

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

14th March 2023

Present: Councillor Andy Stafford in the Chair

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

Officers: Lloyd Griffiths, Corporate Director –
Operations, Homes and Communities
David Sutton, Deputy Director – Corporate
Policy and Strategy
Sandra Green, Head of City Services
Tim Allen, Environmental Operations
Project Manager
Douglas Henderson, Business Development
Manager (Bereavement Services)
Harry Simms, Team Supervisor (Street
Scene – Trees and Play)

Apologies: Councillor Hassan

43 Appointment of Substitutes

None.

44 Declarations of Interest

None.

45 Public Participation

None.

46 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 24th January 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

47 Management of Ash Dieback - Update Report

The Committee considered an update report on the management of Ash Dieback.

Ash Dieback is now established across significant areas of the city, although not every ash tree is currently showing signs of disease. Appendix 1 attached to the report contained 2 images of trees within the city that are showing signs of disease.

Upon recommendation from The Tree Council and Forest Research Agency, Worcester City Council has now adopted the Suffolk County Council Ash Health Assessment System. This will enable the Council to categorise the health of ash

trees in line with a national standard and also allows assessment to be performed by a layperson with minimal training.

Using this system in late summer/early autumn the conditions of Worcester City's mature and semi-mature ash trees were grade Class 1-4 as outlined in paragraph 2.5 of the report. In appendix 2 attached to the report reference photographs which form part of the assessment system were included to assist with visualising Class 1-4 graded trees.

A formal action plan based upon the template from The Tree Council is currently being drawn up for Ash Dieback and will be brought back to the Committee in Summer 2023 along with identified costs. A programme of extensive replanting will be developed to repopulate areas as part of the action plan.

Members were informed that they would be consulted regarding ash removals in their wards and in respect of replanting programmes.

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

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the contents of the report and that a further report will be presented to the Committee in Summer 2023, setting out a formal action plan for managing ash dieback, along with additional investment required.

48 Meco Memorial Nature Park

The Committee considered a report on the Meco Memorial Nature Park.

The Environmental Operations Project Manager presented the report and provided details on the proposal to create the Meco Memorial Nature Park on land between Sanctuary Close and Hopton Street, shown in a plan and photographs at appendices 1 and 2.

Funding of £30,000 had already been approved by the Council in 2020 for ground clearance (now completed), the construction of the memorial area with a sculpture, seating and interpretation, wildflower areas and a community orchard. The report set out what had taken place since this funding was agreed, which has resulted in more funding being required to complete the rest of the work.

Members were now being asked to consider an additional capital funding of £30,00 for the delivery of additional works, which would then require Council approval. The additional facilities include a kickabout area, a boardwalk, steps and link paths across the wetland to create a north-south route for pedestrians walking around the park.

If approved the proposed scheme would be split into phases as set out in paragraph 3.3 of the report. If the amendment to the capital programme is approved by Council, it is proposed that authority is delegated to the Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee, to agree any change in proposals up to a maximum of £30,000 should be ecological assessment and habitat survey highlight factors which limit the delivery of the proposed additional works.

Committee Members expressed support for the proposal as a way of moving forward with the project.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:

- 1. note the scheme of works to be delivered at Meco Memorial Nature Park in line with funding approved by Policy and Resources Committee in September 2020;**
- 2. the proposal for the delivery of additional works at the site (as outlined within this report), that would require £30,000 capital investment;**
- 3. the additional work as set out within the report and recommend to Council an amendment to the capital programme of £30,000; and**
- 4. delegate authority to the Corporate Director - Operations, Homes and Communities in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of Committee, to agree any final change in proposals within the existing budget, should the findings of any ecological assessment and habitat survey limit the additional works as outlined within the report.**

49 Business Case for the Installation of Electric Vehicle Charge Points

The Committee considered a report on the business case for the installation of electric vehicle charge points.

The report was accompanied by 3 appendices; appendix 1 the financial summary for the existing chargers at St Martin's gate including a projection for the next 10 years; appendix 2 a breakdown of costs and funding for the proposed charge points and appendix 3 details of the fixed and variable costs associated with the charge points and gives a minimum number of charging sessions per charge point in order to ensure the fixed costs can be paid from the income taken.

The Deputy Director – Corporate Policy and Strategy presented the report, providing background information and highlighting the key points of the business case, in particular the procurement of the charging points in Tallow Hill and King Street; capital spend for the proposed charge points; revenue spend for the proposed charge points; revenue from the proposed charge points; break-even point and parking charges.

The Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy for Worcester was currently being drafted by officers and would be brought to the June Environment Committee meeting. This proposal is in line with the proposed strategy.

The Deputy Director – Corporate Policy and Strategy responded to questions and comments from Committee Members on detailed aspects of the report and commented that other areas of the city need to be considered, not just City Council owned car parks.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:

1. **accept the offer of grant funding arising from the bid to the ORCS fund as detailed within the report;**
2. **approve a spend of up to £55k from the allocated capital programme to install six dual charge points in Tallow Hill car park (to charge 12 vehicles simultaneously) and four dual charge points in King Street car park (to charge eight vehicles simultaneously);**
3. **delegate authority to the Deputy Director - Corporate Policy and Strategy to undertake the procurement and award the contract in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee;**
4. **approve that a market rate tariff should be applied for use of electric vehicle charge points as outlined within the report and delegate authority to the Corporate Director - Operations, Homes and Communities and the Corporate Director – Finance and Resources to implement a market rate tariff and to keep it under review annually; and**
5. **authorise the Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities to make amendments to the relevant Car Parking Order as required to implement the proposals within the report.**

50 Bereavement Services Review

The Committee considered a report on the strategic review of Astwood Cemetery and Crematorium.

The report was accompanied by a map showing the extent of the site (appendix 1) and a table (appendix 2) illustrating the number of burials (Astwood and St Johns) and cremations undertaken since 2011/12. Overall, the number of burials and cremations have decreased over the last 10 years, this was down to two factors which were outlined in paragraphs 2.8 and 2.9 of the report.

The Corporate Director - Operations, Homes and Communities presented the report, providing background information and highlighting the key points of the review, in particular technical and legislative pressures, Astwood cremators, mercury abatement and pre-application planning advice.

To understand whether the continued use of Astwood for cremations is feasible then a programme of work is required to be undertaken and led by a specialist project resource working alongside Council staff and various appointed specialist contractors where required. This resource will need to be procured which will enable the project to proceed on a timelier basis, conscious of some of the operating challenges currently faced through age of equipment and the pressure of existing resources to focus on developing the existing service to maintain demand.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the financial and budgetary implications and legal and governance implications.

Officers responded to questions from Committee Members particularly around the amount of funding requested and how the figure of £100,000 had been arrived at, for which the Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities explained.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:

- 1. note the contents of the report, and in particular the work undertaken to date to review the future operating opportunities at Astwood Cemetery and Crematorium;**
- 2. approve the funding of up to £100,000 to be taken from the Bereavement Reserve, to undertake technical feasibility work in respect of the Astwood Cemetery and Crematorium; and**
- 3. note that a further report will be presented to the Committee on completion of this work, including a 'future operating model' options appraisal for consideration.**

51 Proposed Committee Performance Scorecard 2023-24

The Committee considered the proposed content of the Environment Scorecard for 2023/24. The Head of City Services presented the report and highlighted the main points, including details of 2022/23 scorecard content which will be removed and new projects and activities to be included for 2023/24.

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

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree the proposed content of the Environment Performance Scorecard for 2023/24.

52 Any Other Business

None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. to 8.38p.m.

Chair at the meeting on
6th June 2023