

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Date: 15 October 2020

Time: 10.00 a.m. - 12.00p.m.

Present: Councillors Josh Schumann (Chairman), Tim Wotherspoon (Vice-Chairman), Anna Bradnam, Lorna Dupre, Ian Gardener, John Gowing, Peter Hudson, Jocelynne Scutt, Mathew Shuter and Graham Wilson.

36. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

No apologies for absence were received.

There were no declarations of interest.

37. Minutes - 17th September 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th September 2020 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

- Correction to the fifth issue raised by Members on Minute 33 (Northstowe Phase 3A – Outline Planning Application Consultation Response), with ‘Cambridge Equality Panel’ to be replaced by ‘Cambridgeshire Quality Panel’.
- Last sentence of second bullet point on item 32 (The Great Ouse Fens Tactical Plan – changes to Flood Risk Funding) amended to read: “It was noted that Internal Drainage Board (IDB) watercourses and EA main rivers were often well designed to cope with more than the design standard.”
- Second sentence of third bullet point on item 32 amended to read: “Members were informed that, the County Council did not make a significant contribution towards (IDB) or EA defences, and that for the current 10 to 15 years of the Tactical Plan this was unlikely to change.”

38. Action log

While considering the Action Log, one Member noted that a final response should be circulated to the Committee regarding Northstowe Phase 3A – Outline Planning Application Consultation Response, asking for a target date for this to be set. Officers agreed to provide updates on an ongoing basis until the final response had been completed. **Action required**

The Action Log was noted.

39. Petitions and Public Questions

No petitions or public questions were received

40. Carbon Valuation

The Committee received the Carbon Valuation report, which detailed a proposal to apply a financial value to carbon emissions in order to improve the Council's decision making on environmental issues. Attention was drawn to two of the four methods which the Council could implement in order to meet its climate change objectives. The recommendation was to mirror the Government's approach by applying the combination of Option 2 and Option 3, as set out in the report.

It was suggested that carbon valuations could be built in to business cases to demonstrate a virtual cost or saving. It was highlighted that workshops and training sessions were essential across the Council in order to strengthen collective competency and to achieve understanding of the use of carbon valuation for each work area. In addition to the re-development of business case templates to include carbon valuation, it was suggested that the Finance team could be the first point of implementation.

Members praised the report for its clarity and foresight, in addition to its identification of the need for increased training.

It was resolved unanimously for:

- a) The Council to implement a virtual 'internal carbon price', based on the UK Government's method of using the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) price for traded emissions (such as electricity) and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) forecast carbon value for non-traded emissions (such as those from heat or transport).
- b) The internal carbon price to be built into all applicable business cases, updating templates where used, in order to understand how and which decisions may differ when the cost of carbon is taken into account.

41. Business Planning Proposal for 2021-26 – Opening Update and Overview

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Council's current business and budgetary planning position and estimates for 2021-2026. It also lay out the principal risks, contingencies and implications facing the Committee and the Council's resources, while setting out the process and next steps for the Council in agreeing a business plan and budget for future years. Members attention was drawn to the fact that the Business Plan had been greatly affected by Covid-19. This had led to an increased demand for Council services, as well as a reduction in the Council's income. Options for tackling these issues were presented in the report, and Members were advised that these ideas would provide the basis of the business plans to be presented to the Committee in December.

Individual Members raised the following issues after the report was introduced:

- A significant cost increase regarding Stanground and Woodston Landfill Sites and North Angle Solar Farm for 2022-23. Officers explained that the increase was due to the fact that the North Angle Solar Farm and Stanground Landfill Site would both generate income and have operational costs for 2022-23. It was noted that the Woodston project was currently on hold due to the lack of grid capacity in the area.
- Income generation from the services provided by the Flood Risk team and the Historic Environment team. The Committee was informed that the savings were achieved by providing specific services to both Milton Keynes Council and Peterborough City Council. Further savings could be achieved by the Historic Environment team through providing support services, but the review of this revenue was reviewed by Shared Services.
- The contrast between the lowest and highest achievable savings as a result of the review of Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) and waste disposal. Officers acknowledged that the range of available options could result in different saving values and noted that the plans were still under development.
- Government's financial support to address expenditure resulting from the impact of Covid-19. Members were advised that further discussion was planned for the December Committee meeting as part of the budget planning process. It was also noted that the Business Intelligence remit included finding ways to provide further support for vulnerable people.
- Operational and policy changes at HRCs. It was suggested that the early involvement of local Members and members of the public would establish support and give an opportunity to contribute to the future plans.

One Member commented that whilst she was happy to note and comment on the report, as per the recommendations, this did not mean that she supported all of the proposals in the report.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the overview and context provided for the 2021-22 to 2025-26 Business Plan.
- b) Comment on the draft proposals for E&S Committee set out in section 5.3 and endorse their development.

42. Service Committee Review of the Draft 2021-22 Capital Programme

The Committee received the Service Committee Review of the Draft 2021-22 Capital Programme which provided an overview of the capital process. The Strategic Finance Business Partner drew attention to the two schemes relevant to the Committee, as detailed on page 3 of the appendix. There was a discussion on how elements of the budget presentation could be improved.

It was resolved unanimously to note:

- a) The overview and context provided for the 2021-22 Capital Programme for Place & Economy
- b) The draft proposals for Place & Economy's 2021-22 Capital Programme and endorse their development

43. Results of the Consultation on the draft Heat Supply Agreement for Swaffham Prior Community Heat Project

Members received a report detailing the outcome of the general consultation on the Draft Heat Supply Agreement for the Swaffham Prior Community Heat Project. Members were informed that over 107 comments had been submitted during the consultation. The community had raised questions regarding various aspects of the plans and the central three concerns related to the proposed standing charge, the cancellation fee and plans regarding the future of the scheme.

In response to the report, Members noted that:

- The plan for a cancellation fee had been discarded, although a payment would need to be made for removal of equipment from individual households.
- there was a duty of care to vulnerable people for exceptional weather phenomenon
- A further consultation would be held within the community on 23rd October to consider different price models for standing charges.

A Member thanked officers for the exemplary Member engagement that had taken place with regard to this scheme.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the consultation process and metrics set out in paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2;
- b) Agree the key proposed changes to the draft HSA as set out in the tables under paragraph 2.3;
- c) Agree the updated Heat Supply Agreement is shared with the community for a second time, ahead of finalisation; and
- d) Delegate any further changes to the Heat Supply Agreement to the Executive Director, Place and Economy in consultation with the Chair of Committee and the Green Investment Advisory Group.

44. Planning White Paper (Planning for the Future) – Response to Consultation

The Committee received a report which outlined the proposed formal response from the Council to the Government's White Paper for reform of the planning system. The Council was required to submit a formal response to the consultation, which was due to end on 29th October 2020, and was scheduled for implementation in 2024. It was reported that the response had been completed and was ready for submission.

While discussing the report, Members expressed concern that planning for water sufficiency had not been included as part of the response. It was suggested that this could be included under point 8a, which related to the planning of future developments, although after discussion, it was agreed that officers would include this matter in the appropriate section. **Action required**

In response to a Member question, the composition of the Member Reference Group and Member engagement processes with regard to the Planning White Paper were noted.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Allow the Executive Director: Place and Economy, in consultation with the Chair of Environment and Sustainability Committee, to finalise and submit the Council's technical officer response on the Government's consultation on the Planning White Paper in order to be able to meet the Government's deadline of 29th October 2020.

45. Agenda Plan, Training Plan and Appointments to Outside Bodies and Working Groups

While considering the Agenda Plan, Members noted that the 'Trees & Woodland Strategy' report, scheduled for the December Committee meeting, had been deferred due to the need for further engagement with partners. It was also agreed that the 'Finance Monitoring Report' should be reintroduced to all future meetings.

The 'Energy Programme including new business models – Carbon offset from CUSPE 2020' training session scheduled for 22nd October had been deferred until December, due to a clash with another meeting. It was further suggested that there was a need for a water sustainability training session to be added to the Training Plan. **Action required**

Chairman