

Present: Councillor Judith Skinner (Chairman), Councillor Tracey Abbott (Vice-Chairman), Councillors George Cornah, Anton Dani, Deborah Evans, Paul Goodale, Neill Hastie, Peter Watson and Judith Welbourn

In attendance:

Portfolio Holder –  
Councillor Paul Skinner

Officers –  
Chief Executive, Head of Environmental Operations and Democratic Services Officer

## **25 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were tabled from Councillor Peter Bedford

## **26 MINUTES**

With the agreement of the committee the Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 24 September 2019

## **27 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

No declarations of interest were tabled.

## **28 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No public questions were tabled.

## **29 CLIMATE CHANGE**

Councillor Anne Dorrian Chairman of the Member Working Group presented the report to the committee and reminded members that the review arose following the two original Motions on Notice tabled at Full Council on the 15 July 2019: Full Council voting on a procedural motion. Stating that her initial reaction to the decision had not been too positive, Councillor Dorrian advised that she was now most confident that the piece of work being undertaken would enhance the working of the Council into the future.

Providing an overview of the group, Councillor Dorrian confirmed it was convened of five elected members including the portfolio holder; eight members of the Council's staff with the agreement of the Chief Executive and one member of the public Mrs Victoria Haw. Councillor Dorrian further expressed her gratitude to the Officers of the Council who had provided ongoing support to the group.

Addressing the report tabled Councillor Dorrian referred members to point 2.7 therein and confirmed that investigations into comparative Council's undertaking similar work had identified nothing to support any depth of review: Boston's review was significantly stronger with greater detail.

External representation had been received and members were invited to attend the next meeting of the working group on the 12 November 2019. The NFU along with representatives from Beeswax were confirmed to attend and make representation, with another two businesses also potentially attending.

Two members of staff had each attended events. The Council's Housing Solutions Manager had attended the "Ashdean" Local Authority Climate Change Toolkit launch in October 2019 and had reported back positively on how it identified promoting the core local benefits to residents.

A Planning Officer had visited an event by Western Power about the Transition to a Zero Carbon Economy.

Addressing the rise in electrically powered vehicles, members were advised that in 2013 there had been 37,000 vehicle charging points across the Country. An estimated 3 million were required by 2030 proving the year on year growth of electric vehicles.

Concluding Councillor Dorrian confirmed that looking forward the final recommendations of the group would be agreed for tabling at the January 2020 meeting of the committee. Whilst the recommendations had not been agreed they would most likely be formed around the areas identified within point 3.5 of the report. Furthermore Councillor Dorrian reassured the committee that the group would continue to lobby for additional resources and the outcomes from the review would be incorporated within the Council's Corporate Strategy and Transformation Programme.

The Chairman opened the meeting for deliberation which included the following:

A member questioned why there was no mention of public transport within the review, voicing concerns on the buses currently operating through Boston which generated significant dust, noise and air pollution. The member asked if so many buses were actually required, as many appeared to run with only a few customers on them. The member further suggested that Boston should implement a 'Car Free Day', where the population who worked within the town, walked or cycled for a day and left their cars at home.

Councillor Dorrian acknowledged the comments in respect of public transport in Boston and supported the idea of a 'Car Free Day' stating that the Council should take a leadership role and signpost people. Committee were further advised that following on from the review, consideration of a Citizens Assembly would be looked into as there did appear to be a role for one. Committee were also advised that there was a website where it was possible to sign up for car sharing in your local area and having noticed the amount of officers who drove to work, Councillor Dorrian suggested that the Council could consider offering incentives for staff who car shared to work.

Responding to the comments about residents cycling more and leaving cars behind, a member advised that in her role of working at a local school, she was very aware of the attempts to encourage children and parents to cycle. The main problem that arose was the parents' fear of their children riding on the very busy roads in the town. Whilst parents were happy for children to ride along the pathways, they would not let them on the roads, in particular some of the main arterial roads within the town which served a number of the schools.

A member asked if when lobbying the Government for resources, the group also lobby for all urban public transport to be electrified to help local authorities to rid their towns of fumes and reduce carbon emissions significantly.

The Chief Executive addressed the meeting at this point and stated that the Council had two issues to address: one was how it would become carbon neutral – what could we do and how could we achieve it, and the second to lead an champion others in achieving similar aims. Furthermore he noted that the Council would support lobbying on cycle networks.

The Portfolio Holder then advised that the work of the group could influence the Boston Transport Strategy including clarifying and identifying cycle routes.

Concluding the Chairman thanked Councillor Dorrian for the detailed presentation and stated that as a member of the working group herself, she had realised from the review that the Council had already undertaken a number of steps to reduce its carbon footprint.

**RECOMMENDED:** Members agreed to refer the update to Full Council.

### **30 NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY**

The Head of Environmental Operations presented the report, providing a reminder that following a resolution from the committee's meeting on the 24 September 2019, an Inquiry Session had been held on the 14 October 2019 which had been chaired by the Head of Regulatory Services, supported by Lincolnshire Police and the Council's Community Safety Manager.

Following significant debate the members had agreed that the issues they wished to consider in greater detail were wider than 'Night-Time Economy' issues and that a detailed Task and Finish Group was the preferred way forward. Referring members to the additional information on their placement in respect of a Task and Finish Group convention of a group, the Head of Environmental Operations advised that should a group be convened, due to ongoing activity and commitment of support officers, it would not be possible to start the work until January 2020.

It was moved by Councillor Anton Dani and seconded by Councillor Neill Hastie that a Task and Finish Group be convened to carry out a review.

The motion was unanimously agreed by the committee.

The clerk sought nominations for volunteers to facilitate the review group with Councillors Tracey Abbott; Paul Goodale; Neill Hastie; Judith Skinner and Judith Welbourn duly volunteering their support.

The clerk confirmed that details for the first meeting of the group would be circulated the following day.

**RESOLVED:** That the Environment and Performance Committee unanimously agree the convention of a Task and Finish Group Review.

**To do:** The clerk to issue the date of the first meeting to the group.

### **31 NEW STATUTORY GUIDANCE ON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN LOCAL AND COMBINED AUTHORITIES**

The Head of Environmental Operations presented the report to the committee confirming that the new statutory guidance had been introduced in May 2019 and the Council's committee team had analysed the guidance to determine how compliant the Council was with it. Item 5 within the summary paper recommended consideration be given to producing an executive / scrutiny protocol. A draft protocol was attached at appendix 3 of the report for consideration.

The Corporate and Community Committee had already considered the report and made its recommendations which were provided paper for members' reference to avoid duplication of suggestion.

The Chairman addressed the recommendations of the Corporate and Community Committee noting that the first two noted did not apply to the Environment and Performance Committee as this committee did not have any attendance issues. The Chairman then advised that item 5 in the recommendations was subject to a future report to the Corporate and Community Committee and therefore, the remaining recommendations were for the committee to consider agreeing their support of or not. At this point the Chairman then opened the meeting for comments from members which included the following:

Referencing the new guidance a member questioned how the Council could effect a greater level of scrutiny bearing in mind the limitations of officer and member availability at the current time, as identified in the previous report. The member further asked that when finances improved greater consideration be given to providing further Scrutiny resources.

Further concern was noted that some members had a role on both scrutiny committees and in any resulting stream of scrutiny from the parent committees.

Addressing political proportionality in the calculations of the committees, a member stated that as Scrutiny was non-political, all executive members should be withdrawn from the balance, prior to the calculation for the Scrutiny committees. It was unfair that the executive members were included in that calculation.

A further concern referenced recommendations to Cabinet by Scrutiny which were overturned and not reported back to the respective committee. The Head of Environmental Operations referred committee to page 86 of the papers and point 3.3 which addressed the position of portfolio holders reporting back on such issues.

Members agreed re-wording of point 3.3 to firm up the commitment:

The Executive will be required to consider any recommendation or views expressed by the Scrutiny Committees and to take such action it sees fit. Where any decision taken by the Executive is not in accordance with advice provided by the Committees, *the relevant Cabinet Member shall attend the following meeting of the committee and provide an explanation of the reasons for that decision.*

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That the Environment and Performance Committee agree the following recommendations tabled by the Corporate and Community Committee and identified below noted under their respective minute number reference from the Corporate and Community meeting:

3. That it be recommended to Cabinet that the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committees be appointed at the first meeting of each Municipal Year by the Committee itself, though not by secret ballot.
4. That meetings of the Scrutiny Committees continue to not be recorded.
6. That the draft protocol, attached at Appendix 3 to the report, be recommended to Cabinet and Full Council for approval, but to be renamed the Executive / Scrutiny Protocol.

That the Environment and Performance Committee further agree the following recommendations in addition to those noted above and that it be recommended to Cabinet that:

1. All Executive Members be removed from the political balance, ahead of Scrutiny committee membership proportionality being calculated.
2. That Portfolio Holders present all reports to Scrutiny Committees, supported by the respective Council Officer solely for technical reference.
3. That section 3.3 of the protocol be amended to read as follows:

The Executive will be required to consider any recommendation or views expressed by the Scrutiny Committees and to take such action it sees fit. Where any decision taken by the Executive is not in accordance with advice provided by the Committees, the relevant Cabinet Member shall attend the following meeting of the committee and provide an explanation of the reasons for that decision.

## **32 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Head of Environmental Operations confirmed that Cabinet Call-In had been activated in respect of Replacement Domestic Wheeled Bin Charges which would be held on the 14 November 2019. The Portfolio Holder would be in attendance to answer questions.

He further advised that two additional items had been scheduled to the next committee meeting in January: The Air Quality Action Plan and the PSPO for Dog Control which was due for renewal.

Members comments followed which included:

A request for a report from the Environment Agency following the installation of the Boston Barrier and the outcomes of its installation. The request arose from issues recognised in planning developments where floor levels in certain areas of the town were required to be 1.6m due to potential flooding and the member questioned how this could be, once the barrier was installed.

It was agreed that an all member briefing would be arranged as the subject would be of interest to all members.

Referencing the 'selling-off' of old British Telecom booths, a member questioned if the Council could take these on as they could be transformed for use for a variety of things. In other parts of the Country they had been converted for De-Fib storage in town centres; as Tourist Information Points and in many guises for flower / artistic displays and even for ATM machines. The member noted she felt the boxes were being sold off for £1 and expressed her concern that they were of historic merit and should be protected where possible. Concern was also noted that one such booth on Carlton Road in the town which was due to be sold off, was still in regular use. The Chairman stated that it may be more relevant to forward onto BTAC if the boxes were town centre based and the Chairman of BTAC who was in attendance on the committee, agreed that the information be forwarded to the Lead Officer on BTAC to take forward.

A member stated that a number of his residents were experiencing difficulties with the purple bin paper and card waste trial in his ward. He requested an interim report to the next committee meeting to feedback on the outcomes of the trial to date. It was agreed that an all member briefing would provide a better forum for reporting on this as the subject would be of interest to all members.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Environment and Performance Committee schedule two member briefings in January 2020:

1. To invite representation from the Environment Agency in respect of the effects / impacts on the town following installation of the Boston Barrier.
2. To receive representation from the Head of Environmental Operations on the paper and card waste collection trial.

That the lead officer for the BTAC committee be forwarded the committee comments in respect of the 'selling-off' of the British Telecom booths with the Chairman of BTAC's agreement to look into potential purchasing of booth(s).

The Meeting Closed at 8.10 pm