

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7 October 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Joycelyn Redsell (Chair), Jane Potheary (Vice-Chair), Steve Liddiard, Maureen Pearce, Elizabeth Rigby (*arrived 7.03pm*) and James Thandi

In attendance: Jo Broadbent, Director of Public Health
Michelle Cunningham, Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager
Daren Spring, Assistant Director – Street Scene & Leisure
Cheryl Wells, Emergency Planning and Resilience Manager
Mark Barber, District Commander Essex Police
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

7. Minutes

The minutes of the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 14 July 2021 were approved as a correct record.

8. Items of Urgent Business

There were no urgent items of business.

9. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

10. Health & Wellbeing Strategy Refresh

Jo Broadbent presented the report that provided members with an update on the progress in refreshing the Health & Wellbeing Strategy for 2021-26. Members were referred to the Appendix that set out the scope, arrangements and timeline for the refresh.

Councillor Redsell thanked Jo Broadbent for the report and opened up to questions.

Councillor Potheary stated it was great to see a vision that was clearly trying to tackle those huge health inequalities that have been known for some time and that the strategy would be focusing on them but was confused that the scope of the report was not delivering anything new. That there was nothing bold or radical enough to actually tackle the huge problem of health equality and questioned how Jo Broadbent had envisaged the refreshed strategy to

achieve that ambition. Jo Broadbent stated that in part it had reflected the work that was already ongoing around the domain staying healthier for longer and promoting good health in the first place, such as good health for children, and would continue to see those dividends for decades to come. There was strong evidence about physical activity reducing obesity and not smoking and these already formed part of the key things that people could do. Other areas being more radical on was the work around the adult's health and care strategy where a different approach was being undertaken on commissioning, contracts and providing those services. Councillor Potheary referred to section 4 of the report and stated it had not detailed much about differences in life expectancy and no explanations as to why these would be happening. There were also some key areas not covered such as disability, race and lots of different issues that affected health equality. Jo Broadbent thanked Councillor Potheary for her comments and stated this was a reflection on where they were in the process and would have been further in terms of developing the strategy if it was not for the pandemic. That lots of development work would be undertaken as the strategy continued and that connections would be made between the different ethnic groups across different ages and stages as well as geographic which would be reflected as those connections were made.

Councillor Potheary was not convinced that Housing and Environment should be taken together into one chapter as each area would require a significant amount of work and had concerns that both being taken together would mean neither would get the attention they both needed. Jo Broadbent stated there was no right way to structure this as there was such a broad range of influences and a challenge being that it was so broad and high level. They were also trying not to reflect everything they were doing on those areas of influence on health and wellbeing but had worked with stakeholder groups to come up with a few key priority areas under each of the domains and would focus on them as part of the consultation. Members were also requested to comment if they thought the priorities being focused on were not right and whether they should be focused on in a different way.

Councillor Redsell referred to domain five, that new homes being developed would keep people well and disagreed that putting people in a new home would not guarantee to keep them well. That focus should be given to where new houses were being built and what greenery there was for people to enjoy. Councillor Redsell stated that we had to be careful in what we put on paper can be fulfilled. Jo Broadbent stated these were the high level priorities with more detail behind them which would be included in the consultation document. To ensure these priorities were based on things that we had strategies to address or developing strategies to address such issues. That linking up and working in parallel with the Local Plan and Regeneration Plan would include those policies and the design principles.

Councillor Pearce questioned why women lived longer than men and what the life expectancy in Thurrock was. Jo Broadbent stated that the life expectancy gap was actually narrowing between men and women due to the reduction in differences of lifestyles. That smoking was a massive part of that as the

smoking rates had fallen phenomenally over the past 30 years with the biggest drop had been in men, which had contributed to increasing life expectancy for men. Jo Broadbent stated the life expectancy figures for Thurrock in 2017-20 were 83 for women and 79 for men.

Councillor Rigby questioned how the inequality disparity cross the borough between the different regions compared to other areas in the country to which Jo Broadbent stated this was a picture seen across the country and could see differences in life expectancy. Looking nationally you would see the differences between affluent groups and the least affluent groups but also small local areas but most local authorities would have a disparity to some extent and exaggerated in some areas.

RESOLVED

- 1. The Committee was asked to note and comment on the project scope outlined in the Appendix and the arrangements for completing the strategy refresh.**
- 2. The overarching Vision for the refresh would be “Levelling the Playing Field”, with each chapter identifying ambitious actions required to do that.**
- 3. The actions to Level the Playing Field would be arranged around six key influences on health and wellbeing, including wider determinants of health, around which the strategy would be structured: 1. Quality Care Centred around the Person 2. Staying Healthier for Longer 3. Building Strong & Cohesive Communities 4. Opportunity for All 5. Housing & the Environment and 6. Community Safety.**
- 4. Review and sign-off of the draft strategy document which would be at the HWB Board meeting in March 2022, before review through the Council’s committee structure.**
- 5. Operational oversight of the refresh process would be via the HWB Strategy / TICP Strategy Group, AD Oversight Group, and HWBS Engagement Group.**
- 6. The Strategy would be finalised and launched in June 2022.**

Jo Broadbent left the meeting at 7.37pm.

11. Overview of responsibilities of Portfolio Holder for Environment, Sports and Leisure

Councillor Jefferies, portfolio holder for environment, sport and leisure attended this evening’s meeting to answer any questions on his portfolio responsibilities.

Councillor Redsell requested an update on the Sports Strategy and questioned the £2500 being charged for anything that was put on a field for residents to use. Councillor Jefferies stated the Sports Strategy was a priority and hopefully a report would be brought to committee fairly soon. Daren Spring stated that the Active Play Strategy was already available and

contained information which had been brought to committee. Councillor Jefferies stated costs were factored into the £2500, for example to budget to keep the equipment safe. Councillor Redsell argued that community groups were unable to afford this cost and could not be guaranteed to get funding every year to maintain the equipment. That these community groups would fail and cease to exist if allowances were not made and further thought needed to be made especially when it was Council land that was being used. Daren Spring commented that he welcomed the contributions made by the community groups but the £2500 amount covered the costs of maintenance and to repair any vandalism on the equipment. Councillor Potheary reiterated the comments made and stated that these community groups invested a lot of time to raise funds to pay for equipment and to then be told by the Council that they would not get further funding was not the right message the Council should be giving out. Councillor Rigby questioned what more could be done to combat the vandalism such as CCTV or more lighting to which Councillor Jefferies stated discussions were ongoing with the Police, the Anti-Social Team, Officers and Ward Councillors to see how improvements could be made in certain areas. Councillor Thandi questioned the quality of the equipment to which Councillor Jefferies confirmed that any costs of repair would still fall to the Council. Daren Spring stated the Council did not want to deter community groups and agreed to look at the maintenance regime going forward and that the communications team and officers would continue to work together to which Councillor Potheary stated that not all officers may understand the process that these community groups have to follow to raise money. Councillor Jefferies agreed to take this item away and have another look.

Councillor Liddiard questioned where the responsibility fell for external contractors on the new estate in Tilbury who were not doing the work as it should be done to which Councillor Jefferies stated this would fall to the management company on who they decide to employ. Daren Spring stated the Council could intervene when overgrown shrubbery encroached onto public highways.

Councillor Jefferies agreed to speak to Councillor Potheary outside the meeting in regards to her question on Impulse Leisure.

Councillor Jefferies left the meeting at 8.10pm.

12. Public Land Maintenance Strategy

Daren Spring presented the report and stated that Thurrock's public land and open spaces should enrich the quality of resident's lives, have a positive environmental impact and contribute towards a healthy lifestyle. The Public Land Maintenance Strategy set out guidelines as to how we would change some of the current delivery methods to reduce cost, help improve and maintain our public land in the future.

Councillor Redsell thanked Daren Spring for the report and stated although she was not against anything in the report she did not want to see wild flowers

planted everywhere in the borough and that more work should be undertaken on roundabouts in the borough. Daren Spring confirmed roundabouts would be covered by the strategy and that going forward this would be a new strategy where nothing on this scale had been carried out before. That each individual location would be looked at in isolation to assess what needed to be carried out.

Councillor Thandi referred to the example photo in the report of the grass being cut alongside the wildflower and meadow planting and stated this did not look good and residents may think this was an overgrown area and that the Council were not doing their job of cutting the grass. Daren Spring stated this could be seen as a challenge but could also be seen as areas made to look good and the Council were looking to do something different. The importance would be to get the communication element of this strategy right.

Councillor Liddiard also stated he was not against wild flower meadows but requested that all forums and ward members were consulted and that everyone agreed on what was going to happen. Councillor Liddiard also asked what the frequency of grass cutting would be to which Daren Spring stated that areas would still need to be maintained and weeded and would be based on location and once established would be in full fruition.

Councillor Rigby stated this was a brilliant idea to improve the environment and would like to see this becoming more widespread and should be communicated to residents as a positive to which Councillor Pearce echoed the same comments.

Councillor Potheary agreed with the general consensus of the committee but agreed that maintenance was important to ensure that areas had not just been left overgrown. Councillor Potheary had a slight concern on the approach that it could potentially stop the Council from being responsive to ward members and residents and questioned how some flexibility could be incorporated into the strategy to be more responsive. Daren Spring stated there would be a plan for each open space that would look at how each area would need to be maintained. That in the first three years' work would may be required to remove weeds and cut and maintain areas to ensure that the wild flowers become established. That communication would play a key part to identify these areas and the Council would be sensible in their approach to requests by Councillors.

Councillor Redsell questioned whether the Council were saving money on cricket and bowl club grounds that the Council were no longer maintaining to which Daren Spring stated these groups were more self-managed with external funding available. The Council still offered maintenance at a fee.

Councillor Redsell questioned whether "Thurrock in Bloom" was Thurrock wide to which Daren Spring stated it was.

RESOLVED

That the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended to Cabinet the adoption of the Public Land Maintenance Strategy and its recommendations as shown within this report.

13. Processing Household Waste

Daren Spring presented the report that outlined the details of treatment for each of the streams of household waste collected by Thurrock Council. Additionally the report addressed concerns regarding the end destinations of Thurrock Council's waste and dispelled any issues that it may be inadvertently disposed of inappropriately. The briefing had been developed in response to a request from the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2021.

Councillor Redsell thanked Daren Spring for the report but stated there was still some confusion on when brown bins would be emptied and this needed to be communicated better to residents.

Councillor Potheary thanked Daren Spring for the enjoyable and interesting report and referred to paragraph 2.9 that stated "the waste taken to the HWRC by the public, was separately collected and stored and that last year, over 85% of this was reused or recycled". Councillor Potheary stated this was brilliant and that Thurrock Council should be shouting about successes like this more.

Councillor Potheary stated there was still some confusion on what went in brown bins and asked for confirmation. Daren Spring thanked Councillor Potheary for the complement and confirmed that food and garden waste could go into brown bins and would take the point forward to ensure this was communicated out to residents.

RESOLVED

The Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.

14. Clean and Green Service Savings Proposal Details

Daren Spring presented the report that provided the detail behind the Street Scene and Leisure Service saving opportunities presented to Cabinet at the beginning of July 2021 for further consideration.

Councillor Redsell questioned why Highways England could not do more to address litter issues in the borough to which Daren Spring stated Highways England cleaning regime was different to Thurrock Councils but they were in regular contact with them and that teams were out this week dealing with the Thurrock stretch on the A13.

Councillor Potheary thanked Daren Spring for the report and stated her concerns on the impacts of these savings and there had already been a

deterioration in business over the last couple of months. That the report had not provided any alternatives only that this was just what was on the table and asked for some further information on whether any alternatives were looked into and why these were not included in the report. Daren Spring noted Councillor's Potheary concerns on the reduction of services and stated the elements referred to by Councillor Potheary had been looked into and this was just part of the overall picture and would have the minimum impact when services were reduced.

Councillor Potheary referred to the potential risk that reducing the capacity of the street cleansing service would result in less frequent litter picking in some areas to which Daren Spring stated there would be a minimum impact on services across the borough with an increase of the mechanical sweep in some areas.

Councillor Redsell commented that she would like to speak on behalf of the committee when the report was presented to Cabinet.

Councillor Thandi questioned the comparison of services offered now to last year to which Daren Spring stated there had been no change in services offered last year and that the Bartec electronic system was now used to mark off the collections of waste, street cleansing and grounds maintenance work once completed.

Councillor Thandi questioned whether the Council had lost workers over the last year to which Daren Spring stated this was no difference to previous years as permanent staff tended to stay and although there is always a turnover of some agency staff, the Council were able to retain agency staff in many instances.

Councillor Rigby questioned whether the 10 day cycle of litter picking would be reduced to which Daren Spring stated the litter picking cycle may change to a 15 day cycle on major routes but there would be an increase of frequency in the mechanical sweep across these areas of the borough.

Members agreed that the wording in the recommendation 1 be changed from "...recommend approval of the proposals outlined in the report to Cabinet" to "noted the proposals outlined in the report".

RESOLVED

- 1. The Committee considered the report in view of the current and MTFS position and noted the proposals outlined in the report.**
- 2. The Committee agreed that Councillor Redsell speak on behalf of the committee when the report was presented to Cabinet.**

15. Off Road Motorbike Nuisance Report

Michelle Cunningham presented the report following the request by the Chair of the Cleaner, Greener Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members were provided with the opportunity to review the actions being taken by the Community Safety Partnership in response to the ongoing anti-social behaviour being caused by off road vehicles which was causing harassment, alarm and distress to residents across the Borough.

District Commander, Mark Barber, thanked the Chair for inviting him to this evening's meeting and briefed members on operation Caesar that the Police had been responding to for the last three years. That operation Caesar was owned by the community policing teams that ranged from high visibility patrols and the support of specialist units, road policing units and local joint operations that had been successful. That evidence based data from Police systems had been taken to identify the top five hotspots and an action plan had been set for the Police and partners to visit those five sites to look at what target hardened opportunities were available, engage with local landowners and to encourage members of the public to continue to report problems. Members were also briefed on the future plans of Police to have off-road quad bikes which had been successful in other Police forces across the UK. That funding had been agreed through the Council and Community Safety Partnership to support the pilot for off-road quad bikes with the initial paper being supported by Essex Police Chief Officers with the second paper due to go to Chief Officers within the next couple of weeks. That final details were being looked at with the Inspector and once approved by Chief Officers and with the joint funding approach it would be specific to Thurrock and to local residents. The next stage would be the procurement and purchasing phases with insurance and training to be undertaken.

Councillor Redsell thanked the District Commander for all the work the Police had undertaken in the borough but they needed to tell residents about all this good work and get the praises from residents on those successes as residents were unaware of all the good work being undertaken.

Councillor Potheary was pleased that this was now a priority for Essex Police but had concerns that target hardening tended to involve A-Frames which were a nightmare for cyclists, mobility scooters, prams, wheelchair users and making footpaths and pathways completely inaccessible for those people who innocently wanting to use them. Councillor Potheary questioned whether there was an alternative being considered other than using A-Frames and asked for a commitment to look at alternatives as these frames stopped people from doing the things they want to do. Michelle Cunningham agreed with Councillor Potheary's comments and that the Council were working closely with the public rights of way team to make sure the access routes were kept open and to look at different alternative mechanisms that could be used.

RESOLVED

- 1. That members of the Committee scrutinise and satisfy themselves that the Council and Police were working together effectively to**

combat the issue of Anti-social Behaviour in relation to motorbike nuisance.

- 2. That members of the Committee recognise that we cannot address this issue without the support of our communities and that reporting is key.**

Michelle Cunningham and Mark Barber left the meeting at 9.10pm.

16. Work Programme

Members agreed the work programme.

As part of the Scrutiny Review, Members agreed for the Waste Strategy Implementation to form the in-focus topic for this committee to discuss and develop throughout the year. Members were provided with an update on the waste strategy which included the overall aims of the strategy to reduce, reuse, recycle, recovery and disposal and how these could be educated, empowered and enforced. Members were briefed on some of the operational changes such as the introduction of separate food-waste collections from September 2022, alternate weekly general waste collections, week recycling collections to remain the same, the purchase of 20 new collection vehicles, renewal of current waste disposal contracts to include food-waste and alternate weekly garden waste collections to remain. Members were also briefed on the new service roll out which included the tender for the supply and delivery of food caddies in January 2022, new larger refuse collection vehicles due for delivery (four in January and six in March 2022) and to be put into use immediately. Comms Strategy to commence around the new services in March 2022, food caddies delivered to residents by contractors in September 2022, food-waste collection vehicles due for delivery in late August 2022 with the new services – food-waste and recycling collections weekly, residual goes to alternative weekly, completely new collection schedules to be created to commence September 2022. Members were briefed on the household waste and recycling and what went in each bin and how household waste was reused, recycled and composted. Members agreed to add this item to the work programme and would be happy to receive briefing notes for regular updates.

The meeting finished at 9.20 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**