



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

04 October 2022

7.00 - 9.01 pm

Council Chamber

Minutes

Membership

Councillor Chloe Turner (Chair)

Councillor Christopher Evans
 Councillor Lindsey Green
 Councillor George James
 Councillor Haydn Jones
 Councillor Norman Kay
 Councillor Martin Brown*

*= Absent

Councillor Robin Drury-Layfield (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Norman Kay
 Councillor Ashley Smith
 Councillor Brian Tipper
 Councillor Tricia Watson
 Councillor Steve Robinson*
 Councillor Haydn Sutton*

Officers in Attendance

Strategic Director of Place
 Principal Planning Officer
 Principal Accountant

Head of Planning Strategy & Economic
 Development
 Democracy & Information Governance Officer

EC.011 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brown, Robinson and Sutton.

EC.012 Declaration of Interests

There were none.

EC.013 Minutes

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2022 were approved as a correct record

EC.014 Public Question Time

There were none.

EC.015 Environment Committee Budget Monitoring Report Q1 2022/23

The Accountant introduced the report and advised there was a projected net revenue underspend of £87K and highlighted to Committee a number of the more significant overspend and underspend variances. He explained that a 3% increase on the Garden Waste Service

was recommended for approval to fund the raising inflation costs, rising the service cost to £51.50 annually for 2023.

Councillor Kay asked whether Parish and Town Councils were still able to apply for funding for walking and cycling schemes. The Head of Planning Strategy and Economic Development confirmed that they were and advised an event was being coordinated to encourage proposals from Parish and Town Councils for prospective schemes on the 18 November 2022.

Councillor Jones enquired whether projected forecasts had been considered for the number of future Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) coming forward to constitute the need for an additional Officer. The Head of Planning Strategy and Economic Development confirmed and explained he was aware of several proposed NDP's coming forward in the future.

Proposed by Councillor Kay and seconded by Councillor Tipper.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

- RESOLVED**
- a) **To note the outturn forecast for the General Fund Revenue budget and the Capital Programme for this Committee.**
 - b) **Agree the subscription fee for the garden Waste changing to £51.50 for 2023.**

EC.016 Stroud Canals Vision and Strategy

The Head of Planning Strategy and Economic Development introduced the report and explained that;

- The current Council Plan identified the need to develop a long-term Vision and Strategy for the Canals Network to support the current Cotswold Canal Connected Project, to achieve broader social, economic and environmental objectives for future projects and open funding opportunities.
- Strategy & Resources Committee in January 2022 approved the Draft Canals Vision and Strategy for public consultation and 115 consultation representations were received.
- Local Plan Policy (both in the current and draft new Local Plan) supported the restoration of the Canal and it was emphasised that there was not a specific proposal to restore a navigable link East of Brimscombe, connecting to the River Thames at Lechlade. It was noted that policies and allocations in the local plan needed to be realistically deliverable within a 20 year time frame.
- The Strategy is a supplementary planning document that supplements the current Local Plan, reinforces the Councils 2030 Strategy and emphasised the ecological emergency.
- Finally, if adopted the Strategy would support policy ES11 (maintaining, restoring, and regenerating the District Canal) of the current Local Plan providing weight in the planning system for future development in the canal corridor to take account of the Strategy.

The Head of Planning Strategy and Economic Development responded to Members questions with the following responses:

- Members would be required to approve a change to the Local Plan if they wanted to include the restoration of a navigable link East of Brimscombe or for it to be included in a future review of the Local Plan.
- The action plan permitted collaboration with local groups on specific projects relating to the canal and workshops with Parish and Town Councils and Community Groups.

- There was not a specific Officer at Stroud to encourage community involvement relating to equality, however Cotswold Canals were looking to recruit an Engagement Manager. Networks were also being developed with the Community Hubs in the district to encourage engagement with the canal.
- The Canal Strategy must align with the Local Plan policies and therefore cannot include a proposal to restore a navigable link East of Brimscombe. As noted earlier, the current and emerging Local Plan does not include a specific proposal to restore this section of canal. If Members wanted to explore this, the mechanism to do so would be either a review of the policy in the Local Plan after the emerging plan had been adopted, or through Full Council via a motion or decision.

Proposed by Councillor Watson and seconded by Councillor Drury-Layfield.

Councillor Jones proposed amendments to specific paragraphs identified in the Strategy. He proposed paragraph 1 of page 43 to read: 'Between the three centres of Frampton, Slimbridge and Purton, there exists a number of popular recreation and historical destinations offering a variety of facilities and activities that are sometimes canal-focussed. These diverse service points are more intimately related to the communities of Frampton and Purton due to their proximity to those settlements, with the canal being enjoyed by local and visitors alike. They can be rich in their use, but the associated pressure on infrastructure, community and natural environment presents a challenge. They require integrated public transport provisions, appropriate traffic management and design that recognises the local impact and limited imposed by lack of facilities available in these rural locations. Any use should properly consider local community impact of all recreational activities and demonstrably add to local village character and the communities they serve'

Paragraph 4 of page 43 to read: 'WWT Slimbridge is a well-known landmark destination in the locality. Canal-based projects to enhance biodiversity for the wider area and enlarge habitats for wildlife go hand-in-hand with growing canal-focussed activities and recreation outcomes associated with WWT visitors enjoying the wider area along the canal. The associated increase recreational impact on habitat, environment, landscape and community is a consequence that requires consideration. If projects are deemed worthy of progress appropriate practical management must accompany proposals to avoid appropriately fully mitigate any impact'.

Paragraph 4 on page 44 to include at the end of the second sentence ending 'notwithstanding the constraints on development to protect local habitats' 'together with the areas immediately adjoining to the west that are nationally and internationally protected'.

The decision box was amended to include 'in addition to providing delegation regarding any changes identified at Environment Committee on the 4 October 2022' at the end of point 'c'.

The amendment was proposed by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor James.

Councillor Jones informed Committee that there was still great ambition from past and current Members and from the Political Parties for the East of Brimscombe to be restored to connect the River Thames and River Severn.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried unanimously.

The Motion with the included amendment was proposed by Councillor Watson and seconded by Councillor Drury-Layfield.

- RESOLVED**
- a. To approve the Council response to representations made during the public consultation process, as set out within the Consultation Report in Appendix A; and
 - b. Approve the Final Canals Strategy set out in Appendix B as a Supplementary Planning Document to the adopted Stroud District Local Plan;
 - c. Delegate to the Head of Planning Strategy and Economic Development, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Environment Committee, the ability to agree minor textual and formatting changes to the final document for publication in addition to providing delegation regarding any changes identified at Environment Committee on the 4 October 2022.

On being put to the vote, there were 6 votes for, 4 against and 0 abstentions.

EC.017 Cotswold Beechwoods and Rodborough Common SAC Mitigation Strategies

The Principal Planning Officer introduced the report and advised that under the Habitats Regulations all plans and projects must give consideration whether they are likely to have significant effect on protected habitats sites. The Mitigation Strategies were measures intended to reduce or prevent any adverse significant effect to these habitats from any planning projects. An Interim Rodborough Mitigation Strategy had been in force since 2015 and the Cotswold Beechwood Mitigation Strategy was new and required a partnership approach in Gloucestershire between Local Planning Authorities.

In response to Member questions, the Principal Planning Officer responded by advising:

- Cotswold Beechwoods zone of influence was broadly worked out on where 75% of visitors originated from.
- As to the current uncertainty on the future of Habitats Regulations, it was explained that the Council can only operate on current regulations and guidance in place on the national habitat sites.
- Any future proposals from Central Government on habitat protections would require the Strategies to be reviewed.

Councillor Jones advised Committee he had a potential amendment and asked for Officers advice on the legitimacy of either excluding affordable housing or a mitigation contribution under HC4 of the Local Plan or giving Officers provision to use the Country Surveyor viability reports to exempt affordable housing making the contribution. The Principal Planning Officer responded that he hasn't heard of an exclusion for affordable housing under these regulations. The Head of Planning Strategy and Economic Development advised the Council must demonstrate Local Plan developments were viable with policy requirements as part of the draft Local Plan evidence. There was no requirement on developers to pay money towards the Mitigation Strategies if their own schemes could mitigate adverse impacts.

Councillor Jones proposed an amendment that Community Land Trusts were excluded from making the mitigation contribution but welcomed officers' advice. The Head of Planning Strategy and Economic Development advised alternative ways could be more appropriate to address the impact of costs on Community Land Trusts developments. The mitigation strategy was a statutory requirement and focussed on nature conservation. The Chair, Councillor

Turner suggested Councillor Jones and the Head of Planning Strategy and Economic Development discuss outside of Committee based on Officer feedback.

Based on Officer feedback, the amendment did not proceed and Councillor Kay proposed and Councillor Drury-Layfield seconded the original motion. Councillor Jones informed Committee he would have preferred to have deferred the report to seek Legal Advice to try and accommodate the exclusion on affordable housing.

On being put to the vote, there were 6 votes for, 3 against and 1 abstention.

- RESOLVED**
- a. **To Adopt the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC Recreation Mitigation Strategy; and**
 - b. **Rodborough Common SAC Recreation Mitigation Strategy for avoidance of likely significant adverse effects on these Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)**
 - c. **The Director of Place be delegated to determine the membership of the Oversight and Working Groups in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Environment Committee.**

EC.018 **Appointment to the Stroud Valleys Canal Company**

A nomination was received for Councillor Drury-Lafyfield who was duly appointed.

EC.019 **Appointment of Performance Monitor for Civic Year 2022-23**

A nomination was received for Councillor Evans who was duly appointed.

EC.020 **Member / Officer Reports**

- a) Strategic Planning Advisory Board

The Chair, Councillor Turner advised an extraordinary meeting was held in July regarding an update on the Canal Strategy and a meeting held in September for an update on the Local Plan examination process, Canal Strategy and Mitigation Strategies.

- b) Stroud Regeneration Committee

The report was published as part of the document pack. There were no further questions.

- c) Performance Monitoring 2022-2023 Q1

The Chair, Councillor Turner, advised providing narrative against objective was crucial and in particular against those objectives where there were currently no performance indicators. She advised the Youth Council input would form part of the next performance monitoring report.

EC.021 **Walking and Cycling Task & Finish Group Recommendations - Officer update on progress**

The report was published as part of the document pack. There were no further questions.

EC.022 **Lower Severn Drainage Board**

The report was published as part of the document pack. There were no further questions.

EC.023 **Work Programme**

The Chair, Councillor Turner informed Committee the Air Quality Information Evening would be announced imminently and would either take place on the 21st or 23rd November. She continued and advised an information report on Natural Flood Management would be added to the December Work Programme.

RESOLVED **To note the above update to the Work Programme.**

EC.024 **Member Questions**

Member questions were submitted, They were asked by Councillor Evans and Watson. ([Refer to the Council's recording and Agenda Item 12](#)).

The meeting closed at 9.01 pm

Chair