ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE WORKING GROUP

25 March 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Mrs Warr (Chairman), Brooks (Vice-Chair), Bicknell, Mrs Catterson, Clayden, Dixon, Gunner, Huntley, Jones, Kelly and Ms Thurston

Councillors Coster, Goodheart, Mrs Hamilton and Roberts were also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

26. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

The Committee Manager was asked by the Leader of the Opposition, a question in relation to the attendance of another member in the Working Group and a response was provided.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

28. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2020 were approved as a correct record, and it was agreed that these would be signed as soon as practicably possible.

29. ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA THAT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

There were no urgent items on the agenda, however the Chairman invited the Leader of the Green Party to make a statement in relation to the Kelp Forest Project.

30. SOUTHERN WATER

The Director of Place introduced the representatives from Southern Water, Dr Toby Willison Director of Environment & Corporate Affairs, Tom Gallagher Bathing Water Manager, Richard Bagwell Stakeholder Manager for Sussex and Charlotte Mayall Regional Planning Lead for Hampshire & West Sussex and invited them to give their presentation.

Members then took part in a question and answer session, where the following questions were raised:

- It was stated that the Environment Agency had given Southern Water a 1 star rating in October for their performance in 2019, and it was asked whether Southern Water felt that they were meeting the needs of Arun. Southern Water's Director of Environment & Corporate Affairs acknowledged this and said there had been a significant programme of investments, re-training and re-engineering, and they were confident they would not be rated 1 star again this year.
- Clarification was requested around Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO) and Asset Maintenance Programme (AMP). An explanation of these terms was given by Southern Water's Director of Environment & Corporate Affairs.
- It was felt that Southern Water seemed to be really trying, and it was hoped that in a couple of years the impact of this would be felt.
- A member asked whether programmes can be extended to cover run-off from roads.
- It was raised that Pagham Waste Water Treatment Plant was currently undergoing work that won't be completed until 2025, and it was asked whether a stop should be put on any development there until this was complete.
- It was asked whether there was a policy within Southern Water to move towards community groups getting involved with sites around the districts, and whether there were any plans for a national emergency phone number to report leaks.
- A question was asked around flooding and what steps Southern Water took to monitor ground water table and water table rises. Southern Water's Bathing Water Manager confirmed that this was monitored by Southern Water and that they worked with landowners and farmers on this.

It was asked that Southern Water provide written answers, to be sent to the Chairman and all members of the council, to the following questions:

- Of the 6 wastewater areas in the South, Southern Water had mentioned 3, please could they provide the names of the other 3
- Could a breakdown be provided of the investment in wastewater assets and transformation programmes?
- Could Southern Water provide clarification regarding surface water connections to sewage networks, as it was thought this was now unlawful, and that rainwater must now be separated from sewage water.
- It was noted that Pagham had previously failed bathing water standards due to high nitrate levels, and that when a meeting was set up to discuss this with farmers, this coincided with harvest so farmers were unable to attend. Had another meeting had been arranged with farmers to address this?

It was asked how Southern Water dealt with criminal conduct within their company. An answer was provided by Southern Water's Director of Environment & Corporate Affairs.

It was asked whether Southern Water were happy with Arun as a council and the conditions set as Planning Consents, or whether there was anything that Arun could do better? It was agreed that Southern Water's Director of Environment & Corporate Affairs would attend a future meeting to further discuss this matter.

The Chairman thanked the representatives from Southern Water and the presentation was noted by members.

31. FLOODING UPDATE

The Engineering Services Manager presented his report, where he provided detailed overview of various types of drainage. He advised that surface water schemes for new development were designed to ensure sustainable draining systems, and that Engineers commented on most Planning Applications to ensure the guidance is followed, and the area would be at no greater risk than if the development didn't go ahead. The hierarchy was as follows: where possible, the aim was to try and get water back into the ground (by infiltration), if this could not be achieved they looked to store the water and return it into ditches, and if this was not possible they would release into surface water sewers. They would resist any discharge into the foul system.

The Engineering Services Manager explained that although sometimes members of the public thought that a development should not go ahead due to flood risk, it was sometimes the case that because of the development, work could be carried out on ditches etc that have not been tended to for many years, which would actually reduce the flood risk. Consent would not be given for any development that may have a negative impact on the watercourses.

Members then took part in a full debate where the following points were raised:

- Concern was raised that the Local Plan did not offer sufficient protection in relation to flooding, and it was asked how this could be addressed to mitigate these problems. The Engineering Services Manager explained that a development would not proceed if it would adversely affect itself or its neighbours in a 1 in a 100 year storm plus an allowance for climate change, and gave assurances that developments coming forward now do not get to Development Control Committee until officers were happy with the proposal.
- It was discussed that the wider issue of climate change needed to be discussed at National Level, however it was also mentioned that what could be done at local level should be explored too.
- It was noted that a decision had been taken not to retain the foreshores team.
- Concern was raised about the long-term outcome for the new developments on the seafront, and it was suggested that when the Local Plan was revised, it would be good to have a consultant to advise on everything. The Engineering Services Manager confirmed the Shoreline Management Plan had a 100 year horizon, and much thought went into this. The Director of Place confirmed officers were very aware of the issues around climate change and developing the Local Plan, and thought would need to go into how much the Council would wish to spend updating the Local Plan.

Councillor Roberts declared a personal interest as he was a current member of the Littlehampton RNLI crew. He sought clarification on the decision not to re-hire the Foreshore Team. An answer was provided by the Group Head of Community Wellbeing.

32. PLACE ST MAUR

The Principal Landscape Officer introduced her report and provided the Working Group with an update on the plans for Place St Maur in Bognor Regis. It was highlighted that the consultation process was now complete, and the designs have been presented to and approved by Cabinet.

Members then took part in a full debate where the following points were raised:

- There was disappointment that Cabinet had already approved the scheme 2 days prior to the Working Group were due to meet.
- There was concern regarding the existing tree on the site, the paving and the mounds in the design.
- Concern was raised about how flexible the new space would be for events. The Principle Landscape Officer confirmed that the space had been designed with flexibility in mind, for large events water jets would be switched off and plant pots moved.
- A question was asked regarding timings of the work and whether the 2021 Folk Festival could still be held there. This was answered by the Principle Landscape Officer.
- It was asked what opportunities there may still have been for councillor input into the designs. The Principal Landscape Officer and Group Head of Neighbourhood Services explained the consultation process and confirmed the design has been frozen in order to go out to tender to get the work achieved.
- Concerns were raised about the lighting, and whether the area would be safely lit.
- Members raised concerns about locations for a stage and also whether the paved area would be robust enough to be driven over by event organisers.

The Working Group noted the report provided by a show of hands to the screen.

33. REPORT BACK FROM CABINET/FULL COUNCIL

The Chairman advised members that at the last meeting of the Working Group on 10 December 2020, they had made recommendations to Cabinet which had been reviewed by Cabinet on 11 January 2021.

Councillor Gunner expressed disappointment that Cabinet over-ruled the recommendation regarding the Tree Planting Strategy made by the Working Group and his comments were echoed by other members.

The following points were raised by members:

- Clarification was sought regarding the funding of the Safer Arun Partnership
- Questions were asked in relation to the timing of the Tree Planting Strategy.

The Working Group noted the update.

34. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman confirmed to members that there was no Work Programme to review or approve, due to the change in Governance structure that would be implemented by the Council in May 2021. The Work Programme for the new Environment & Neighbourhood Services Committee would be agreed at the first meeting on 27 May 2021, under the new Governance Structure.

(The meeting concluded at 8.58 pm)