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ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

15 June 2023 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Wallsgrove (Chair), Worne (Vice-Chair), Blanchard-Cooper, P. Bower, Brooks, Elkins, Greenway, Madeley, May and Wiltshire

Councillors Purser and Stanley were also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

67. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Warr.

68. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Greenway declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item 11 as a Member of West Sussex County Council.

Councillor Elkins declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item 11 as a Member of West Sussex County Council.

69. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2023 were approved by the Committee. These would be signed at the end of the meeting.

70. 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 confirmed that there were no urgent matters for this meeting.

71. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair confirmed that no questions had been submitted for this meeting.

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72. START TIMES

The Committee

RESOLVED

That its start times for meetings for 2023/24 be 6.00pm.

73. PLAY AREA IMPROVEMENT 2023/24

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Principal Landscape Officer presented the report to the Committee. The report provided a summary of the proposed projects which had been identified for improvement under the new capital programme. These were Lion's Den, Brookfield Adventure and Bluebell play areas in Littlehampton. The process of delivering these projects would follow the same steps as other schemes, and consultation would be carried out to establish what the public would like to see included. The result of this consultation would be used to produce the design brief for each play area. Companies would then be invited to submit designs and costs for these and the highest scoring tender would be appointed following evaluation. Further information was set out in the report and the recommendations linked to the procurement and delivery of the schemes.

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

- The summary for Brookfield Adventure mentioned 'mobility and those in wheelchairs, to ensure that equipment can be accessed from a seated or standing position', however this was not included in the Lions Den summary. Would accessible play equipment be included at Lions Den as well? The Principal Landscape Officer explained this was an omission in the report and it would be something they would be looking for within all the designs.
- It was asked what sensory play equipment meant, and an answer was provided by the Principal Landscape Officer.
- Recommendation 2.3 mentioned delegation of authority to Officers to increase the contract value and it was asked what was meant by additional funding. The Principal Landscape Officer explained no additional funding was expected, however on occasions Parish Councils came forward with additional funding, and the recommendation enabled the project to continue rather than wait for Committee approval.
- A query was raised on the figures for the costings, which was answered by the Principal Landscape Officer.

Councillor Greenway proposed an amendment to the third recommendation as follows (additions have been shown in **bold**):

Delegate authority to Officers, **in conjunction with the Chair of the Environment Committee**, to increase the contract value(s) at recommendation 2 should additional funding become available ahead of, during, or following the procurement process.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Elkins and following a vote was declared CARRIED.

Turning to the substantive, the question and answer session resumed as follows:

- Were the 2015 regulations mentioned in the report the most current? The Principal Landscape Officer confirmed they were.
- 14.1 said Contractors would be required to provide evidence of their environmental sustainability policies, including any carbon impact footprints. Was this really necessary? The Principal Landscape Officer explained that the Council was looking at its carbon footprint and working towards becoming carbon neutral, and although this could be challenging for contractors, it was important that it was encouraged.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Greenway and seconded by Councillor Blanchard-Cooper.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

- 1) The drawdown and expenditure of £205K funding allocated from the capital play budget plus any other partnership funding that may be made available to carry out improvements at Lion's Den, Brookfield Adventure and Bluebell play areas and deliver an objective from the Council's play strategy 2018-2028, be approved.
- 2) A procurement process be undertaken for design and build contracts and to enter into contract(s) for up to £205K (subject to recommendation 3) with preferred bidder(s) in order to carry out play area improvements at Lion's Den, Brookfield Adventure and Bluebell play areas, be approved.
- 3) Authority be delegated to Officers, in conjunction with the Chair of the Environment Committee, to increase the contract value(s) at recommendation 2 should additional funding become available ahead of, during, or following the procurement process.

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74. PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDERS FOR DOGS

[Councillor Elkins declared a Personal Interest during discussion of this item as a Member of Ferring Parish Council and West Sussex County Council]

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Environmental Health Team Manager presented the report to Committee. This report sought approval to commence public consultation on proposals to extend the current Public Space Protection Orders for Dogs (PSPOs), which would expire on 5 November 2023, for a further three years until 2026. A further report would be presented to the Environment Committee on 7 September detailing the outcome of the consultation, with recommendations regarding renewal of the existing PSPO and any other changes or amendments advised. Internal consultation had identified potential minor amendments to the current PSPO in relation to dogs on leads which were detailed in the report.

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

- Was there a set standard for the distance the signage should be placed when a PSPO was in place? The Environmental Health Team Manager stated that signage had been reviewed three years ago, but he would be happy for this to be reviewed again after the public consultation, and Members could be included in this.
- Could the area with beach huts on the seafront at Felpham be included in this to stipulate dogs must be on leads? The Environmental Health Team Manager would take this away and look into it.
- Support was offered for the report.
- It was asked what the enforcement process was and how members of the public could report concerns. The Environmental Health Team Manager explained there was a contract with East Hampshire District Council who undertook enforcement of the dog controls, and options included fixed penalty notices and prosecution. Members of the public with concerns could report this to the cleansing team, who could arrange targeted enforcement.
- The area outside schools was discussed. The Environmental Health Team Manager explained conditions in the PSPO must be evidence based, and there had not been concerns raised regarding outside schools so far in the internal consultation, but this may change in the public consultation.
- Why was land used for agriculture or forestry not included under fouling of land? The Environmental Health Team Manager gave an explanation.
- One Member had concerns around Hotham Park, and wanted to make sure there was still space for dogs to play there. The Environmental Health Team Manager explained it was the addition of the Discovery Garden that was being looked at for inclusion in the PSPO.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Blanchard-Cooper and seconded by Councillor Elkins.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the undertaking of public consultation on proposals to renew the current PSPO for the control of dogs for a further three years, be approved.

75. BATHING WATER QUALITY

[Councillor Brooks declared a Personal Interest during discussion of this item as his business used LED signs]

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Environmental Health Team Manager presented the report to Committee, which provided an update on the actions taken to investigate and address the causes of the Poor bathing water classification for the Bognor Regis Aldwick, and the progress of the Bognor Regis (Aldwick) Bathing Water Quality Partnership Group.

At present there was no clear link between the elevated sample results seen in 2022 and operation of storm overflows for Bognor Regis Aldwick, and initial investigations had been focused on identifying misconnections. 5 misconnections had so far been identified and addressed, including one toilet misconnection, but investigations were still ongoing. Routine bathing water samples would continue to be taken by the Environment Agency (EA) during the bathing season, as part of the bathing water classifications process. DNA analysis would be considered should high results be found which would give further insight into potential sources of contamination. The Bathing Water Regulations 2013 required Local Authorities, during the bathing season, to display information at each designated bathing water detailing the classification, and at Aldwick advise against swimming. As part of Arun's participation in the short-term pollution risk forecasting (PRF) scheme, additional signage was also required to be displayed when a PRF was issued. PRFs were issued during the season at Aldwick, Littlehampton, Felpham and Bognor Regis East. This currently involved manually displaying signage and could mean delays in information being provided to the public due to the time taken to reach each location and post the required signage. Automated signage would eliminate the need to manually place hand-written signs at each location when a PRF was issued, and mean information and any advice against swimming would be available in real-time. There were costs associated with this. Southern Water had indicated their intentions were to provide funding for the majority of the costs of installation of two of the signs.

Councillor Blanchard-Cooper proposed an amendment to the second recommendation as follows (additions have been shown in **bold**):

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The Environment Committee support the installation of automated bathing water signage at Aldwick, Littlehampton, Felpham, and Bognor Regis East **and asks Officers to return to Southern Water seeking funding for signage at all four locations.**

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Madeley and a short debate took place. It was asked whether it should be stipulated that the signage be solar powered. The Environmental Health Team Manager explained both options were being looked at and it was important the best option was chosen. The Group Head of Technical Services also explained the electricity purchased by the Council was from renewable sources. It was also asked whether the Committee would have any say in what signage was used. The Environmental Health Team Manager explained this would be an operational decision.

Following a vote the amendment was declared CARRIED.

Turning to the substantive, Members and a non-Committee Member given permission to speak, took part in a question and answer session as follows:

- What did it mean that DNA analysis would be considered? The Environmental Health Team Manager explained the EA funded the DNA analysis and they were submitted routinely in certain circumstances, however they could not commit to doing this every time.
- There was a discussion around what information the signs would actually display, and whether they could be used for other things such as temperature, and images. The Environmental Health Team Manager confirmed the intention was for the wording to be the same as that showing on the manual signs currently posted when PRF were issued.
- The report mentioned there was no clear link between samples and storm overflows, could this be an anomaly? The Environmental Health Team Manager explained there was a pattern where higher results were typically seen after the beginning of July and at the end of the season, however modelling for 2022 showed no definitive link to storm releases and so unlikely to be an anomaly. Investigations were ongoing.
- Would information appear on the signs in real time? The Environmental Health Team Manager confirmed this would be the case.
- Had Ward Members' involvement in Bognor Regis (Aldwick) Bathing Water Quality Partnership Group been positive? The Environmental Health Team Manager explained that the additional knowledge Ward Members brought to the Group regarding residents' opinions had been beneficial.
- Would DNA testing definitely be carried out? The Environmental Health Team Manager was confident this would happen.
- Could information from the Beach Buoy app be integrated into the information displayed by the signage? The Environmental Health Team Manager explained that there was a recommendation for the EA previously to integrate this into their modelling and he would raise this at the next meeting of the Bognor Regis (Aldwick) Bathing Water Quality Partnership Group.

- It was asked that Members be provided with the details of the signage as soon as possible.
- The data provided by the EA from May onwards so far looked positive. If the data continued on this trend, was it likely that there would be a reclassification to 'good' instead of 'poor' this year? The Environmental Health Team Manager explained the results and classification were based on information gathered over a four year period, so it was unlikely this could jump straight back up to an 'excellent' this year. It was a question that could be asked at the Bognor Regis (Aldwick) Bathing Water Quality Partnership Group.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Greenway and seconded by Councillor Bower.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

1. The Environment Committee note the progress of the Bognor Regis (Aldwick) Bathing Water Quality Partnership Group and investigations into the Poor bathing water classification at Bognor Regis Aldwick.
2. The Environment Committee support the installation of automated bathing water signage at Aldwick, Littlehampton, Felpham, and Bognor Regis East and asks Officers to return to Southern Water seeking funding for signage at all four locations.

76. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2022-2026 - QUARTER 4 END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2022 TO 31 MARCH 2023.

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Technical Services introduced the report to Committee. The Key Performance indicators (KPIs) were measures of operational performance. The same indicators would be measured each year for the four year period to allow for comparison and trends to be measured both in-year and between years. Some of these KPIs were new this year so comparisons with the previous year were not available. Each Committee had its own indicators which would give them specific relevant information for that Committee and were mainly reported quarterly. The Policy and Finance Committee was responsible for overseeing performance across the Council and received the full KPI report for all Committees.

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions, and these are summarised as follows:

- CP23 – Was residual waste the household waste that was not recycled? This was confirmed correct.

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- CP39 (Building Control Applications) – An update was requested. The Group Head of Technical Services explained they were striving to fill the vacancy which was proving to be very challenging given the recognised national skills shortage. There were currently efforts underway to secure temporary agency workers. The volume of site visit requests was also currently extremely high.
- It was suggested the KPIs could show an arrow (pointing up or down) next to each one to help provide a visual picture for the Committee as to whether the performance in each area was going up or down. This suggestion would be passed to the Group Head of Organisational Excellence, the author or the report.

The Committee noted the report.

77. COUNCIL VISION 2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT

[Councillor Greenway declared a Personal Interest during discussion of this item as a member of Friends of Bersted Brooks and a member of Bersted Parish Council. He also redeclared his Personal Interest in the Item as a Member of West Sussex County Council]

[Councillor Blanchard-Cooper declared a Personal Interest during discussion of this item as a member of Friends of Mewsbrook Park]

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Technical Service introduced the report to the Committee. He explained the Council Vision for the period 2022- 26 had been developed with Councillors at a series of workshops and then agreed by Full Council. It set out goals and would guide decision making for this period. The Vision was divided into 4 key themes: improving the wellbeing of Arun; delivering the right homes in the right places; supporting our environment to support us; fulfilling Arun's economic potential. There were overall aims for each of these themes and some specific objectives to be achieved over the four year period. These were strategic and longer term objectives. Some of them may be changed or added to as priorities changed. The Policy and Finance Committee were responsible for overseeing performance across the Council . The annual report (appendix 2) set out progress against these objectives. It was intended as a useful and informative report for all Members which would give an overview of progress in all areas of the Council. These were grouped by Council Vision theme, rather than Committee.

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions, summarised as follows:

- CV24 (tree planting) – Was there more we could do to attract private investment and working with Parish Councils to get more trees in the ground? The Group Head of Environment and Climate Change explained this was set out in the Tree

Planting Strategy, and they were always looking at additional ways to get funding.

- CV32 – How could we build a better working relationship with West Sussex County Council to better work together to achieve our goals. This question was not within the remit of the Committee, and the Group Head of Technical Services would take it away to consult with the relevant Group Head.
- CV27 and CV28 – Had the roles of Sustainability Officer and Ecologist been filled? The Group Head of Environment and Climate Change confirmed the role of the Sustainability Officer had been filled, and interviews had recently been held for the role of Ecologist.
- CV24 – Could figures be provided on the survival rates of the trees being planted, as it was felt whips may not survive as well as standard trees? The Group Head of Environment and Climate Change explained that in his experience, planting whip trees was very successful, sometimes more so than standard trees. Of the 8000 trees planted in Brookfield Park, there was a 95% survival rate, and he would be happy to report back on survival rates in the future.
- CV5 – Adopt Public Arts Strategy – One Member Considered this to be a priority and expressed concern regarding the lack of indoor space for art in Bognor Regis, the adequacy of public performance spaces in the District and wished to see progress on adopting a public art strategy, including performance art and sculpture. This matter was not in the remit of the Committee and the Group Head of Technical Services would feed this back to the relevant Director.
- CV25 (coastal defence) – Would the results of annual inspections of sea defences be provided to this Committee? The Group Head of Technical Services explained these records were operational and did not come back to Committee, they were used to monitor the performance and condition of assets, identifying where works needed to be carried out in the short and longer terms.
- CV7 – Should this be removed from the indicators? The Group Head of Technical Services explained this would be a matter for the Policy and Finance Committee to consider.
- It was suggested that in future there was some sort of indicator showing the Committee which areas of the report they had responsibility for. The Group Head of Technical Services would feed this back to the report author.

The Committee noted the report.

78. OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no updates from Members regarding Outside Bodies.

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79. WORK PROGRAMME

The Group Head of Environment and Climate Change presented the Work Programme to the Committee. He gave a brief update on work around Beach Access, a full update on which was on the Work Programme for November. He updated that surveys of the ramps in Bognor Regis had been carried out, two of which had been identified and cleared of shingle. These were the ramps at Gloucester Road and at Felpham, adjacent to the sailing club. Questions regarding the progress of Beach Access were asked by Members, which would be provided after the meeting by the Group Head of Environment and Climate Change.

It was asked why there was currently nothing on the Work Programme for the March meeting. The Group Head of Technical Services explained that this was an evolving Programme, and there were already additional Items that he was aware of to be added to the Programme for later in the municipal year.

One Member noted that there was no mention of cemeteries on the Work Programme, and there was concern relating to memorial safety. The Group Head of Environment and Climate Change would take this up after the meeting and discuss with the Chair.

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

(The meeting concluded at 7.34 pm)