

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

24th January 2023

Present: Councillor Andy Stafford in the Chair

Councillors Altaf, Bisset, Cleary, Cookson,
Cronin, Lamb, Lewing (Vice-Chair),
Mitchell, Norfolk and Roberts

Officers: Lloyd Griffiths, Corporate Director –
Operations, Homes and Communities
Shane Flynn, Corporate Director – Finance
and Resources
Sandra Green, Head of City Services
Mark Baldwin, Head of Finance
Gareth James, Parking and Enforcement
Services Team Manager
Niall McMenamin, Principal Officer,
Licensing, Worcestershire Regulatory
Services
Kiran Lahel, Licensing and Support Services
Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory
Services
Mark Cox, Technical Services Manager,
Worcestershire Regulatory Services
Toni Ainscough, Environmental Health
Practitioner, Worcestershire Regulatory
Services

Apologies: Councillors Hassan and Udall

32 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor Mitchell for Councillor Hassan and Councillor Lamb for Councillor Udall.

33 Declarations of Interest

None.

34 Public Participation

Chris Thorp, Secretary of the Worcester Allotments Forum, updated the Committee about the progress and demise of the Forum. He advised them on what had been done with the assets and what schools had been awarded grants of £350 each. He reported that he would be visiting all the schools during the next few months to sign off the match funding grant. He confirmed that all the assets had now been allocated in accordance with the Forums' Constitution.

The Chair thanked Mr Thorpe for updating the Committee and for his support during the allotment review and for identifying where the remaining funds had been allocated to.

35 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 1st November 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

36 Setting of the Budget for 2023-24 and MTFP to 2027-28

The Committee considered the proposed budgets for Environment Committee for 2023/24, outlined in Appendix 1. The Committee reviewed the priorities within each service and also considered the draft Capital Programme to 2027/28, outlined in Appendix 2.

The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources in presenting the report drew the Committee’s attention to new Appendix 3 showing the Medium Term Financial Plan including the latest annual Settlement which was notified in December 2022. The figures represented a budget gap of £1.887m and any proposed budget amendments at this stage are likely to result in a reduction or reallocation of resources rather than an increase in the net budget available.

At its meeting on 1st November 2022 the Committee received three budget proposals for 2023/24, as outlined in paragraph 4.4 of the report. These proposals will be forwarded to the Policy and Resources Committee on 7th February 2023 for approval and inclusion in the 2023/24 budget.

Committee Members were informed that should they have any new City Plan themes or projects that require funding in the 2023-2028 MTFP they will be forwarded to the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 7th February 2023 for consideration along with those proposals submitted by the Council’s other policy committees.

The Committee did not recommend any change for the services’ Budgets and did not recommend any changes or additions to the Capital Programme. It was also agreed that there were no further new budget proposals to be recommended to Policy and Resources Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to

- 1. note the proposed Budgets for the various services identified for 2023/24;**
- 2. note the priorities within each service;**
- 3. note the services’ Capital programme and future projects.**

37 Referral Report from Licensing & Environmental Health Committee - Proposal to Introduce 'Real Time' Air Quality Monitoring Equipment to Monitor Air Quality

The Committee considered a referral report from the Licensing and Environmental Health Committee in relation to a proposal to introduce ‘real time’ air quality monitoring equipment to manage air quality.

The Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities informed Committee Members that at its meeting on 27th September 2022, the Licensing and Environment Committee noted a proposal to introduce 'real time' air quality monitoring equipment at various locations across the city.

The proposal relied on a successful Defra Grant application for 90% of the costs. The grant application required an investment of £4,000 in capital expenditure and revenue expenditure of £500 in year one and £2,500 in year two as 'match funding'. The Council had not yet been made aware of any decision in respect of the application and if it were refused then a further report would be presented to the Licensing and Environmental Health Committee setting out alternative options.

The full report to the Licensing and Environmental Health Committee was attached as Appendix 1, the financial implications were set out in paragraph 6.1 of the report.

Officers responded to questions and comments from Committee Members.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to

- 1. approve capital expenditure of £4,500 as a 'match funding' contribution subject to determination of the DEFRA 'Air Quality Grant Scheme' bid submitted by the Council;**
- 2. recommend to Full Council an amendment to the capital programme of £45,000 in the event that the bid is successful; and**
- 3. note that subject to determination of the DEFRA 'Air Quality Grant Scheme', the ongoing revenue costs associated with operating and maintaining equipment will be met from existing budgets**

38 Referral Report from Licensing & Environmental Health Committee - Proposal to Apply a Fees and Charges Exemption for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles

The Committee considered a referral report from the Licensing and Environmental Health Committee in relation to a proposal to apply a fees and charges exemption for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Electric Vehicles.

The Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities informed Committee Members that at its meeting on 12th December 2022 the Licensing and Environment Committee approved a proposal to incentivise the transition to electric hackney carriages and private hire vehicles through a fee and charge exemption for the period 2023-24- 2025-26.

To implement such a change, the Council were required to undertake a 28 day consultation process and authority had been given to the Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Licensing and Environmental Health Committee, to incorporate the fees and charges proposal into the 2023/24 draft Licensing and Environmental Health fees and charges for consideration, subject to the review of the consultation feedback.

The full report to the Licensing and Environmental Health Committee was attached as Appendix 1, the financial implications were set out in paragraphs 6.1-6.6 of the report.

RESOLVED: That the Committee approves funding of £37,000 to be taken from the 'Taxi Reserve' to introduce the Fee and Charge Exemption for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Electric Vehicles for the period 2023/24 – 2025/26.

39 Draft Car Park Fees and Charges 2023-24

The Committee considered a report on draft car park fees and charges for 2023-24.

The Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities in presenting the report informed Committee Members that the car park fees and charges, although reviewed each year, have not been adjusted since 2009. The Council owns and operates 14 car parks across the city. Further information on these car parks was provided in Appendix 1 attached to the report and the existing car park fees and charges were included at Appendix 2.

In reviewing the existing fees and charges scheme a benchmarking exercise has been undertaken that compared the Council's car parks to private car park operators within Worcester City Centre, neighbouring District Councils across Worcestershire and 3 comparator councils including Cheltenham Borough Council, Gloucester City Council and Exeter City Council. The benchmarking information was attached as Appendix 3 to the report.

Having regard to the Council's challenging financial position and the findings of the benchmarking exercise, a draft car park fees and charges proposal for 2023-24 had been developed and was included at Appendix 4. The key principles to the proposal were outlined in paragraph 2.21 of the report. Using the same comparator sites and councils as used in Appendix 3, a benchmarking exercise had been undertaken in respect of the proposed fees and charges and was included at Appendix 5.

There is an existing Environment Committee key project to look at replacing the car park notice boards in order to ensure that pricing information is up to date and includes reference to electric vehicle points. The total cost of the project was highlighted at paragraph 2.28 of the report.

The preferred option was outlined in paragraphs 3.1-3.3 of the report to be recommend for approval to Income Management Sub-Committee on 1st February 2023. The Financial and budgetary implications was set out in paragraph 5.1 of the report. Alternative options were considered which were highlighted in paragraphs 4.1-4.4 of the report, with particular attention drawn to paragraph 4.3.

During discussion some Committee Members, although not against an increase in car park charges, expressed concern over an increase at this time, particularly with the current cost of living crisis and also to the recent issues with the car parking machines. Other Committee Members expressed support and were in favour of the report which made a strong argument of the financial situation.

On being put to the vote the proposals were agreed as recommended.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to

- 1. note the contents of the report and in particular the Draft Car Park Fees and Charges 2023/24 at Appendix 4; and**
- 2. recommend the Draft Car Park Fees and Charges 2023/24 to Income Management Committee for approval as part of the Council's budget setting process for 2023/24.**

40 Review of City Centre Cleansing Arrangements

The Committee considered a report on the review of City Centre cleansing arrangements.

The Head of City Services presented the report and provided Committee Members with the background to the City Centre Team and their hours of working. The area currently covered by street scene operatives in the City Team was shown in paragraph 2.9 of the report.

The place-based approach has been successful and has been pivotal in an efficient and effective and effective service delivery. The introduction of a City Centre Co-ordinator will be uplifted from a vacant operative post and the role will be like those already employed on the place-based model.

In addition to a City Centre Co-ordinator it was proposed to introduce a GPS radio system where operatives can communicate issues and areas of attention which would benefit productivity. The implementation of this system would also aid as a lone working device.

The preferred option for city enhancement was highlighted in paragraphs 3.1-3.4 of the report and the financial and budgetary implications were outlined in paragraph 5.1 of the report.

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

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to

- 1. note the contents of this report and in particular the proposed permanent deployment of the Street Scene Enhancement Team ('hit squad'); and**
- 2. recommends to Council an additional revenue budget of £4k to the Environmental Operations budget for 2023/24 onwards for the proposed implementation of a City Centre Cleansing Co-ordinator and £9k for 2023/24 for the introduction of a GPS radio system for use by the City Centre Cleansing Team.**

41 Quarter 3 Performance Report for 2022-23

The Committee considered a report on the Council's Quarter 3 performance for Environment Committee for 2022/23. The Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities presented the report and highlighted the main points.

Officers responded to questions, comments and points of clarification from Committee Members.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the Council's quarter 3 performance for 2022/23.

42 Any Other Business

None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. to 8.27p.m.

Chair at the meeting on
14th March 2023