

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 6 February 2020 at 6.00 pm in Meeting Room G3/4, Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford, TF3 4NT

Present: Councillors M Boylan, G H Cook, V J Holt, T L B Janke, T J Nelson, G L Offland and G C W Reynolds (Chair).

Also Present: Councillor E M Callear

In Attendance: J Eatough (Director for Governance), F Mercer (Director for Policy, Customer and Commercial Services), D Moseley (Democratic & Scrutiny Services Team Leader), K Robinson (Democratic & Scrutiny Services Officer), R Singh (ICT Projects, Development and Quality Manager)

ENVSC1 Declarations of Interest

None.

ENVSC2 Scrutiny Review of Single Use Plastics

Officers gave a presentation outlining the Council's single-use strategy. The presentation set out the Council's commitments before moving onto an assessment of the Year One action plan, with key points from the single-use policy and its successes. Members were also informed of the Council's next steps for single-use strategies in Year Two – focus areas included products in care settings, microplastics, and supporting the wider community in reducing their single-use plastic use.

The Officers highlighted some initiatives that had been implemented for the first year. Members were informed of an upcoming community 'litter pick relay' that they would be able to take part in. Key developments noted for the Committee included the introduction of a milk vending machine, a reusable cup scheme in Café Go within the Council building, and 10 Water Refill stations in council buildings.

The Director expressed the Council's desire to become a Plastic Free Community in accordance with the Surfers Against Sewage certification for plastic free initiatives. Developments such as Newport's plastic-free status and Hollinswood Primary School becoming the first plastic-free school in Shropshire, were noted as positive steps towards this goal.

Members asked a number of questions as follows:-

At the moment we give out dog waste bags that are made of plastic, is there any work being done on making them biodegradable?

Discussions about this had taken place and, noting the underlying objectives for providing bags, Officers were looking for cost effective alternatives. So far,

the alternatives were quite significantly more expensive. This was an issue on the Council's radar, the dog waste bag programme has been successful as it was but there was a desire to look at greening it.

To raise awareness of the issue of single-use plastics and dog waste, would it be possible to look into installing a dog waste powered streetlamp in the town?

This was something that Officers would look into.

Had the Council considered a deposit return scheme as operated successfully in Germany and many other European countries?

This had been considered.

Could the Council look at Terracycle as a remedy for crisp packet pollution?

Crisp packet pollution was a massive issue and the Council already had a relationship with Terracycle through the pen recycling scheme being run in schools. This was something that could be looked at further.

It was noted that very little recycling took place in the healthcare sector, were there any representatives from the sector on the Taskforce?

There were not any people from the health sector yet so the Officers involved would look into it.

How successful had the Council been in building environmental protections into its contracts?

Packaging was still a major issue, it was not just about single-use products but how they were delivered. This was a challenging issue to resolve as the use of single-use plastics was endemic with goods supplied at scale. It was something that the Council wanted to focus on going forward but it was difficult to replace absolutely everything. This was not something that could be changed overnight but could be looked at as contracts came up for tender.

Members also discussed:-

- Members discussed the pros and cons of replacing plastic bottles with glass and the possible alternatives to glass as an environmentally friendly receptacle.
- The need for greater education on microplastics as many members of the public were now aware of the issue with regard to cosmetics but not the more general problem they pose.
- The lack of split municipal bins in the Borough and the need for them as a means to encourage recycling. Members agreed that they would like to see high street recycling rolled out across the Borough.
- The Council's Green Guide initiative was praised by Members as a useful tool to drive engagement and encourage skill-sharing in environmental matters. Members saw the initiative as a positive way for

people that were not professionally engaged in environmental issues to show their passion and bring a different perspective to the problems.

- Concerns regarding the proliferation of takeaways in the Borough and their reliance on single-use packaging. Possible strategies were discussed, including working with franchises to raise awareness of corporate social responsibility. Members acknowledged that progress was being made, however, noting Greggs' support of the national Refill campaign and McDonald's' move to paper straws.

Members concluded that they would consider the related topic of Climate Change at their next meeting and then begin scoping.

ENVSC3 Work Programme 2019/20 to 2020/21

The Committee received and considered suggestions for the Work Programme and commented as follows:-

- An additional suggestion regarding the Borough's transport network and infrastructure was put forward to examine the Council's transport scheme, especially regarding electrical charging points.
- Members noted that this could be an area of collaboration with other committees.
- An additional suggestion regarding the environmental friendliness of the Council's building regulations and housing planning policy, particularly in regard to *Passivhaus* standards.
- That suggestions for Single Use Plastic and Climate Change be expanded to include Community Engagement.
- That flood water management be scheduled for a future meeting.
- That the item "Waste Receptacles" be merged with Single-Use Plastic and include high street recycling.

ENVSC4 Chair's Update

The issue of co-option had been raised during the meeting and Members held a discussion on the merits of co-option as a means of expanding the Committee's expertise and range of views. While one Member expressed a definite preference for co-option, the Committee delayed any decision on whether to begin the process of co-option until a later date citing the net benefits of expert witnesses and time-limited experts. Members also reflected on the need to involve both lay-people and experts to gather a range of views.

The Chair reminded Members that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 18 March 2020 and would be looking at climate change.

The meeting ended at 7.46 pm

Chairman:

Date: Wednesday, 18 March 2020