

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

2nd November 2021

Present: Councillor Andy Stafford in the Chair

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

Officers: Tim Allen, Environmental Operations Project Manager
Ruth Corral, Environment Sustainability Officer
Mark Cox, Technical Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services
Shane Flynn, Corporate Director – Finance and Resources
Lloyd Griffiths, Corporate Director, Operations, Homes and Communities
Phil Gilmour, Head of Environmental Operations
Gareth James, Parking and Enforcement Manager
David Sutton, Deputy Director – Policy and Strategy

20 Appointment of Substitutes

None.

21 Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interest were made:

Councillors Cleary and Griffiths – Review of the Delivery and Management of Allotments (Minute 26) - As allotment holders in Worcester.

22 Public Participation

Paul Snookes spoke on behalf of Worcester Environmental Group in support of re-instating the post of Wildlife Ranger and recommending Policy and Resources Committee to allocate the necessary funding for the post, for the provision of additional cut and collect equipment, and for setting up a joint project to create a 12 mile “Wild About Worcester” circular walk.

Patrick Allfrey spoke about various issues relating to allotments. The allotment holders at Windsor Avenue Allotment site were unhappy with the manner in which the site had been treated by the developers of the adjoining residential site over a period of 16-17 months, and he listed a number of examples. He had provided more information by email to Council Officers. The Chair thanked Mr Allfrey for his comments and he understood Officers were working to address the points raised.

Councillor Udall spoke on behalf of a number of allotment holders about the security of the Windsor Avenue allotments in the light of several recent break-ins. He had a petition containing over 100 signatures, which he presented to the Chair, setting out a number of suggested safety improvements, and he asked if a report can be presented at the next meeting of the Committee on how to implement Police recommendations regarding security.

23 **Minutes**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th July 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

24 **Biodiversity Action Programme**

The Committee considered a report which outlined the current status of biodiversity in the city and a proposed action programme to improve biodiversity over the next few years. The Environmental Sustainability Officer presented the report and explained that the action programme sought to support and complement the work of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy Action Plan, with a focused approach on the Council's own land, as described in the aims and objectives. It was recommended that a sum of £20k funding be allocated from the Environmental Sustainability Strategy Enabling Budget for the proposals outlined within the report.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:

- 1. approve the proposed Biodiversity Action Programme (Appendix 1); and**
- 2. allocate £20k funding from the Environmental Sustainability Strategy Enabling Budget for the proposals outlined within this report. That authority to spend that allocation is delegated to the Deputy Director, Corporate Policy and Strategy in consultation with the Chair of Environment Committee.**

25 **Progress Update for the Environmental Sustainability Strategy Action Plan**

The Committee considered a six monthly progress report on the Environmental Sustainability Strategy for the City of Worcester, which was approved by this Committee in October 2020, and the Action Plan for the first phase of delivery of the Strategy, which was approved in March 2021. The Environmental Sustainability Officer presented the report and highlighted in particular the reductions on carbon emissions, both by the City Council and across the City generally. It was also noted that a report will be presented to the forthcoming meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Committee on establishing an Active Travel Officer post.

The Environmental Sustainability Officer responded to questions from Committee Members.

In the ensuing discussion, reference was made to the potential to access additional funding opportunities as they emerge. Officers were asked to be alert to these and for the Council to be prepared to increase capacity to take up new initiatives.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the report.

26 Setting of the Budget for 2022/23 and MTFP to 2026/27

The Committee considered a report on the Budgets for the various services for 2021/22 and progress made in delivering the projects included in the City Plan relevant to this Committee. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources presented the report and responded to questions from Committee Members.

It was noted that the Medium Term Financial Plan indicates a budget gap which will need to be addressed.

Officers highlighted that all Members are invited to submit suggestions for potential service improvements. This can be done now so as to be able to feed proposals into the Committee's consideration of the 2022/23 budget at its meeting in January. Members were also asked to consider whether the current capital programme projects are still appropriate for each service and whether there are any further needs that require addressing.

In the ensuing discussion the Chair made reference to a number of issues which he wishes to be addressed as part of the 2022/23 Budget, namely capital funding for a cut and collect mower, elements of the additional budget for city centre cleansing previously agreed for this year which can be can take forward, upskilling the Environmental Operations team to enable them to manage biodiversity issues, and appropriate resourcing of neighbourhood teams.

In response to the Corporate Director's invitation to submit suggestions, a request was made for budget provision to enable the re-opening of the toilets and staff facilities at St. John's Cemetery. The Chair agreed that this should be take this into consideration as part of the Budget discussion at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to note:

- 1. the Budgets for the various services identified for 2021/22; and**
- 2. the progress made in delivering the projects included in the City Plan and City Delivery Fund that are relevant to this Committee and confirms the programme of work resourced.**

27 Consolidation of Off-Street Parking Orders

The Committee considered a report on a proposal to establish a single consolidated off street car parking order that covers Worcester City Council's Car Parks. The Parking and Enforcement Manager presented the report and explained that this would bring together a number of existing car parking orders spanning back 12 years into one document. This would benefit Officers managing the service but, equally as important, customers and stakeholders who need to engage with parking services.

Furthermore, having one order would provide an opportunity to efficiently update the order to bring it into line with the current parking payment options and to formalise arrangements for using the new EV charging bays at St Martins Gate Car Park.

If agreed, it was proposed to undertake a public consultation exercise and delegate authority to the Chair and Vice-Chair to decide whether to implement the order.

In the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made:

- It was clarified that there is a legal obligation to undertake a public consultation exercise.
- The EV charging points are understood to be suitable for all types of vehicle. Officers will check this point and clarify if that is not the case.
- There are a small number of electric vehicles on the taxi fleet currently. This issue has not been raised with the trade due to the impact of Covid, but the Taxi Forum has now recommenced meeting and Officers will raise the provision of electric taxis there.
- The provision of EV charging points outside the city centre was raised and in particular enabling charging for vehicles that are parked on-street in residential areas. In response, it was explained that Officers are exploring the potential for on-street charging as a part of their work on implementing the findings of the Air Quality Task and Finish Group and it is intended to meet with public health colleagues on this issue.
- It was proposed and seconded that representations be made to the County Council, calling on them to change their policy and consider introducing a pilot scheme in Worcester to allow on-street charging with the use of gulleys. Following a discussion, and after seeking advice from Officers, this proposal did not proceed, however it was agreed that Officers will seek clarity from the County Council regarding their current policy, advise them that this Committee wishes to support local residents through the provision of on-street charging, and ask the County Council to consider providing funding to enable a pilot scheme. It was agreed to receive a report back on this at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:

- 1. note the contents of the report and in particular the proposal to introduce parking arrangements for the designated electric/hybrid vehicle bays at St Martins Gate car park;**
- 2. approve the undertaking of a 21-day public consultation exercise in respect of the Draft Worcester City Council (Off-Street Parking Places) Order 2021 at Appendix 1;**

3. **delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Operations, Homes and Communities in consultation with Chair and Vice-Chair of Environment Committee to implement the Order subject to any changes required following consultation feedback received; and**
4. **request the Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Resources to seek clarification of the points raised in the final bullet point above and report back to the next meeting.**

28 Review of the Delivery and Management of Allotments

The Committee considered a report on the outcome of engagement work, including the undertaking of a consultation exercise, pursuant to the review of the delivery and management of allotments which had been the subject of previous Committee reports in May and July 2021. The Head of Environmental Operations presented the report and explained that the engagement exercise sought views on a draft Tenancy Agreement and the role of the Allotment Officer, Site Representative and Allotment Forum. It also included reference to several proposed changes to how concessions are applied to existing and prospective allotment holders.

A summary of the consultation feedback was included in the report and was provided as part of the presentation. Overall feedback had been generally positive and no element of the proposals had been dismissed although several changes had been made to the draft Tenancy Agreement. A proposed revised Agreement was appended to the report.

Following the review, a number of changes were proposed to the charging regime:

- All concessions will be removed for those plot holders living outside of the City boundary as of 1st October 2022;
- It is intended to introduce a concession for those on low-income, to be applied in line with other similar concessions across other Council services;
- It is intended to raise the age related concession to state pension age (currently 66 years for men and women) year on year, so for example this concession would apply to all those 61 years of age as at 1st October 2022, 62 years of age as at 1st October 2023 and so on until reaching state pension age;
- It is intended to remove the current concession applying to those plot holders who have held their plot prior to 2008.
- Only one concession per person will apply.

In the ensuing discussion, Members acknowledged the amount of work that had been undertaken by Officers and support was expressed for the proposed changes to the draft Tenancy Agreement and the fees and charges.

In order to enable the changes to proceed without the need for further reference back to this Committee, it was proposed and seconded that authority be delegated to the Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities in

consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee to make any future minor amendments which may be required to the Tenancy Agreement as part of the programme of implementation.

The Chair thanked all allotment holders and residents who had contributed to the review and suggested improvements.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:

- 1. note the contents of this report, and in particular the consultation feedback summary attached at Appendix 1;**
- 2. approve the proposed changes to the draft Tenancy Agreement at Appendix 2;**
- 3. recommend to Income Generation Committee the approval of changes to the Allotments Concession Regime as set out within this report in preparation for 2022/2023 Fees & Charges;**
- 4. delegate to the Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, authority to agree any future minor amendments which may be required to the Tenancy Agreement.**

29 Public Bin Investment Programme

The Committee considered a report on Ward Improvement Plans for Public Bins, pursuant to the decision of the Committee in January 2021 regarding improvements to the current provision of litter bins across the city and introducing more public recycling bins. The Environmental Operations Project Manager presented the report and gave a detailed explanation of the proposals.

The Policy and Resources Committee at its June 2021 meeting had agreed an allocation of £75,000 from the 2020/21 surplus for enhanced public waste collection services and £48,000 of this was identified as being required for bins and collection improvements. Following an initial analysis of Ward litter bin needs, the costs associated with Phase One of the improvements were identified as £80,000 and it was agreed with the Chair of the Committee that £32,000 be re-allocated from other Environmental Operations elements of the Fund to enable ordering of equipment and planning to commence.

The report set out the proposed two-phase approach for improvements. It was explained that Phase One can be delivered using previously approved budgets. The estimated costs of Phase Two were £323,000, to be implemented from April 2022 to March 2025, and if approved, will be included in the proposed capital programme for 2022/23 – 2025/6. Phase One also comprises capital spending and should therefore be recommended to Council for inclusion in the capital programme for the current financial year.

Officers responded to questions from Committee Members on detailed aspects of the report.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:

1. **note the contents of this report and approves the planned phased approach to the Ward Improvement Plans for Public Bins.**
2. **recommend to Council a supplementary estimate of £80,000 to the Capital Programme in 2021/2022.**
3. **delegate authority to the Corporate Director – Operations, Homes & Communities to agree the programme of implementation in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee.**

30 Annual Gull Control Report and Proposed 2022 Gull Control Work Programme

The Committee considered a report on gull control activities undertaken by the Council during 2021 and feedback received, together with proposed actions for next year's breeding season to build on the work done to date. The Technical Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services presented the report and commented in detail on the various aspects.

The cost of delivering the recommended actions would require an additional £40,000 to the existing budget (£30,000 plus an additional £5,500 within the Worcestershire Regulatory Services budget).

Officers responded to questions from Committee Members on detailed aspects of the report.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:

1. **note the work undertaken during 2021;**
2. **approve the Proposed Gull Control Work Programme for 2022 as detailed in Section 4 of the report; and**
3. **recommend to Policy and Resources Committee an additional £40,000 funding from reserves.**

31 Quarter 2 Performance Report for 2021/22

The Committee considered a report on the Council's Quarter 2 performance for Environment for 2021/22. The Scorecard had been refreshed with projects completed in the last financial year replaced by new projects as previously agreed by this Committee. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources presented the report and highlighted the main points.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to note the Council's Quarter 2 performance for 2021/22.

32 Any Other Business

None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. - 9.10p.m.

Chair at the meeting on
25th January 2022