

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 30 AUGUST, 2016 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT:
Councillors

Cooper, Miss J. (Chairman)
Pearson, A.R. (Vice-Chairman)

Dean, A.	Sutton, Mrs. H.M.
Foley, D.	Witton, P.T.
Grice, Mrs. D.	Woodhead, P.E.
Hoare, M.W.A.	

Also in attendance:-

Councillor J. Preece (Environment Portfolio Leader-observer)
Councillor G. Adamson (Leader of the Council-observer)

7. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. A. Allt, J. Bowater, Mrs. S.M. Cartwright and A. Dudson.

Notification had been received that Councillor M. Sutherland would be substituting for Councillor J. Bowater. However, he was not in attendance at the meeting.

8. Declarations of Interests of Members and Officers in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

No further declarations were made in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members Interests.

9. Minutes

A Councillor referred to Minute 5 (page 4) and explained that a fellow Councillor had asked her to read out a statement which provided an update regarding the concern she had raised at the previous meeting about the overgrown weeds/hedges in the Rugeley area.

The statement was as follows - "Following the last meeting I have spoken with Steve Clarke (Cleansing Supervisor) on the above matter who advised me that spraying of weeds had taken place along roads and pathways within Rugeley town centre etc., however there was no budget available to sweep up the dead weeds once the spraying was done. I also mentioned to him about the bridge which was also overgrown with weeds. Since speaking with Steve I have visited the bridge area to see if anything had been done, but as it stands the area is still weedy and untidy".

The Waste and Engineering Services Manager confirmed that this area was now clear and the weeds had been removed. He advised that Officers were currently in discussion with Staffordshire County Council regarding this matter as there was financial pressure on the County to reduce weed spraying but Cannock Chase Council wanted to maintain the town centres in good condition.

With regard to Minute 5 (page 5) a Member had concern that water courses/flooding was scheduled on the Work Programme for April 2017. He considered that it should be discussed sooner in case there was a flooding incident during the winter months. The Head of Housing and Waste Management confirmed that the item would be a presentation on how the Council was involved in managing water courses/flooding and therefore this will not effect how a flooding incident would be dealt with. The Waste and Engineering Services Manager confirmed that Staffordshire County Council was the flooding authority but either himself or Steve Schofield, the Senior Technical Officer were the contacts locally for any flooding issues.

A Member asked when the briefing note regarding log burners would be circulated. The Environmental Protection Manager confirmed that the briefing note regarding log burners had not yet been completed but would be forthcoming for the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July, 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed.

10. Oak Tree Farm

The Environment Protection Manager provided the Committee with an update on the situation at Oak Tree Farm, Slitting Mill.

He advised that Mr. Ward had been successfully prosecuted in 2011 by Cannock Chase Council's Environmental Health Team following a protracted investigation into the illegal deposit and treatment of waste by burning. He was fined over £10,000. Unfortunately this did not deter Mr. Ward and he was successfully prosecuted again in 2015 by Cannock Chase Council's Environmental Health Team for the illegal deposit and treatment of waste by burning. A penalty of over £17,000 was added to the sum outstanding from the previous conviction (£7,955). This totalled £25k. The Court agreed he could pay back the fine at £20 per week.

The Environment Agency had issued an exemption to give him authority to burn some types of waste. However, Mr. Ward took this to mean that he could burn anything. The D7 exemption was therefore withdrawn by the Environment Agency.

In October 2015 it was noted that there was an accumulating mound of chipped wood waste on site at the farm. The matter was referred to both the Environment Agency (Environmental Permitting Authority) and the Planning Department, Staffordshire County Council (Minerals and Waste Planning Authority).

In December warnings were given to Mr. Ward and Steven Morgan (the Operator of a wood chipping business) by the Environment Agency and Staffordshire County Council. Mr. Ward was given the opportunity to apply for planning permission for the development and to reduce the volume of wood waste on site to comply with the Waste Exemption issued by the Environment Agency.

The Environment Agency is preparing a case against Mr Morgan for waste offences. Staffordshire County Council is considering further action against Mr. Ward which may include consideration of an injunction. They are also considering a request from Mr. Morgan for more time to remove the accumulated waste. The Environmental Protection Manager confirmed that it was the responsibility of both the Environment Agency and Staffordshire County Council to pursue these issues. In the meantime, Cannock Chase Council Officers will continue to monitor the site.

In response to questions from Members the Environmental Protection Manager advised that the Court had determined that fines should be issued to Mr. Ward for the offences even though they were aware he had land holdings. He had apparently informed the Court that the land holdings were in his wife's name.

He further confirmed that the Environment Agency would be focussing their investigation on Mr. Morgan with a view to preparing a prosecution case and would consider options to pursue Mr. Ward for receiving proceeds of crime.

11. Waste Contract Performance Update

The Waste and Engineering Services Manager provided a presentation on the performance of the Waste Contract. He advised that there were no major issues with the Contractor and the new service still was 'bedding in'. The contamination issue was not due to the new contractor but to new regulations and market conditions. A new recycling campaign was due to be launched to raise awareness of the importance of recycling. Discussions were taking place with with a Materials Recycling Facility and partnering authorities.

Biffa had reduced from 6 vehicles to 5 in June and changes to some round times had occurred as the team were working later into the afternoons. Rural properties had been provided refuse sacks to use in wheeled bins. CCTV was provided on all vehicles which recorded all issues with public / motorists along

with any missed bin footage.

He advised that there were new back office systems at Biffa and Cannock Chase Council which allows for the real time checking of streets completed, bins not presented for collection and any contamination issues. He confirmed that contamination remains the largest issue with 25 loads being rejected since March 2015 (full/part). This has led to lost recycling of 7-8 Tonnes per load at a cost of approximately £1,500 per full load. The most common form of contamination in the blue bin was food waste, animal bedding and nappies. These were generally hidden within the bin and not placed on top.

He made reference to the new “Stop and Think” recycling campaign and Members were shown an example of the poster and sticker which would be applied to all blue bins outlining what can and can’t be recycled. Articles regarding the campaign had appeared in the local press / social media / buses. The remaining educational budget had been set aside from the ‘food out campaign’.

He then referred to the “food out campaign” which had commenced prior to the start of the contract (February – March 2016). Food had to be removed from the blue bins due to a charge in disposal. There was a saving of approximately £90,000 and the campaign had been extremely successful so far. No garden waste loads had been rejected to date.

He confirmed the following statistics:-

- 50.1% Recycling (WDF 2014/15)
- 82nd out of 325 authorities (2014/15)
- Top Quartile Performer
- Recycled 10,850 Tonnes of Dry Recyclables
- Composted 9,000 Tonnes of Garden & Food waste

Members were offered the opportunity to ask questions and the following issues were raised. Reference was made to the row of terraced houses where there was difficulty in getting the bins into the rear of the properties. Confirmation was sought as to whether they should be issued with refuse sacks similar to what was being done with the rural properties. The Waste and Engineering Services Manager confirmed that discussions were taking place with residents at this location and consideration was being given to operating a sack collection.

With regard to contaminated loads the Environment Portfolio Leader, Councillor Preece clarified that for a bin to be classed as contaminated the contaminated waste would have to be physically visible and not hidden in the load.

A Member asked whether it was made clear to residents what could be recycled in their blue bin. The Waste and Engineering Services Manager confirmed that an annual recycling calendar was produced which outlined what could be placed in each of the bins. Additionally, information could be obtained from the Council’s website and downloaded via an app available on the

website.

A Member asked whether there had been an increase in contaminated loads since April. The Waste and Engineering Services Manager confirmed that there had been a stricter regime at the recycling facility which had led to an increase; however, this was not due to Biffa taking over the contract. It was in Biffa's best interest not to take contaminated loads to the recycling facility.

Members noted that where residents were continually found to be placing incorrect items into their blue bins they would receive a letter advising them that their bin would be taken off them if they continued to recycle incorrectly. They would have to sign to say they would use it correctly prior to it being returned to them. The Council wanted to improve the quality of the recycling presented to the recycling facility and did not want to begin to ask residents to sort their own recycling (source segregate). Keeping things simple was the key. Source segregation was a costly option and it did not form part of the contract. It was hopeful that the campaign would help to ensure residents recycled correctly.

Reference was made to the proposed sticker which would be applied to the blue bins to make it clear what could be recycled. The sticker stated that all paper could be recycled when in fact shredded paper was not welcome in the recycling bin. The Officer was asked whether this should be included on the sticker. The Waste and Engineering Services Manager commented that whilst the recycling facility did not wish shredded paper to be placed in the blue bins it technically could be recycled. It would be difficult to include this on the sticker. A Member considered that the sticker should highlight the need for the recycling to be washed and clean prior to being placed in the blue bins. It was also considered that the sticker should advise that the blue bins would not be taken away if they were contaminated with a non recyclable item. Additionally it was suggested that wording could be added to highlight that recycling "saved money".

In response to a question from the Leader the Waste and Engineering Services Manager confirmed that refuse collectors were sometimes subjected to abuse. There had been an incident of a resident punching a refuse collector when he refused to take away a contaminated load. Additionally there was an incident whereby a resident had parked illegally blocking access to a junction and the refuse vehicle had to mount the kerb to get passed. When the resident threatened to send her video evidence of the vehicle mounting the kerb to the Police the refuse collector had to point out that the resident was actually parked illegally and the CCTV on the lorry had captured the whole incident.

12. Environmental Protection

The Environmental Protection Manager provided a presentation which outlined the services covered by the Environmental Protection Team, the staffing, achievements during 2015-16 and highlights for 2016-17.

The Committee noted that the services covered were as follows:-

- Statutory Nuisance investigations – noise/dust/fumes/odours/smoke
- Waste-related crime enforcement – fly tipping/waste carriers/littering
- Planning/Licensing consultations – assessment/comment on applications
- Environmental Permitting – industrial processes (air/land and water pollution)
- Air Quality Management – air quality management areas/monitoring
- Contaminated Land – assessment/investigation
- Scrap Metal Dealers – inspection/enforcement
- Dog Control – dog fouling//stray dogs/dogs off leads
- Pest Control – domestic pests/in-house support
- Additional duties – insecure, filthy and verminous properties, education/promotional work, land charges searches, Freedom of Information/Environmental information requests and MP enquiries, Civil Contingencies support

(At this point in the proceedings Councillor A. Pearson left the room and was not present for the remainder of the meeting).

The Officer advised that the Environmental Protection Team consisted of the Service Manager, Senior Environmental Health Officer, Scientific Officer, 4 Pollution Control/Environmental Health Officers and 2 Environmental Enforcement Assistants. There were external contractors for the dog collection service/kennelling and pest control.

He outlined the following achievements during 2015-16:-

- 2000 Service Requests dealt with
- 20 Fixed Penalty Notices served
- Successful Prosecutions for :
 - Dog off lead
 - Illegal disposal of waste
 - Breaches of Scrap Metal Dealers Act
- 8 Nuisance Abatement Notices issued for :
 - Noise (5)
 - Other (3)
- 2 Seizures of noise equipment
- 68 inspections of Industrial processes
- Air Quality Monitoring station relocated to Five Ways Island
- Official launch of ECO Stars Scheme
- 990 pest reports addressed
- 136 stray dogs collected – 75 reunited with owners
- 178 dogs microchipped Free chipping event
- Good Junior Citizen and Environmental Citizen Awards Schemes launched

Members noted that the highlights for 2016-17 were as follows:-

- Declare 3rd Air Quality Management Area
- Implementation of new Fixed Penalty Notice for fly tipping

- Re - Tender pest control, stray dog collection and Kennelling contracts
- Declare Public Space Protection Orders for:
 - Dog Control
 - Gating
 - Alcohol-related issues
- Refresh “Good Junior Citizen” and “Environmental Citizen” Awards Initiative

Members were offered the opportunity to ask questions. In response to a question from a Member the Environmental Protection Manager confirmed that Five Ways Island had been identified as a potential Air Quality Management Area a while ago. During the preliminary assessment air quality levels were not exceeded. However, Officers undertook further monitoring and levels were found to be increasing and have now exceeded the levels required to enable it to be declared an Air Quality Management Area.

13. Bus Shelters

The Waste and Engineering Services Manager provided the Committee with a presentation on the replacement/refurbishment of bus shelters in the District.

He advised that a two year (2015-2017) Capital Bus Shelter Replacement / Refurbishment had been undertaken. This was condition based.

The Committee were advised that:-

- £24k p.a. x 2 for Council Owned Shelters
- Programmed works now all complete
- 6 Replacements (2015/16)
- 1 Removal
- 5 Refurbishments
- 7 Replacements (2016/17)

Members were shown photographs of the recent works to the bus shelters throughout the District.

The Committee noted that an early payment discount had led to a £3k surplus. This surplus was to be used to refurbish additional bus shelters such as those located at Rugeley Bus Station.

14. Additional Items

Countryside Estate Review

The Head of Housing and Waste Management referred to the Countryside Estate Review which was discussed at the previous meeting. The Head of Commissioning had provided two letters and these were circulated to the Committee for information. The letter from Staffordshire County Council (dated May 2016) outlined the proposals for the future management of the countryside estate. For Cannock this included Cannock Chase Country Park, Sevens Road picnic area and Wimblebury Road picnic area. The response to these

proposals was outlined in our letter dated June 2016. She advised that the County were currently assessing the feedback to the consultation.

Should the Committee wish to receive further information on this review they could invite Ian Wykes, Commissioner for the Rural County to attend a future meeting. However, should this be agreed it would be necessary to remove an item from the Work Programme.

Councillor Woodhead advised that he was involved in this review via a Body he was a member of and suggested that he could provide further information on this review to the Chairman.

Brindley Crescent

Councillor Mrs. Grice explained that a number of residents had raised concern regarding the layout of Brindley Crescent in Brindley Heath whereby the road had been cut into two by a grass verge in the middle. This was causing various problems for the residents and she sought clarification as to where to raise the concerns. The Waste and Engineering Services Manager stated that the works had been undertaken during the 1980's as part of a highways improvement scheme. He advised that the concerns should be raised with Mark Keeling, Staffordshire County Council Highways.

The meeting closed at 5.25pm.

CHAIRMAN