

# **Minutes of the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 27 April 2023**

Present: Tina Clements (Chair)

## **Attendance**

Charlotte Atkins	David Smith
Philippa Haden	Samantha Thompson
Philip Hudson	Ross Ward (Vice-Chair (Scrutiny))
Graham Hutton	Bernard Williams
Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf	

**Also in attendance:** Darryl Eyers, Jonathan Lindop and Simon Tagg

**Apologies:** Peter Kruskonjic

## **PART ONE**

### **61. Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

### **62. Minutes of meeting held on 22 March 2023**

**RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

### **63. Household Waste Recycling Centres – Outcome of the Public Consultation and Policy Changes for 2023/24**

The Committee considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Environment Infrastructure and Climate Change regarding the outcome of public consultation on Staffordshire's Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) together with proposed policy changes for implementation in 2023/24 (schedule 1 to the signed minutes).

The County Council had a network of 14 HWRCs across Staffordshire together a further jointly funded site at Lower House Farm, Warwickshire, whose primary function was to receive household waste. There was no statutory duty to accept commercial or trade waste at any of these sites.

Since April 2022 the operation of HWRCs had been brought in-house and better access to data had revealed a significant increase in the deposit of bulky and trade waste (especially at the Cannock site). This situation had

significantly increased disposal costs and pressure on existing budgets. In addition, there had been minimal capital investment across the network during the time the service had been outsourced. Therefore, various changes to existing policies were being considered with the aim of ensuring residents were not having to subsidise the disposal of bulky/trade waste and to finance improvements.

Consultation with the public (including traders and businesses) on the proposed changes had been undertaken between 5 December 2022 to 22 January 2023 to seek their views so that, where possible, any concerns or queries could be mitigated. During this period, a total of 1,002 responses were received and following an analysis, key messages had been identified including:-

#### **Policy 4 (Van and Trailer Use)**

Proposal - Introduce a van permitting or vehicle recognition-based system for vans and cars with trailers used by Staffordshire residents disposing of household waste generated from domestic properties.

#### **Key Messages**

- Half of respondents stated 12 visits per year should be allowed with a van permit.
- Van users had a higher preference for 12 permits per year - 73% compared to 38% of car users. However, this remained a top option across all vehicle types.
- Respondents cited the impact of a van and trailer permit scheme would be to:- (i) Reduce congestion and queues (14%); (ii) Penalise residents with privately owned vans (16%) and; (iii) Increase fly tipping (11%).

#### **Mitigations**

- Ensure clear definition of vehicles and trailers requiring a van permit. Full details to be included in an online application and effectively communicated.
- Site staff empowered to be supportive of Staffordshire County Council residents and to make appropriate decisions when faced with exceptional circumstances.
- Lessons learnt from other Local Authorities with van permits to be used to shape the solution for Staffordshire.

## **Policy 15 (Commercial (Trade) Waste)**

Proposal - Option (a) - Staffordshire only business and commercial waste accepted at all sites and increase trade prices per load for larger vans and pro rata increase when traders use cars, small vans and or trailers;

Option (b) - Staffordshire and non-Staffordshire business and commercial waste accepted at larger sites only and increase trade prices per load for larger vans and pro rata increase when traders use cars, small vans and or trailers and;

Option (c) - Staffordshire and non-Staffordshire business and commercial waste accepted at all sites and increase trade prices per load for larger vans and pro rata increase when traders use cars, small vans and or trailers.

### **Key Messages**

- More respondents (60%) supported the option (Option). This option was most prevalent in Cannock Chase, with 73% compared to 60% overall.
- Respondents favoured prioritising Staffordshire County Council's boundary for the disposal of trade waste. However, concern was raised regarding increased fly tipping.

### **Mitigations**

- Introduce a two-month amnesty for non-Staffordshire traders to allow time for any new arrangements to be fully communicated.
- Work closely with the District and Borough Councils to monitor fly tipping and assist with appropriate action, including enforcement, as required.

The re-use of items collected at HWRCs was currently managed by the Katherine House Hospice registered Charity which received approximately 150,000 items per year of which 80% were offered for sale. The current arrangements were due to expire in April 2023. However, the contract had been extended to April 2024. Whilst a separate public consultation on options for a longer-term solution had originally been envisaged, a soft market testing exercise had concluded that this would not be worthwhile owing to a lack of potential partners. Therefore, work was underway with the existing provider to review their operations at HWRCs and develop a new model for the future.

In the full and wide-ranging discussion which ensued, Members gave further detailed scrutiny to the proposed policy changes having regard to the results of the public consultation, asking questions, seeking clarification and raising areas of concern as necessary including:- (i) the arrangements to distinguish between private residents using trailers at HWRCs and commercial traders; (ii) how health and safety considerations could be improved as part of the wider development of services at HWRCs including citing of Automated External Defibrillators and 'Bleed' Kits; (iii) how the current arrangements for dealing with fly-typing could be improved notwithstanding the anticipated inconsequential effect of the proposed policy changes; (iv) the arrangements for Parish Councils and voluntary organisations to continue to use HWRCs without charge; (v) waste from neighbouring Local Authority areas; (vi) the importance of the proposed amnesty period during the transition to the new arrangements; (vii) monitoring and enforcement considerations; (viii) the anticipated length of time required to issue permits and; (viii) additional training required by operatives at HWRCs.

In conclusion, the Committee welcomed further news of the investment proposals for HWRCs and re-affirmed their preference for Option (a) above in relation to Policy 15 – Commercial (Trade) Waste. In addition, they were supportive of and assured by the proposed mitigations identified in response to concerns highlighted from the public consultation and stressed the importance of improving service delivery for the benefit of local residents.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the report be received and noted.

(b) That their support for the proposed changes with regard to Policy 4 (Van and Trailer Use) above, be reaffirmed.

(c) That their support for Option (a) for the proposed changes with regard to Policy 15 (Commercial (Trade) Waste) above be re-affirmed.

(d) That the proposed changes to Policy 14 (Schools, Charities (*and other not for profit organisations*)) involving a short application process as set out in Appendix 4 to the report be supported.

(e) That long-term proposals for the future treatment of 're-use' items be brought to the Committee for scrutiny, at the appropriate time.

#### **64. Flood Risk Management Strategy - Update**

The Committee considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Environment Infrastructure and Climate Change updating them on progress with regard to the development of the County Council's Flood Risk Management Strategy (schedule 2 to the signed minutes).

Members were informed that since the previous Strategy was approved in 2018, there had been nine significant flood events each bringing their own financial and emotional costs for individuals, local communities and businesses.

Working with communities and incorporating recent experience and innovative practice, the updated strategy aimed to include ways of managing and reducing flood risks in Staffordshire, as well as considering how best recovery could be achieved quickly. Also, it incorporated comments previously made by the Committee in respect of greater collaborative working with Partners such as District/Borough Council's, Environment Agency and Canal and River Trust etc in respect of Flood Risk Mitigation.

At their meeting on 15 March 2023, Cabinet resolved that:-

- (a) the draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy be approved.
- (b) That the accompanying documents: Habitats Risk Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment, be approved.
- (c) That the Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change be authorised to sign-off any necessary changes and publish final versions of a) and b) assuming no significant changes necessary.
- (d) That the Strategy be revised again, when implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 makes Staffordshire County Council a SuDS Approval Body responsible for the approval, adoption, maintenance and management of sustainable drainage systems, to take account of this.

At that time, a public consultation on the revised Strategy was being undertaken, the results of which were appended to the report for Members' information. In addition, Risk Management Authorities and stakeholder organisations with an interest in flood risk management were consulted on the draft Strategy with the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England being consulted on the accompanying Strategic Environment and Habitat Regulation Assessments.

Members heard that the above-mentioned consultations had generated various comments including from:- (i) The Environment Agency regarding concerns over compliance of the Strategy with the Strategic Environmental Assessment; (ii) Natural England who had cited the

national response to the Environment Agency Strategy and; (iii) Historic England who had requested greater reference to the historic environment.

Members were also given details of 24 Flood Risk Management Schemes currently being promoted in the County together with a 'Flood: Aware, Informed and Resilient' (FAIR) Project.

In the full and wide-ranging discussion which ensued, Members gave detailed scrutiny to the Authority's continuing approach to flood risk management having regard to the consultation responses received, asking questions, seeking clarification and raising areas of concern as necessary, including:- (i) the detrimental effect of outdated drainage infrastructure on flooding in the County; (ii) the role of third parties in ensuring appropriate management of water on their land together with enforcement actions available to the County Council where appropriate; (iii) the role of Planning Authorities in maintaining the provision of flood plains and promoting a better use of run-off water; (iv) the responsibility of the Highway Authority to adequately maintain road gullies and the role of local Members in reporting defects; (v) the need for better co-ordination between Partners and for a lead authority to be responsible for seeking resolution of issues and; (vi) communication with the public including publication of timescales for completion of projects.

In conclusion, Members welcomed news of the additional Government funding for Staffordshire and the progress which had been made by the Authority in the various flood risk management schemes in the County. However, they urged the Cabinet Member to have regard to their comments during his continued work in this area and undertook to give further scrutiny to the matter in future, as necessary.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the report be received and noted.

(b) That Appendix 1b to the Strategy, "Draft Local flood Risk Management Strategy Action Plan", (and/or other documentation, as appropriate) include details of current Flood Risk Management Schemes being promoted in the County together with indicative timescales for their completion.

(c) That the publication of live flood schemes on the County Councils' Flood Risk Management website be supported subject to appropriate environmental reports to be undertaken.

(d) That further scrutiny of the Authority's work in the area of Flood Risk Management be undertaken at the appropriate time, as necessary.

## **65. Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) - Annual Report 2021/22**

The Committee considered a report of the Chairman of Staffordshire Standing Advisory County on Religious Education (SACRE) regarding their 2021/22 Annual Report which covered their work during the period September 2021 to September 2022 (schedule 3 to the signed minutes).

SACRE was a statutory Committee of the County Council whose role was to inform and advise the Authority on all matters relating to religious education and collective worship in Staffordshire's 'Maintained' schools. Whilst the Scrutiny Committee had a limited role in scrutinising the work of SACRE, the County Council commissioned support for them from Entrust. Therefore, Members were interested to learn whether these arrangements had operated satisfactorily and if not, to hold the Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND) to account as, necessary.

Members noted that the support commissioned by the County Council through Entrust had included clerking, venue hosting and advisory services (as supplied by a part-time Advisor in Religious Education post for up to twelve days work per year). In addition, the Advisor also provided in-service training courses to teachers whose schools had bought into this enhanced service.

During the discussion which ensued, they were pleased to note that the support given to SACRE compared well with that of other areas in the Country (as set out in the Annual Report) and that the Advisory Council had no concerns regarding their operation during the year.

The Committee then thanked Reverend Prebendary Michael Metcalf for an interesting and informative presentation of the report.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the report be received and noted.

(b) That the support commissioned by the County Council for SACRE during 2021/22 was appropriate and effective and that no further issues required scrutiny at this time.

## **66. Work Programme 2022/23 and 2023/24 (Indicative)**

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the updated 2022/23 Work Programme (schedule 4 to the signed minutes) be approved.

(b) That the 2023/24 Work Programme (indicative) be noted.

(c) That Members hold an informal Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme Planning Session on Friday 2 June 2023 at 10.00 am, County Buildings, Stafford.

**67. Date of Next Meeting - Wednesday 7 June 2023 at 2.00 pm,  
County Buildings, Stafford**

**RESOLVED** – That the date, time and venue of the next meeting be noted.

**Chairman**