be achieved with the allotments with regard to site security, improving and maintaining the sustainability of the sites and ensure that they are being used to their full capacity. The appointment of a dedicated Allotments Officer would be directly responsible for the day to day management.

Some Members commented that allotment holders were not aware of the review until very recently and it was asked if a communication could be sent to all allotment holders informing them of the proposals. The Corporate Director – Homes and Communities deferred to the representatives from NAS who confirmed that contacting the individual plot holders were never part of the process. The Corporate Director stated that he would ensure that the next stage of the process included this.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- 1. Note the contents of the report and in particular the findings of the National Allotment Society's (NAS) Executive Summary "Review of Allotment Management in Worcester City", at Appendix 1;**
- 2. Note the Allotment Task and Finish Group's endorsement to progress further work in respect of Option 2 (The Council to appoint a dedicated Allotments Officer, with reduced roles for the Forum and the Site Representatives) and direct officers to undertake this further work, including further engagement with key stakeholders and interested parties; and**
- 3. Note that a further report for decision will be presented to this Committee in July 2021 detailing the outcomes of this further work.**

6 National Resources and Waste Strategy for England 2018 (RWS) - Consultations

The Committee received a report on the National Resources and Waste Strategy for England 2018 – Consultations.

The Head of Environmental Operations presented the report, in conjunction with a PowerPoint presentation.

Consultations on three key policy measures has begun that include:

- Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging (EPR);
- Introducing a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS); and
- Consistency in Household and Business Recycling.

Details of each were provided in paragraphs 3-5 of the report.

The Worcestershire Strategic Waste Partnership have worked together at both Officer and Elected Member level to develop a single response that captures each Council's viewpoints on the consultations. It is intended that each individual council in Worcestershire submits the same response.

The report intends to provide Members with the principles that will underpin a set of agreed views to each of the consultations, which subject to agreement, will then be developed into a final submission via delegations to the Corporate Director – Homes and Communities in consultation with the Chair of the Committee.

Members thanked officers for the report and the presentation which was found to be very useful.

It was questioned whether the recommendation at 1.2 of the report should include the Vice Chair. The Corporate Director – Homes and Communities stated that the wording had been agreed with Legal at the time of writing the report but would check.

Members debated each of the three key policy measures. It was felt that as a Council we should support DRS in conjunction with EPR, although there were some concerns over this. In view of this, an amendment was proposed to insert at 1.2 of the recommendation the following:

'Instruct Officers to reflect the view that household waste collection does not necessarily negate the value of DRS'.

The Chair agreed that the wording be recorded in the minutes but not for inclusion in the recommendation, for which officers agreed to note.

In general it was felt that communication with residents was key and there was a need to be more informative on what could and could not be recycled, also encouraging communication with residents on the reduction of food waste. Members also asked that officers endorse food waste collections as other authorities have done successfully.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

1. Note the contents of the report and in particular, the three policy proposals that are currently out to consultation including –

- **Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging (EPR)**
- **Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)**
- **Consistency in Household & Business Recycling**

- 2. Delegates the Corporate Director (Homes and Communities) in consultation with the Chair of Environment Committee, to review the proposed responses (when available) from the Worcestershire Strategic Waste Partnership, to the three consultation exercises listed at recommendation 1, to amend these responses, if necessary, to reflect the views of Worcester City Council and to approve the submission of the final responses**

7 Ash Dieback Update Report

The Committee considered an update report on Ash Dieback.

The Street Scene Supervisor (Trees and Conservation) in presenting the report provided Members with detailed background information on this matter.

A new bespoke tree inspection software was currently being procured which will increase the efficiency and accuracy of tree inspections whilst also raising the risk levels of all Ash trees to high, making them subject to a 6 monthly inspection timeframe. The new software will allow officers to inspect and record data for large wooded areas which the current system does not allow.

The monitoring of Ash trees, including the installation of the software, forms part of the Environmental Operations Service Plan, this will be updated quarterly as part of the Performance Review.

It is intended to continue to brief Committee on an annual basis regarding any developments and presence of Ash Dieback in the city.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the contents of the report and in particular, how the Council intends to manage the presence and impacts of Ash Dieback.

8 Arterial Routes (Key Project) Update Report

The Committee considered an update report on the Arterial Routes project.

At its meeting in May 2020, the Committee approved a report that proposed to allocate £100,000 from the City Plan Fund to improve strategic and arterial routes in respect of litter bin provision and replacement, and the trialling of an arterial routes team. The future cleansing of the A449, including litter bin provision in laybys to be considered as part of the project.

The brief of the project was set out in paragraph 2.6 of the report. Paragraph 3.3 onwards provides an update on progress against each of the proposed items.

Good progress has been made against each of the items that form part of the project and moving forward these will be kept under review and monitored by the Environmental Operations Management Team.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the contents of the report and in particular, the progress that has been made in respect of Arterial and Strategic Routes.

9 Quarter 4 Performance Report 2020/21

The Committee received a report on the Council's Annual and Quarter 4 performance for the Environment Committee for 2020/21.

The Scorecard has been refreshed for 2020/21 with projects completed in the last financial year replaced with new projects as previously agreed with committee.

The Corporate Director – Homes and Communities responded to questions from Committee Members, in particular a reassurance that household waste does get recycled, for which it was suggested that another visit to the recycling centre, when safe to do so, would be useful for those who have not been previously, as a reassurance on household recycling.

Reference was made to the Council's approach to grass cutting in the City as some areas were being left uncut, maybe for biodiversity reasons. It was suggested by Members that a communication from officers on the grass cutting methods city wide would be useful so Members are aware and can inform residents if asked.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the Council's Annual and Quarter 4 performance for 2020/21.

10 Any Other Business

None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.45p.m. to 9.45p.m.

Chair at the meeting on
20th July 2021