

Minutes of the meeting of General scrutiny committee held at online meeting on Monday 28 September 2020 at 10.15 am

Present: Councillor Jonathan Lester (chairperson)
Councillor Tracy Bowes (vice-chairperson)

Councillors: Barry Durkin, Jennie Hewitt, Louis Stark and William Wilding

In attendance: Councillors Gemma Davies (Cabinet Member), John Harrington (Cabinet Member), David Hitchiner (Cabinet Member) and Paul Symonds

Officers: Richard Ball – Director for Economy and Place, Ben Boswell – Head of Environment Climate Emergency and Waste Services, Victoria Eaton - - Senior Planning Officer, Joni Hughes – Senior Project Manager, Nicola Percival – Waste Operations Team Leader, Kevin Singleton – Strategic Planning Manager, Kenton Vigus – Waste Disposal Team Leader, and Marc Willimont - Assistant Director for Regulatory Environment and Waste.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

The Chairperson reported that Councillor Stark had replaced Councillor Symonds on the Committee and welcomed him to the meeting.

Councillor Symonds was in attendance as Chairperson of the Task and Finish Group for the Waste Management Strategic Review whose report appeared on the agenda for the meeting. The Chairperson thanked him for his work on the review and his contribution to the work of the Committee as a whole.

2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

None.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2020 be approved as a correct record.

5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None.

6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

None.

7. MINERALS AND WASTE LOCAL PLAN

(The agenda order was changed and this item was considered as the second substantive item following consideration of the Task and Finish Group's report on the Waste Management Strategic Review.)

The committee was asked to determine whether it wished to make any recommendations to the executive on the draft Minerals and Waste Local Plan, which would strengthen the emerging policy approach.

Victoria Eaton, Senior Planning Officer, introduced the report. Kirsten Berry (of Hendeca Ltd) then commented on the detail.

The committee discussed the Plan asking a number of questions to which responses were given.

The following principal points informed the recommendations:

- The document was complex and highly technical in nature making it difficult for a general audience to understand. A plain English summary should be provided.
- The definition of sustainability needed to be made explicit so that appropriate weight could be given to it in decision making.
- Some members considered that there should be a specific policy prohibiting fracking/unconventional hydrocarbon extraction in Herefordshire. Professional advice was given counselling against this course on the grounds that it would be contrary to national policy and potentially lead to the Plan being rejected as unsound. The committee considered that the matter nonetheless warranted highlighting and further consideration.

A number of detailed points on the text of the plan were noted for review by officers.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO THE EXECUTIVE:

- That**
- (a) a plain English and practical guidance/executive summary document be produced to support the report;**
 - (b) a more explicit definition, with links to the examples of acceptable sustainable development - within the context of this report - be included**
 - (c) while it recognises that the insertion of a stronger line on preventing fracking/unconventional hydrocarbon extraction in Herefordshire may make the MWLP 'unsound' due to national policy guidelines - the committee wishes to voice its view and see a clearer statement from government that fracking/extraction of unconventional hydrocarbons is unacceptable in Herefordshire; and**
 - (d) the current draft MWLP be endorsed to go forward to public consultation.**

8. TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT - WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIC REVIEW

(The agenda order was changed and this item was considered as the first substantive item. An adjournment took place following consideration of this item.)

The committee considered the Task and Finish Group's report on the waste management strategic review.

Councillor Symonds, chairperson of the Group, introduced the report.

Kenton Vigus, Waste Disposal Team Leader, then delivered the presentation as published with the agenda papers as an appendix to the report. *(The report's recommendations were summarised in appendix 2 to the report at pages 393-398 of the agenda papers.)*

The committee discussed the Group's report asking a number of questions to which responses were given.

The following principal points informed the additional recommendations to those set out in the report:

- It was noted that recommendation 13 proposed that, of the 3 waste collection option, summarised in the report at p 381 of the agenda papers, it was not proposed to consult on option 1 (an "as is service" with a food waste and garden waste collection bolted on). The rationale for this approach was accepted. However, the committee considered that this should be explained in the proposed consultation document.
- The committee agreed that communication was key if there was to be public understanding of and acceptance of change and wished to encourage focus on this aspect.
- It was noted that in the interim prior to the introduction of the new service there was scope to undertake a number of improvements to current arrangements including the treatment of waste received at the household waste recycling centres. The committee considered that this latter initiative in particular should be pursued.
- The report was regarded as comprehensive and thorough, raising significant issues. It was suggested that, noting the Council had been in dialogue with the Department of Rural affairs about the future direction of these services, as had other councils, there would be merit in providing them with a copy of the Group's report.

RESOLVED:

That (a) the Task and Finish Group report and all of its recommendations be approved, subject to including:

- 1. that, as part of the consultation process, there is clear explanation given as to why option one is not being put forward as an option;**
- 2. the Waste Team continue to work with and lead the communications on each of the schemes to ensure public understanding for the preferred options is secured;**
- 3. asking that the reuse of waste is brought forward as quickly as possible at our local household recycling centres; and**

4. that the Task and Finish group report is shared with Defra; and
- (b) the findings and recommendations be submitted to the executive for consideration.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee reviewed its work programme.

The Chairperson drew attention to two public suggestions for scrutiny that had been received, (page 471 of the agenda papers): council purchase of Maylords Shopping Centre

and repairs to the B4224 between Fownhope and Mordiford. He informed the committee of comment received from the Director for Economy and Place on the possible inclusion of these items in the work programme and the timing of any such consideration. He asked the Committee to consider whether the subjects warranted inclusion in the work programme.

The Committee supported the inclusion of the two issues in the work programme, acknowledged the Director's comments on timing and requested that the issues be allocated specific reporting dates.

RESOLVED: That the draft work programme as set out at appendix 1 to the report be approved, subject to the inclusion of reports on the council purchase of Maylords Shopping Centre and repairs to the B4224 between Fownhope and Mordiford;

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 12 October 2020 at 10.30 am.

The meeting ended at 2.10 pm

Chairperson