



## **ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 14 September 2023 at 6.00 pm in Walker Room, Meeting Point House, Southwater Square, Telford, TF3 4HS**

**Present:** Councillors M Boylan (Chair), P Davis (Vice-Chair), H Morgan, T J Nelson and H Rhodes

**In Attendance:** F Mercer (Director: Communities, Customer and Commercial Services), A Allen (Project Support Officer: Climate Change and Sustainability), K Fisher (Lead Lawyer: Children & Adults), L Hicks (Group Catering Manager), I Wykes (Team Leader: Climate Change and Sustainability) and S Yarnall (Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)).

**Apologies:** Councillor T L B Janke

#### **ENVSC7 Declarations of Interest**

None.

#### **ENVSC8 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Following the recent local elections, there were fewer Members who had previously sat on the Environment Scrutiny Committee who continued to sit on Environment Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/2024. The minutes of the 28 February 2023 meeting were deferred to the next meeting of the Committee to allow for greater attendance from previous Members for confirmation.

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

#### **ENVSC9 Work Programme Review**

The Democracy Officer (Scrutiny) presented the Environment Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/24 to the Committee. This provided an update on what was scheduled on the work programme for the remainder of the municipal year as well as a summary of the outcomes from the work that the Committee had completed.

#### **ENVSC10 Corporate Catering – Role in Net Zero**



The Group Catering Manager provided an update on Corporate Catering to the Committee. The objectives were summarised to be focused on how best to support sustainability and supporting climate change within the catering offered within schools.

At the time of the meeting there were 55 schools and 5 nurseries that the Council cater for, this accounted for 3,000 meals of children not on free school meals and 4,000 for those on free school meals. There were 254 caterers employed and 50 of the catered schools achieved a 5 star rating. The team worked to promote more eco-friendly measures for food waste such as replacing the refuse bags with eco-friendly ones. Some of schemes implemented including the introduction of school gardens where the pupils learn about growing fresh produce that were to be used in food provided to the children.

The Group Catering Manager summarised some of the challenges that were being faced. These being that not all schools had full recycling facilities which included a number of schools not having food waste disposal on site. There were concerns with the cost of food increasing and its impact to provide sustainable meals. There was also challenges with determining the levels of carbon emissions being emitted and whether the work that was currently being done had an impact on this because the potential figures would be based on the whole school.

Following the presentation, members had the following discussions and raised the following questions.

*Were the challenges faced by the Corporate Catering team listed by priority?*

The challenges were not put to the Committee in priority. However, officers said that the complications faced by the increasing food prices was a particular concern. The Director: Communities, Customer and Commercial Services explained that this concern was of particular importance because of providing a nutritional meal that amounted to 96pence per head. Another particular concern was gauging the carbon emission figures because it was hard to determine the impact from the kitchens as figures are based on the whole school.

*Was there schools that left the service or asked to be a part of it?*

There were three schools that previously left the service that had approached the Corporate Catering Team to re-join them.

*Was there any difference in service/provision to the team if they were based in a Council maintained school or privately ran school like an Academy Trust maintained school?*



For Council maintained schools it was said that elements of the service would differ such as being able to get equipment repaired in a timely manner. When working with schools that were not maintained by the Council it was said that the team would offer a 3-5 year plan that was bespoke to the school.

*How many children brought packed lunches and were the reasons as to why known?*

78% of free-school meal eligible children had school meals. The children that had packed lunches were either the 'fussy eaters' or wanted to play outside faster.

*How did the catering team work with children that had Special Educational Needs (SEN)?*

The Group Catering Manager explained that when working with SEN children, there was work with the parents to build trust. This was done in order to get children to engage with the food and understand whether the food required anything specific such as being processed further to prevent choking.

Members discussed the work done by the Catering team and was impressed with the work and the achievements that they have achieved. Members expressed interest in forming a working group to look further at what the service can be done to improve their environmental impact further than what they already do. It was discussed that a site visit to one of the schools could be done along with exploring other areas of best practice that could be implemented not just in school catering but in other catering provisions.

**RESOLVED – the contents of the report and the planned review into Corporate Catering and how it support the Council's net zero ambitions be noted.**

### **ENVSC11 Climate Change Adaptation**

The Project Support Officer – Climate Change and Sustainability presented the Climate Change Adaptation report to the Committee. The presentation summarised the different climate events across the world over the last year and its impact on areas such as environmental, social and economic aspects of society. The presentation summarised some of the mitigations that were in place to reduce carbon emissions such as the adoption of a tree policy which included the planting a mixture of native and non-native species.

The adoption of a Climate Change Adaptation Policy was said to be focussed on the National context. The goal was said to examine how the best way it



was to adopt the policy whilst maintaining consistent services across all Council services.

The development of the plan was said to take a two-pronged approach. These were to identify the risks as part of a developing Climate Change Risk Register and to develop actions to mitigate the identified risks.

Members were presented examples of risk registers and Adaptation plans from other local authorities such as Blaby District Council and Stafford Borough Council.

The next steps of establishing a Climate Adaptation Plan was summarised to Members to focus on developing the plan for March 2024 and to work with Members in forming the plan. Some possible external partners were mentioned such as the Environment Agency and Public Health bodies.

Following the presentation, Members posed the following questions and discussions.

*Is there still a Climate Change Taskforce?*

There was still the Plastic Free Task Force and the Climate Change Partnership.

Members thanked Officers for presenting the work and would like to be more involved with the development of the plan as well as hearing further information such as the work done by Glasgow Council.

*How would the Scrutiny Committee add further value to the development of the plan?*

The Director: Communities: Customer and Commercial Services explained that the approach presented to Members would allow scrutiny to help inform the development of the Adaptation plan.

*Could Town and Parish Councils as well as those that live in the Borough support the development of the plan?*

Members of the public would be able to support the development of the plan and feedback into its development.

Members recognised the importance of developing this plan with the increasing Climate Emergency both locally and nationally. Members voted on the recommendations.



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**RESOLVED**– The Environment Scrutiny reviewed the proposed approach to developing a Corporate Climate Change Adaptation Plan and recommended to form a working group to explore this further.

**ENVSC12 Chair's Update**

The next meeting was scheduled for the 29 November 2023.

The meeting ended at 7.27 pm

**Chairman:** .....

**Date:** Wednesday 29 November 2023