

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

19 September 2024 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Wallsgrove (Chair), (Amanda) Worne (Vice-Chair), P. Bower, Huntley, Madeley, May, Warr, Wiltshire, Oppler (Substitute for Blanchard-Cooper) and Turner (Substitute for Greenway)

Councillor Butcher was also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

[Councillor Warr was absent from the meeting during discussion at Minute 218 – 225]

211. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Blanchard-Cooper and Greenway.

212. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

213. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2024 were approved by the Committee. These would be signed after the meeting.

214. 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

The Chair explained to Committee that due to a Member request, she wished to make a change to the published order of the agenda, by moving agenda Item 11 [2 Hour Town Centre Parking Schemes] to before Item 7 [Draft Final Out-Turn – 2023/24]. The Committee approved this change by a show of hands.

215. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No public questions had been submitted for this meeting.

Environment Committee - 19.09.24

216. COMBINED CLEANSING SERVICES CONTRACT OVERVIEW AND PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Chair welcomed Steve Usher, Senior Business Manager from Biffa, who was in attendance virtually, to the meeting.

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Environmental Services & Strategy Manager presented the report, which provided an update in respect of the Council's Combined Cleansing Services Contract over the past twelve months. He highlighted that an in-cab technology solution, provided by Biffa, enabled real-time updates from the crew on work progress and allowed for the easy recording of why a collection may have not been able to take place, which had improved service efficiency. He also highlighted the consistently high performance in relation to missed bin figures.

The Senior Business Manager from Biffa then delivered his presentation to Members [available to view on the Arun District Council Environment Committee web pages] which covered the following:

- Overview
- Safety, Wellbeing and Engagement
- Performance Summary
- Innovation and Added Value
- Social Value and Sustainability

Members then took part in a question and answer session and the following points were raised:

- Members congratulated Biffa and the operatives, for the high level of friendly service they felt had been provided.
- There was concern around the fire risks of lithium batteries being disposed of by residents within the general waste. The Senior Business Manager from Biffa explained batteries were a real risk to the crew and was a very serious issue. Biffa had looked at potential technological solutions, however it was proving difficult to find a solution. He explained more work needed to be done around educating the public on where to safely dispose of the batteries. The Environmental Services & Strategy Manager explained that Arun was part of the West Sussex Waste Partnership, who had relayed a lot of communication to residents around this, but the communication needed to continue.
- It was asked what happened to electrical items placed out next to bins for collection. The Senior Business Manager from Biffa explained there was a cage under the truck in which the crew placed such items for later sorting.
- It was asked whether it was helpful to Biffa that the bins be a standardised size. The Environmental Services & Strategy Manager explained there was an advantage to this in terms of consistency across the district and that Members had approved this approach back in March.
- It was asked whether disposable vapes would be made illegal. The Cleansing Operations Manager confirmed there would be a move away from disposable vapes, and he believed this would come into effect in January 2025.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and the presentation provided by the Council's incumbent contractor, Biffa.

217. TWO HOUR TOWN CENTRE PARKING SCHEMES

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Technical Services presented the report. At its meeting on 7 September 2023, the Environment Committee resolved to establish a Working Party to comprehensively review the free parking schemes and report its recommendations to the Committee. The membership of the Working Party was made up of the Chair of the Environment Committee plus four other members of the Committee, two named representatives from each of Littlehampton and Bognor Regis Town Councils, a named representative of the Bognor Regis Business Improvement District (BID) and a named representative of Littlehampton traders. At the first meeting of the Working Party members received an Officer presentation on the current scheme, including limitations, and also agreed the Terms of Reference and Objectives of the Working Party. Members of the Working Party had been asked to submit proposals for discussion at the second meeting. A wide range of ideas had been submitted by two members, which were appraised, debated and shortlisted at the second meeting. The Working Party had recognised the significant advantages of a virtual disc over a physical disc, however recognised some people may not be ready for this transition, so recommended the physical disc should remain available at a higher price than the virtual disc, which would help to incentivise the transition.

At the third meeting, the Working Party made a recommendation to the Environment Committee which was 'A single disc that covers both Bognor Regis and Littlehampton town centre car parks, using Option B, a hybrid scheme of both physical and virtual discs, with the virtual discs costing less for the end users to purchase than the physical discs. The costs of these to be decided by the Environment Committee, guided by the outcome of public consultation.'

As requested at the final meeting of the Working Party, public consultation had been carried out, which had received 338 responses. The mean average response to the question around what people felt represented good value was £8.44 for the virtual disc, and £9.74 for the physical disc, however there were three high responses which distorted this. The median average had therefore also been calculated which was £3 for both virtual and physical discs.

The recommendation to Committee was that the virtual disc continue to be £3, but the physical disc be priced at £10. This took into account the consultation responses, but that people may have understated what they considered to be good value; that the disc would now cover two towns, whereas they only covered one under the current scheme; the recommendation of the Working Party that there be price differential sufficient to encourage buyer behaviour towards the app; it also took account of the high production and admin costs of the physical discs, and the need to

Environment Committee - 19.09.24

attenuate the parking revenue losses the Council incurs. The scheme remained exceptional value.

The Group Head of Technical Services explained to Members that despite a number of research papers being produced in the UK, there was a lack of robust evidence linking car park charging levels with town centre footfall. The cost of the scheme, based on the very limited usage data held, indicated a cost to the Council of £1.2m each year for the scheme, however there was a low level of confidence in that figure due to the limited volume of usage data.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Worne and seconded by Councillor Wiltshire.

The Chair opened for debate, and Councillor Oppler explained that although he respected the Officers, he disagreed with the report. He felt the scheme that had run until the end of December 2023 had been very successful, and it had been a well used scheme. He said that to charge £10 for the physical disc would be a 250% increase. He read out a statement that he had been provided with from Councillor Bob Waterhouse, a Bognor Regis Town Councillor that was a member of the Working Party. This statement rejected the indicated cost to the Council of the scheme of £1.2m, which it stated were unrealistically high. Councillor Oppler explained he welcomed the idea of having one disc that covered both towns, and he also supported having the physical card disc and the app in parallel. He then proposed amendments to the Officer recommendations as follows (additions shown in **bold**, deletions in ~~strikethrough~~):

- a. To delegate authority to the Group Head of Technical Services to implement a single 2-hour free town centre parking disc scheme to incorporate both Littlehampton and Bognor Regis town centres, with the scheme to be administered in both Littlehampton and Bognor Regis by Arun District Council.
- b. To agree the differential pricing for virtual and physical parking discs, whereby the virtual parking disc is cheaper than the physical counterpart to encourage transition to the virtual scheme.
- c. To agree the retail price points for both the virtual and physical parking discs for 2025 from the options in 4.19. The recommended retail price for the virtual disc is **£4** and **£6** for the physical disc. **Both price points should be fixed for a period of three years.** ~~Thereafter decisions on the scheme are to be included within the Council's annual budget setting process, as with other tariffs.~~
- d. ~~To delegate authority to the Group Head of Technical Services to make any necessary changes to the Council's Parking Orders and to take any other actions necessary to enable the scheme to take effect.~~

e. Card discs should be supplied to traders on a strictly sale or return basis.

f. The clause to use the disc only once per day should be removed.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Huntley.

The Group Head of Technical Services explained that the cost estimates were based on 50k sales per annum and that those be used once per month. There was however, a 4% actual usage sample size, and consultation responses indicated the usage may be even more frequent than this, which would mean the cost to the Council was in fact higher. He advised that a lower cost for the cardboard disc would mean a further loss of revenue, and less of an incentive for people to transfer from the cardboard disc to the app, and he reiterated that the cardboard discs were difficult to enforce and did not provide usage data. The amendment allowing use of the disc more than once per day, would make it even more difficult to enforce. He felt it important that the Council retained its flexibility with the budget setting process and were able to review that on an annual basis.

The Director of Growth explained that locking in the cost of the discs for three years would take away all flexibility of Committee with regards to this, and as nobody could predict the budget pressures the Council would be under, he strongly encouraged Members not to support this element of the amendment. He urged Members to keep in mind that this scheme was in existence, was unique to Arun, and should be celebrated. Regarding the removal of recommendation d, he explained that this was not a strategic decision, and was not something he felt the Committee would need to be involved in.

The proposer of the amendment was allowed to speak again, and said he felt that reviewing the scheme had been a painful process and the scheme had worked very well for several years prior to this point. He felt his amendments would support both towns and the traders.

The Group Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer warned against fixing the fees for three years, as this would reduce budget setting flexibility, and he felt this would be a decision that may need to be taken by the Policy & Finance Committee. He reminded Members of the overall financial position of the Council, and that additional forgone income would reduce the ability to reduce the existing structural budget deficit, and may mean services in other areas would need to be cut or staff would need to be made redundant.

The Director of Growth requested that the amendment be altered to make a recommendation to the Policy & Finance Committee that they agree to fix the price point for three years. He also re-emphasised that he felt recommendation d should remain, as the intention of this was so that the actual parking orders could be updated to allow the changes to the scheme to be implemented.

Environment Committee - 19.09.24

Concern was expressed that the Working Party had spent a lot of time working through the options and drawing up recommendations to the Committee, and it was felt the amendments undermined this process. The Group Head of Technical Services followed this by explaining some of the suggested amendments had been carefully considered by the Working Party, including being able to use the disc more than once per day, and had concluded they should not be included as the final recommendations.

The seconder to the amendment stated that he felt the extreme differential between £3 for the app and £10 for the physical disc was unfair, and he felt this would particularly impact the elderly population within the District. He felt quite a lot of people currently shopped in Bognor Regis or Littlehampton town centres because of the scheme. He thought that revisiting the pricing every year was tedious. Other Members expressed similar views, while some stated they were concerned about fixing the costs for three years.

With the agreement of the Committee, the Chair announced a 10 minute adjournment of the meeting.

Upon resumption of the meeting, Councillor Oppler agreed to alter his recommendations, taking into account the course of the debate and advice from Officers and these were read out by Officers and confirmed to be the following (additions shown in **bold**, deletions in ~~striketrough~~):

- a. To delegate authority to the Group Head of Technical Services to implement a single 2-hour free town centre parking disc scheme to incorporate both Littlehampton and Bognor Regis town centres, with the scheme to be administered in both Littlehampton and Bognor Regis by Arun District Council.
- b. To agree the differential pricing for virtual and physical parking discs, whereby the virtual parking disc is cheaper than the physical counterpart to encourage transition to the virtual scheme.
- c. To agree the retail price points for both the virtual and physical parking discs for 2025 from the options in 4.19. The recommended retail price for the virtual disc is **£4** and **£6** for the physical disc. ~~Thereafter decisions on the scheme are to be included within the Council's annual budget setting process, as with other tariffs.~~
- d. To delegate authority to the Group Head of Technical Services to make any necessary changes to the Council's Parking Orders and to take any other actions necessary to enable the scheme to take effect.
- e. **Card discs should be supplied to traders on a strictly sale or return basis.**

- f. To recommend to the Policy and Finance Committee that the retail price point (set out in c. above) should be fixed for a period of three years.**
- g. To recommend to the Policy and Finance Committee that the clause to use the disc and app only once per day should be removed.**

These amendments were read out twice in full. The Committee confirmed they understood the amendments and voted upon them separately, with each one being confirmed as CARRIED.

The Chair then returned to the substantive and it was agreed that no further debate was required.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

- a. Authority be delegated to the Group Head of Technical Services to implement a single 2-hour free town centre parking disc scheme to incorporate both Littlehampton and Bognor Regis town centres, with the scheme to be administered in both Littlehampton and Bognor Regis by Arun District Council.
- b. Differential pricing be agreed for virtual and physical parking discs, whereby the virtual parking disc is cheaper than the physical counterpart to encourage transition to the virtual scheme.
- c. The retail price points for both the virtual and physical parking discs for 2025 from the options in 4.19 be agreed, with the retail price for the virtual disc being £4 and £6 for the physical disc.
- d. Authority be delegated to the Group Head of Technical Services to make any necessary changes to the Council's Parking Orders and to take any other actions necessary to enable the scheme to take effect.
- e. Card discs should be supplied to traders on a strictly sale or return basis.

RECOMMEND TO THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE that

- f. The retail price point (set out in c. above) should be fixed for a period of three years.
- g. The clause to use the disc and app only once per day should be removed.

Environment Committee - 19.09.24

218. DRAFT FINAL OUT-TURN - 2023/24

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer presented the report, the purpose of which was to appraise the Environment Committee of its draft 2023/24 final out-turn, subject to external audit, against the 2023/24 budgets approved by Full Council at its meeting of 9 March 2023. There was an underspend of £956k, which was a positive shift of £617k from the £339k underspend reported in Quarter 3. The reasons for this were outlined in paragraphs 4.3 – 4.8. The Capital Programme showed an underspend, however the majority of this would be carried forward to the following year as slippage.

Members then had an opportunity to ask questions. Clarification was requested on '£258k overspend relating to specialist fee expenditure on the Keystone Centre' in paragraph 4.7. The Group Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer explained this needed to be read in conjunction with paragraph 4.5 that referred to a £250k variance on the Keystone Centre. He explained this related to a grant payment of £250k to Littlehampton Town Council, which was effectively revenue costs, funded by capital resources. Both £250k figures offset one another in the revenue budget.

Paragraph 4.4 stated £385k of salary savings were due to unfilled staff vacancies, and it was asked whether these positions would be filled. Officers confirmed they were trying to fill those vacancies.

The Committee noted the report.

219. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT TO 30 JUNE 2024

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer presented the report. The Quarter 1 forecast anticipated an underspend of £11k. He drew Members' attention to Table 2 in paragraph 4.2. He drew Members' attention to Table 3 in paragraph 4.6, and explained that whilst there appeared to be an overspend under Improvement & Discretionary Grants, this was not actually the case, as additional funding had been allocated from West Sussex County Council, so whilst more would be spent than budgeted for, more funding had been received.

Members then took part in a question and answer session and the following points were raised:

- It was asked whether the £1.58m under Improvement & Discretionary Grants came from West Sussex County Council. Officers confirmed this was transferred to Arun from West Sussex County Council, but the grant originated from central government.
- There was concern that the equipment provided to people under Disabled Facility Grants, was thrown away instead of being reissued to other users. The Group Head of Technical Services explained there had been a team in operation for a number of years who made improvements to how Disabled Facility Grants were issued, and they had sped up minor adaptations. The reuse of equipment

had been looked into by this team, but there were significant issues with this. He would provide the Councillor with further information on the work of this group across the County after the meeting.

The Committee noted the report.

220. BUDGET 2025/26 PROCESS

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer presented the report, which provided a summary of the budget process for 2025/26 for Members 'consideration and approval, noting that it was approved by the Policy & Finance Committee on 9 July 2024. It was expected that the budget process would be supported by ad hoc briefings to Members as and when necessary.

There were no questions from Members.

The Committee noted the report.

221. RIVER ROAD CAR PARK REVIEW

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Technical Services presented the report. River Road car park in Arundel had 14 spaces, and was around 50 metres from the larger Crown Yard Car Park. Prior to the closure, River Road car park operated as a seasonal permit car park only. It closed on 31 July 2023 to provide full access to the Environment Agency to enable them to carry out repairs to the river wall as part of the flood defence work. The Environment Agency had indicated that they expected to retain occupation of the car park until approximately mid-September 2024. In accordance with the Council's financial and car parking strategies, Officers had undertaken a review of its use. It had been identified that as a result of operating for seasonal permit use only, River Road car park generated just 7.6% income per bay of the neighbouring Crown Yard pay & display car park for the same period. A series of options had been consulted upon, and the Officer recommendation was to introduce a combination of both pay & display and leased bays, with effect from when the Environment Agency vacated the site. 10 spaces within the car park would become pay & display, while 4 spaces would be offered for lease.

The Item had been deferred from the previous meeting to allow Members to visit the car park and look at the concerns raised by Arundel Town Council, which were around making the road dangerous. The highway authority had been consulted and did not raise any objections. Arundel Town Council had also raised concerns about the estimates for the income from the lease of bays being unrealistic, however Officers felt the only way to determine what was achievable was to test the market. This option was expected to increase revenue from £2k to over £30k, and was considered to strike a balance between the needs of the residents and visitors to the town.

Environment Committee - 19.09.24

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Huntley and seconded by Councillor Bower.

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

- There was concern around pay & display spaces, as particularly in the summertime, people may be trying to find spaces and have to turn around.
- The report stated that the enforcement should be rigorously policed which was felt to be unrealistic. The Group Head of Technical Services explained that the Council would act consistently with regards to enforcement across all Arun car parks.
- It was asked whether the revenue that would be achieved through the sale of the site could be looked into. The Group Head of Technical Services explained that a review of the Council's assets would take time.
- It was asked whether more spaces be allocated as leased bays if they proved popular. The Group Head of Technical Services explained that any such decision would be brought to Committee.
- There was concern that consultants had been employed to assist with this. Officers confirmed the fee paid to the consultants was a fairly modest sum in relation to the cost of some consultants.
- It was asked how much the leased bays were expected to achieve. The Group Head of Technical Services explained that an exercise would be carried out to achieve the best price. Crown Yard car park obtained roughly £2.5k per space per annum, so a figure less than this would not be accepted.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

- 1) A combination of both pay & display and leased bays be introduced, with effect from when the Environment Agency vacate the site known as River Road car park, Arundel. 10 spaces within the car park would become pay & display, while 4 spaces would be offered for lease.
- 2) Authority be delegated to the Group Head of Technical Services to determine and implement the required amendments to the Parking Order.
- 3) Authority be delegated to the Group Head of Technical Services to determine the required terms and conditions within the leases and the appropriate methods of advertisement and sale.

222. ARUN FLOOD FORUM

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Flooding and Coastal Engineering Manager presented the report, which provided an update to Committee following the third meeting of the Arun Flood Forum held on 05 August 2024. He explained that following a round of introductions, each authority provided updates against the previous meetings actions. The Forum had then been presented with a cross organisation presentation featuring information from the Environment Agency, Southern Water, Arun District Council and West Sussex County Council. The Chair had then invited representatives of Flood Avoidance Community Taskforce (FACT) to provide an update on their work. A copy of the presentation and minutes of the meeting were attached to the Environment Committee agenda pack. The Flooding and Coastal Engineering Manager also highlighted that Committee were asked to note the proposed changes to the town and parish council representation on the Flood Forum in future.

Members then took part in a question and answer session and the following points were raised:

- The Flood Forum was praised and the Flooding and Coastal Engineering Manager was commended for his enthusiasm.
- It was requested that a press release go out after each meeting to keep residents informed of the progress. The Flooding and Coastal Engineering Manager agreed to ensure this happened.
- It was asked whether flooding from the river and flooding at Climping could be incorporated at the next meeting. The Flooding and Coastal Engineering Manager explained that although the Forum had initially been established to discuss the impact of Storm Ciaran, he thought both of these things could be discussed at the next Forum, as there were similar issues being encountered across the District.
- Paragraph 4.4 stated 'Southern Water confirmed that they will investigate if the Saltbox developments are in breach of their condition by discharging above the agreed rate', it was asked whether Committee would receive an update around this. The Flooding and Coastal Engineering Manager confirmed Committee would receive an update.

The Committee noted the report.

223. Q1 PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI'S) WHICH FORM PART OF THE COUNCIL'S VISION 2022-2026.

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Environment and Climate Change presented the report, which set out the performance of the Key Performance Indicators at Quarter 1 for the period 1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Huntley and seconded by Councillor Worne.

Environment Committee - 19.09.24

The Chair invited debate and one Member stated they were concerned about the recommended removal of CP37, CP38, CP39 and CP40 from the KPI list for Environment Committee, as believed these to be badly performing. The Group Head of Technical Services did not believe these to be poor performing. He explained there had been difficulties recruiting a qualified building control surveyor, however this vacancy had now been filled. Through the remarkable efforts of the team, the next day inspection target was still achieving 97%. CP39 was currently showing as red, however he believed this to be the least impactful of them. The Member accepted this.

Having noted the contents of the report

The Committee

RECOMMEND THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE that

1. that the removal of CP37, CP38, CP39 and CP40 from the KPI list for Environment Committee (para 4.8), be approved

224. OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Wallsgrove gave an update on the last meeting of the Sussex Bay Restoration Project which took place on 13 June 2024 [A copy of the full report has been uploaded to the Environment Committee pages of the Arun District Council website].

225. WORK PROGRAMME

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Technical Services presented the Work Programme, explaining that after publication of the agenda, the Economy Committee had made a recommendation to the Environment Committee around Beach Access, which would be brought to the next meeting.

Members were invited to ask questions. It was asked that documentation explaining why a site visit of the Ferring Rife car park would be taking place early the following year, be provided to Ward Members. The Group Head of Technical Services explained a full briefing would be provided to Ward Members nearer the time, and this was currently ongoing work.

The Group Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer confirmed the 'Budget Monitoring Report September 2024' would be added to the Work Programme for November, and the 'Budget Monitoring Report December 2024' and the '2025/26 Budget Proposals Report' to the January 2025 meeting.

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

(The meeting concluded at 8.47 pm)