

---

## ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

---

**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in The Sapling Room, The Appleyard, Avenue of Remembrance, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 4DE on Thursday, 3 November 2022 from 7.00 pm - 8.29 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Richard Darby, Steve Davey, James Hall, Ann Hampshire, Nicholas Hampshire, Denise Knights, Julian Saunders (Chair), David Simmons, Sarah Stephen, Tim Valentine (Vice-Chair), Tony Winckless and Corrie Woodford.

**PRESENT (Virtually):** Councillors Oliver Eakin and Pete Neal.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Billy Attaway, Tracey Beattie, Martyn Cassell, Philippa Davies, Janet Hill, Clare Lydon and Adrian Oliver.

**OFFICERS PRESENT (Virtually):** Joanne Johnson.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually):** Councillors Monique Bonney, Tim Gibson, Ken Ingleton, Ken Rowles and Mike Whiting.

**APOLOGY:** Councillor Eddie Thomas.

### 415 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

### 416 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

### 417 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 October 2022 (Minute Nos 348 – 352) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### **Part B Minutes for Information**

### 418 **Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual report 2022 draft**

The Climate Change Officer introduced the report which set out the progress made by the Council in achieving its targets for net zero carbon by 2025 and net zero carbon across the Borough by 2030. She explained that Council had declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency in June 2019, and a clause within the declaration required an annual progress report to be submitted to Full Council in January each year. The Climate Change Officer emphasised that this was a draft report for consideration by the Environment Committee, prior to it being submitted to Full Council in January 2023. A steering group met every six weeks, and she drew attention to the progress highlights outlined in paragraph 3 of the report.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions and make comments and these included:

- In relation to renewable energy set out on page 19 of the report, suggested total consumption be included as well;
- sought clarification that household waste had increased, but the level of recycling had plateaued;
- what legal standing did planning conditions on a development have?;
- concerned with the Local Plan delay and whether the delay had a detrimental impact on the council achieving its net zero carbon targets;
- welcomed the draft report and considered it was well laid out, with a lot of information;
- considered more financial implications and costs and benefits of projects to achieve net zero carbon targets should be included within the report;
- more detail needed on the refurbishment of Swale House;
- considered the ten high priority key actions set out on pages 23 and 24 of the report needed refining prior to January 2024 and were they set out in order of importance?;
- considered paper use should be reduced, i.e. printing agendas etc.;
- if there were less demands on the Council's print room, this would enable them to tender for more outside business; and
- further information sought on what happened to green waste.

In response, the Climate Change Officer explained that more information could be included on the total consumption of energy, and added that the BEIS (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy) figures were always three years old, but she would have a look at this. She said she was working with Planning Policy in ensuring there were high environmental standards within the Council's policies. The Climate Change Officer said that more financial information could be included in the final report on individual projects. She explained that the ten high priority key actions set out on pages 23 and 24 of the report were not set out in order of importance, and would be refined as usual at the start of each year.

The Head of Environment and Leisure explained that recycling had plateaued across the country and ways of tackling this were being investigated as part of the Government review of legislation. This included providing smaller refuse waste bins, but this was not always practicable. He explained that in Swale, there was room for improvement. An audit indicated that 50% of green refuse bins had items in that could be recycled and 20% of that was food waste. The Head of Environment and Leisure said that education in changing residents' habits could be beneficial in improving recycling in the Borough and this was something that costed residents very little to do, but would make a massive impact. He added that developers were willing to add measures to reduce carbon impact on their developments. He explained that garden waste was sold on, with Kent County Council being the waste disposal authority, and Swale Borough Council (SBC) being the waste collection authority. A lot of the green waste went to local agriculture. He acknowledged the success of the compost giveaway held in previous years and hoped that this could be replicated.

The Vice-Chair responded to some of the issues raised. He explained that some refuse green bins were being reduced in size. Planning policies and planning conditions, and improvements in building regulations, were helping to reduce carbon emissions.

Councillor Tim Valentine proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor David Simmons.

***Resolved:***

- (1) That the format of the report and suggested changes be noted.***
- (2) That progress on the targets be noted.***

**419 Air Quality Action Plan**

The Senior Scientific Officer introduced the report and explained that the current SBC Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) expired this year. She explained that the air quality steering group had reviewed the existing measures and were looking at new measures to be included in the revised plan and they would be prioritised. The Senior Scientific Officer said the online consultation would run from 4 November 2022 to 15 January 2023.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions and make comments and these included:

- Considered the pollution on St Paul's Street, Sittingbourne was coming from other sources, rather than from traffic, such as from the nearby recycling plant or from Kemsley Mill;
- HGV traffic needed to use more major roads such as the northern relief road or the M2, rather than through Sittingbourne;
- roads near the Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne were getting heavily polluted because of commuter traffic;
- improved traffic management was needed, such as the northern relief road being linked to the A2;
- how much information would be included for local residents within the consultation?;
- were the priorities set out on page 83 of the report in order of importance?; and
- how would local residents be encouraged to complete the consultation? Suggested information be advertised in local libraries.

In response, the Senior Scientific Officer explained that pollution had been high for the last three years on St Paul's Street, and studies had shown anomalies. She explained that the majority of the pollution was from vehicles, but there were high peaks as well which correlated with wind direction, and a separate study had revealed very dusty residues which could be another source, rather than solely traffic. With regard to increased pollution near the Kent Science Park, the Senior Scientific Officer explained that NOx tubes could be put up to test the pollution rates. She said information on the proposed measures was included in the online consultation. The priorities were not part of the consultation and were not listed in order. There would be press releases, news bulletins and social media releases to promote the consultation and she said that posters could be distributed to libraries with the QR code and alternative means of accessing the consultation through non-digital means.

Councillor Nicholas Hampshire proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Steve Davey.

**Resolved:**

**(1) That the Head of Service be authorised to undertake a public consultation on mitigation actions for the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) for 2023 to 2028 as proposed in the draft prepared by the Air Quality Steering group.**

**(2) That an update be reported back to the Environment Committee following the public consultation.**

420 **Active Travel Fund 4**

The Active Travel Coordinator introduced the report which set out what was known about Active Travel Fund Tranche 4 (ATF4) as of 17 October 2022. He outlined the bidding process and explained that there had been a delay in announcing the funding, and it was hoped that the funds would materialise after the Autumn budget. The Active Travel Coordinator drew attention to paragraph 2.2 in the report: ‘England will be a great walking and cycling nation. Places will be truly walkable. A travel revolution in our streets, towns and communities will have made cycling a mass form of transit. Cycling and walking will be the natural first choice for many journeys with half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walked by 2030.’ He added that most schemes would be walking, rather than cycling schemes, due to more straightforward infrastructure for walking. He drew attention to LTN1/20 as set out in paragraph 2.5 in the report which provided guidance for local authorities on delivering high quality cycle infrastructure. He explained that the bids initiated as concepts and the design process was added later. The Active Travel Coordinator gave an overview of the three priorities, with Faversham concentrating on an enhanced walking experience with raised crossings, with emphasise on the 20mph speed limit; Sheerness, with 20mph start-up, cycling infrastructure to improve connectivity with Queenborough, and walking, with raised crossings; and Sittingbourne, a mix of walking and cycling activities and trying to improve connectivity across the railway line.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions and make comments and these included:

- Suggested Milton Regis be included in the 20mph scheme;
- concerned with how the Council’s Local Plan would take this forward; and
- more information sought in the report on detail of developer contributions to enable this.

In response, the Active Travel Coordinator explained that once all the information had been sought, developers could then be informed on the direction the Council was heading.

Councillor Steve Davey proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Tony Winckless.

**Resolved:**

**(1) That the three priorities outlined for Faversham, Sheerness and Sittingbourne be agreed.**

**(2) That delegated authority be given to the Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property, in consultation with the Chair of the Environment Committee to submit the final Active Travel Fund 4 priorities.**

421 **Forward Decisions Plan**

***Resolved:***

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

Chair

Copies of this document are available on the Council website <http://www.swale.gov.uk/dso/>. If you would like hard copies or alternative versions (i.e. large print, audio, different language) we will do our best to accommodate your request please contact Swale Borough Council at Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT or telephone the Customer Service Centre 01795 417850.

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