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## ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Thursday, 30 June 2022 from 7.00 pm - 8.38 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Richard Darby, Steve Davey, Oliver Eakin, Nicholas Hampshire, Mike Henderson (Substitute for Councillor Eddie Thomas), Ken Ingleton (Substitute for Councillor Ann Hampshire), Denise Knights, Pete Neal, Richard Palmer (Substitute for Councillor Corrie Woodford), Julian Saunders (Chair), David Simmons, Sarah Stephen, Tim Valentine (Vice-Chair) and Tony Winckless.

**PRESENT (Virtually):** Councillor James Hall.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Tracey Beattie, Martyn Cassell, Grace Couch, Philippa Davies and Janet Hill.

**OFFICERS PRESENT (Virtually):** Kellie MacKenzie.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually):** Councillor Mike Dendor.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Ann Hampshire, Eddie Thomas and Corrie Woodford.

153 **Order of Business**

The Chair altered the order of business as minuted.

154 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

155 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 May 2022 (Minute Nos. 21 – 22) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

156 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

157 **Handover Report**

The Head of Environment and Leisure introduced the report which set out the Environment Committee's remit, including the services it had oversight of, and of current issues and major pieces of work relevant to that remit. He drew attention to paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 in the report which set-out current issues and large pieces of work which took-up a lot of the staffing resource. The Head of Environment and Leisure invited Members to ask questions.

Members made comments and raised the following questions:

- Welcomed that air quality issues were being looked into, but the Council were following Government standards, rather than the World Health Organisation (WHO) standards which were significantly tighter than Government standards;
- supported tree planting schemes, but concerned whether maintenance of the trees was included within the schemes?;
- acknowledged that the proportion of missed bins in the Borough was small, but to the individual resident, this was an issue for them; and
- requested further information on brown bins being missed as this scenario seemed to happen more frequently than missed blue or green bins.

In response, the Vice-Chair acknowledged the statutory duties of the UK's legislation and was aware that the WHO had different limits. The Council had recently joined other councils in the UK100 group to lobby the Government to move to the WHO's standards. The Mid Kent Environmental Health Manager also advised that the Council was working as diligently as they could to achieve the targets set by Government in terms of air quality, and aimed to be aspirational like the UK100 group. The Council was working with other Kent local authorities to secure Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) funding for projects to help achieve this.

The Head of Environment and Leisure explained that a new Greenspaces Officer had recently joined the Council and there were plans to plant 6,000 trees, on top of the 5,000 already planted. There was a three-year maintenance programme built-in to the costings. He acknowledged that there was a backlog of works on existing mature trees, but now there was someone in the vacant Greenspaces officer post, it was hoped that this would be rectified soon. The Head of Environment and Leisure spoke on the new waste contract and the intention to design out many of the current issues. He explained that out of 140,000 bins collected each week, the number of missed bins was small. He said that bin collections were prioritised in the order of green-blue-brown. The brown bins were last in the priority list as within the scheme of residents subscribing to have a bin, an additional bin collection could be added at the end of their subscription period when there was an issue of a missed week. The priorities were based on the fact residents wanted the smelly refuse taken as top priority, followed by blue recycling bins. Currently, the supply of drivers was an issue, but going forward it was hoped that there would be more resilience.

**Resolved:**

**(1) That the report be noted.**

## 158 **Procurement of Electric Vehicle Charge Points**

The Chair and other Members congratulated Grace Couch, Climate and Ecological Emergency Project Officer, on recently winning the MJ Rising Star award. Members and officers gave Grace a round of applause.

The Climate and Ecological Emergency Project Officer introduced the report which summarised the procurement process and its results, and sought the Committee's approval of the recommended supplier. She explained that there would be nine new charge points in the Borough, in locations where residents were unable to charge their electric vehicle (EV) at their home due to lack of off-road parking. Funding for the scheme

consisted of 75% from the Department of Transport and 25% from Swale Borough Council's (SBC) Improvement and Resilience fund. Pod Point Limited charge points were already in existence in the Borough and continued use would provide consistency to customers with apps, easier maintenance for SBC staff etc.

Members raised comments and asked questions which included the following:

- Concerned with the lack of lighting where some charge points were located;
- some charge points were located near trees; there needed to be a canopy over them to protect them from wildlife such as falling leaves and guano;
- this was a very good scheme, but clarification was needed on the location of the charge points as they were referred to as **on-street**, but would be located in car parks;
- would like to see more charge points in car parks;
- did the procurement include maintenance of the charge points?; and
- was there any information on the take-up of EVs throughout the Borough?

The Climate and Ecological Emergency Project Officer responded to the points raised: agenda item 7 set out the most suitable locations for the charge points; the scheme included provision of charge points in car parks where there were no appropriate on-street locations; the charge points would be located in Queens Hall car park in Faversham, Albany Road car park in Sittingbourne and Rose Street car park in Sheerness; the sites were chosen on sites recommended by the Energy Saving Trust following data compiled by them, on demand, EV ownership, areas without off-street parking and ease of suitable network facilities; and a second bid for funding would look at other suitable car parks in the Borough.

The Head of Environment and Leisure also responded to some of the points raised: work was ongoing to improve lighting in the car parks in the Borough, and this element was also included in item 7; three-year maintenance was included within the procurement; Pod Point Limited was chosen for consistency and their machinery was robust; the Council was locating charge points in non-commercial areas, and in time the private sector might locate charge points in commercial locations.

***Resolved:***

***(1) That the appointment of Pod Point Limited via the Vehicle Charging Infrastructure 2 (VCI 2) ESPO Framework 636\_21 from 15 July 2022 for the completion of works set out in Swale Borough Council's On-Street Residential Charge Point Grant, at a value of £148,554.57 (+ VAT) be approved.***

***(2) That delegated authority be given to the Head of Environment and Leisure in consultation with the Chair of the Environment Committee to purchase charge point equipment from Pod Point Limited.***

159 **Electric Vehicle Strategy 2022-2030**

The Climate and Ecological Emergency Project Officer introduced the report which set out the draft Electric Vehicle Strategy 2022 – 2030, which aimed to clarify the Council's position on EV charging infrastructure, addressing the balance between current demand for charging infrastructure and the ambition to 'lead the way' in addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency. She said the overall priority was to make EV charging accessible for all residents.

Members raised comments and asked questions which included the following:

- With reference to paragraph 2.5 in the report, concerned about Kent County Council's (KCC) approach to on-street charging;
- supported businesses receiving a decrease in their business rates to have charge points on their land;
- taxi charge points were not the same price structure as the system used by the Council;
- needed to consider both the capacity for more EVs to be bought and the infrastructure for EVs to be charged up;
- the strategy needed to address the difficulty for residents in terraced housing and flats, particularly if they were leasehold; and
- older properties were often not able to facilitate a charge point.

The Head of Environment and Leisure responded to the points raised: there were a lot of trials taking place and KCC wanted to stand back for the moment and see the results of the trials before they stepped in; the Council would continue to work with KCC and the strategy would be regularly refreshed to work alongside changes in the EV industry; there was always over demand for parking in areas where there were terraced housing, however EV ownership in these areas remained low; supported the installation by Pod Point Limited as the Council could set the tariff, decide a maintenance plan and make changes when there were improvements to the equipment; the taxi charge points were supported by SBC and KCC, but done under a different model where KCC allowed the EV charger company to install and set tariffs so there was no control of pricing by SBC; the car parks that had been chosen for the charge points were near areas where there was a higher proportion of EV requirements for off-street parking, with no charge for parking, just for the actual electric charge of the vehicle; discussion on the issue of flat owners not being able to charge their vehicles could be picked-up in the next review; and acknowledged the difficulties of retro-fitting older properties to enable them to have a charge point.

The Climate and Ecological Emergency Project Officer explained that the strategy would need to be updated as there was a scheme to assist flat owners with charge points.

The Vice-Chair explained that cable gullies could be introduced from a resident's house to the roadside for charging, but this was a difficult situation as residents did not have the right to park outside their house; new-build flats did have charge points; there was possibly little motivation for freeholders to install charge points in existing flats; the private sector was likely to increase the installation of charge points, at locations like shopping centres and petrol stations and this could be beneficial to flat dwellers; and it was important to have consistency on payment options for users to make it as straightforward as possible.

**Resolved:**

**(1) That the Electric Vehicle Strategy 2022 – 2030 be adopted.**

**160 Kent Resource Partnership**

The Head of Environment and Leisure introduced the report which asked the Committee to agree the Council's member representation for the municipal year 2022/23 on the Kent Resource Partnership (KRP). He provided some background to KRP as set out in paragraph 3.1 of the report.

The Chair asked for nominations for the two places on the KRP.

Councillor Denise Knights nominated Councillor Tim Valentine and this was seconded by Councillor Sarah Stephen.

Councillor Tony Winckless nominated Councillor Julian Saunders and this was seconded by Councillor Mike Henderson.

Councillor Pete Neal nominated Councillor David Simmons and this was seconded by Councillor Ken Ingleton.

On being put to the vote Members voted in favour of Councillor Tim Valentine and Councillor Julian Saunders to be appointed as SBC's representatives on the KRP.

***Resolved:***

***(1) That Councillor Tim Valentine and Councillor Julian Saunders be appointed as SBC's representatives on the Kent Resource Partnership.***

161 **Forward Decisions Plan**

The Head of Environment and Leisure introduced the report and outlined the work programme, which included the new waste contract. He advised that currently, there were no items for the September 2022 meeting, but there could be some interim waste contract matters to consider. An extraordinary meeting was needed in December 2022 to consider the waste contract award and this date would be circulated to Members as soon as possible.

Members raised comments and asked questions which included the following:

- Clarification sought on the waste procurement process;
- was the waste contract attractive enough for companies to bid for it?;
- bio-diversity should be included within the Forward Decisions Plan, and could be considered at the September 2022 meeting;
- the priorities of this Committee was different to the Cabinet that started the procurement process; and
- noted that the Air Quality Action Plan was on the Plan twice.

The Head of Environment and Leisure responded to the points raised: Members were not involved directly with the procurement negotiation process, they set the policy, and officers negotiated on the basis of the policy; Members could scrutinise non-specific company details and what each company was providing and this information would be in the December 2022 report; the procurement was based on price and quality; the waste industry was massive, with fewer players than ever before; the procurement was a two-year tender process and had commenced in the Cabinet model with decisions on tender process, criteria and delivery models already agreed. This just left the award of the contract decision to be finalised in the Committee model. He explained that bio-diversity could be considered within the Open Spaces Strategy which was intended to go to Committee later in the year/early 2023.

The Mid Kent Environmental Health Manager advised that the Air Quality Action Plan would be presented to the November 2022 meeting, seeking approval to go out to

consultation and in early 2023 the results of the consultation would be submitted to the Committee, with the action plan being sent to DEFRA.

The Head of Environment and Leisure agreed to share the Cabinet report outlining the criteria of the waste contract procurement for inclusion in the minutes.

**Post meeting note:** [Link to 9 June 2021 Cabinet minutes](#)

**Resolved:**

**(1) That the report be noted.**

**162 Food Service Plan 2022 - 23**

The Mid Kent Environmental Health Manager introduced the report which explained that the Food Standards Agency (FSA) required all food law enforcement authorities to prepare a Food Service Plan to reflect achievements, plan for the future challenges and identify resource to meet this need. She explained that the Plan covered just one year as the FSA would be introducing a modernised food enforcement programme in 2023/24. The Mid Kent Environmental Health Manager said there were 1,384 food premises in Swale, with 11 of them being approved premises. There were no prosecutions last year, with 450 inspections carried out. She explained that there was a national shortage of environmental health officers, with 4.5 vacancies within the shared service since April 2022 and measures had been put in place to address this. She outlined the affects that the Covid-19 Pandemic had on the hospitality sector. In response to a question, the Mid Kent Environmental Health Manager confirmed that she understood there was available finance to deliver the Food Service Plan.

**Resolved:**

**(1) That the Food Service Plan 2022-23 be approved and the resource needed to meet future demands of the service be endorsed.**

**163 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**Resolved:**

**(1) That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3.**

**3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).**

**164 Food Service Plan 2022 - 23 - Appendix II**

The Mid Kent Environmental Health Officer introduced the exempt FSA Recovery Plan which was Appendix II to the Food Service Plan 2022-23. This dealt with the food businesses due inspections but not inspected during the national lockdowns. The Recovery Plan set out various milestones which each local authority should aim to meet.

There was no discussion on the appendix.

Chair

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All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel