

Environment and Green Investment Committee

Date: 16 November 2021

Time: 10.00am – 11.50am

Venue: New Shire Hall

Present: Councillors L Dupré (Chair), N Gay (Vice Chair), A Bradnam, S Corney, P Coutts, D Dew (substituting for Cllr Goldsack), S Ferguson, I Gardener, J Gowing, R Hathorn, J King, B Milnes, C Rae and M Smith

24. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tierney and Goldsack (Councillor Dew substituting for Cllr Goldsack).

In relation to the Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Strategy item, the following declarations were made:

Councillor Bradnam declared an interest as a Board Member of the Conservators of the River Cam, and as a Member of the Waterbeach Level Internal Drainage Board (IDB).

Councillor Dupré declared an interest as a Member of the Regional Flood & Coastal Committee, as Chair of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Flood and Water Partnership, and as a Member of Littleport and Downham IDB

Councillor Gardener declared an interest as a Member of the Alconbury and Ellington IDB.

Councillor Milnes declared an interest as a District Council Member of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Flood and Water Partnership.

Councillor Corney declared an interest as a Member of the Ramsey, Upwood and Great Raveley IDB.

25. a) Minutes of the Environment & Green Investment Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th September 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

b) Environment & Green Investment Committee Action Log

The Action Log was noted.

Regarding the outstanding action on broadening the Agricultural Grant Scheme (minute no. 50 from January 2021), officers advised that now that the Environment Bill had just been published, officers would review this and see what the options were with regard to this Scheme, and circulate a note to Committee Members if there was anything of interest.

26. Petitions and Public Questions

No petitions or public questions were received.

27. Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Strategy

The Committee considered the draft Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Strategy, and the proposals to consult the public on this document.

Presenting the report, officers explained that the existing Strategy covered 2015-20, but needed to be updated to reflect the changes in policy and approach to flooding. The format had also been revised to make it easier to follow and link in with biodiversity and climate change issues. In July 2020 the National Strategy was published by the Environment Agency and the key themes of that document were also incorporated. The Strategy was accompanied by an Action Plan, which included input from the Environment Agency and Internal Drainage Boards. Although timescales appeared long, it was stressed that there was no quick fix, and many actions had interdependencies with other agencies.

The public consultation would take place over a six week period, and it was suggested that the responses from that consultation would be best discussed at a Member workshop, given the degree of detail. In discussion, there was strong support for a Member workshop, and it was agreed that this should be open to Committee Members only.

Members raised the following questions:

A Member thanked officers for the excellent document, commenting that it was lengthy, but necessarily so. In relation to paragraph 4.15.3, regarding property owners and residents, the Member suggested that a section should be added about ongoing responsibilities for management of ditches, as responsibilities were often unclear. Officers confirmed that this would be added into the Strategy prior to the consultation. **Action required.**

A number of other Members supported these comments, suggesting that solicitors and conveyancers need to be more aware about potential drainage issues and Riparian rights when advising clients purchasing properties. It was important that those living near drainage features need to be aware whose responsibility it was to maintain it. An issue was also raised about culvert sizing and related planning issues, and the importance of consulting with Local Members who often have the local knowledge regarding potential flood issues. Officers advised that there was a flood and water Supplementary Planning Document that related specifically to planning, which was due to be updated and that update would incorporate consultation with local bodies to achieve this. It was confirmed that there was no timescale at this stage for that update, but it would be progressed in the near future.

A Member observed that when a ditch ran next to the public highway, the public perception was often that the responsibility for maintaining that watercourse was the responsibility of the relevant highway authority. However, the highway authority was only responsible for gullies and outflows in reality, and ditches were the responsibility of the landowner. Another Member noted that solicitors and conveyancers were also often unclear about the responsibilities for watercourses. Officers advised that they had contacted the Law Society on this issue, and also that Mary Dhonau was happy to support the Council on this issue on a national basis.

A Member queried Table 2 of the Strategy, "Flood Risk areas in Cambridgeshire", which only listed Alconbury/Alconbury Weston, Oakington, Wisbech, Cambridge, Huntingdon and March, and did not include other areas where flooding was a major issue such as St Neots and St Ives. Officers advised that this was extracted from the Environment Agency's Regional Flood Risk Management Plans, and related to areas identified in that process.

Members suggested that it would be helpful to contextualise this information, or it may be misinterpreted that those were the only areas of focus. It was also suggested that an explanation on the operation of sluice gates could be included, as this was also poorly understood.

A Member asked if the consultation would be sent to local Flood Groups. Officers confirmed that the document would be shared widely, and input from local groups was welcomed.

A Member raised the issue of housing development in flood areas, and whether it was possible to insist on flood mitigation measures being installed by developers e.g. doors that seal when the water rises. Officers agreed, and commented that development should be in areas not prone to flooding. Regrettably it was not possible to insist on mitigation.

The following amendment to recommendation (b) was proposed by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Bradnam, and agreed unanimously:

“following receipt of the consultation responses, convene one or more workshops of Committee Members, to review and consider consultation responses; and receive an updated FRMS at a future meeting of Committee, prior to presenting the updated FRMS and Action Plan to full Council for approval.”

In terms of timescales, it was noted that the six week public consultation would not be taking place immediately, so the Member workshop was likely to take place in February.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) endorse Cambridgeshire’s updated Flood Risk Management Strategy for public consultation; and
- b) following receipt of the consultation responses, convene one or more workshops of Committee Members, to review and consider consultation responses; and receive an updated FRMS at a future meeting of Committee, prior to presenting the updated FRMS and Action Plan to full Council for approval.

28. Business Planning Proposals for 2022-27 – opening update and overview

The Committee considered a report relating to the Business Planning proposal for 2022-27. The report set out the current business and budgetary planning position and estimates for 2022-27, the principal risks, contingencies and implications facing both the Committee and the Council’s resources, and the process and next steps for the council in agreeing a business plan and budget for future years.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the progress made to date and next steps required to develop the 2022-23 to 26-27 Business Plan; and
- b) Consider the budget and savings proposals that are within the remit of the Committee as part of the consideration of the Council’s overall Business Plan.

29. Service Committee review of the draft 2022-23 Capital Programme

The Committee considered a report detailing the Service Committee review of the draft 2022-23 Capital Programme. Members were reminded that the Capital Programme was set on a ten year rolling basis, with detailed figures for the earlier years, and indicative figures for the later years.

Attention was drawn to the St Ives Smart Energy Grid proposal, and the proposal for this to be recommended to the next meeting of Strategy and Resources Committee.

With regard to the St Ives Smart Energy Grid, a Member queried if there were plans to establish high power Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points in St Ives. Officers explained that the rollout of EV chargers was being phased in line with forecast take-up, and the intention for the St Ives site was to start with 15 and expand from there. Currently there were only slow chargers available, but this was in line with demand, as most users would be using the Guided Busway and away from their vehicles for 4+ hours. With regard to electric buses, discussions were ongoing, but there were proposals to have a pantograph added on to buses.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) note the overview and context provided for the 2022-23 Capital Programme for Place & Economy
- b) consider the draft proposals for Place & Economy's 2022-23 Capital Programme and their further development
- c) recommend the additional capital borrowing set out in paragraph 2.3 for the St Ives Smart Energy Grid Project for approval at Strategy and Resources Committee

30. Environment & Green Investment Committee Agenda Plan and Training Plan and Appointments to Outside Bodies and Internal Advisory Groups and Panels

Members considered the Committee's Agenda Plan, noting that the Reserve meeting date in January 2022 was definitely being used, and a number of the items for the December meeting would be taken to that meeting.

With regard to outside bodies, it was agreed that Councillor Dupré would represent the County Council on the Land Use Framework Group.

It was agreed to add the Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Strategy to the March 2022 agenda.

It was resolved unanimously to note the agenda plan and appoint Councillor Dupré to the Land Use Framework Group.

31. Exclusion of Press and Public

It was resolved unanimously that:

the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the agenda contains exempt information under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and that it would not be in the public interest for this information to

be disclosed - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

32. Waste Management PFI Contract – Update on Variations to Waterbeach Facility Permits

The Committee considered a report on the Waterbeach waste processing facilities.

It was resolved unanimously to approve the report recommendations, as amended.