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ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

17 November 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Edwards (Chair), Goodheart, Huntley, Chace, Warr, Worne, Thurston, Cooper (Substitute for English), Cooper (Substitute for Staniforth) and Stanley (Substitute for Needs)

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

[Note: Councillor Goodheart was absent from the meeting during items 439 - 443]

439. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Councillors English, Needs, Staniforth and Bicknell.

440. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

441. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2021 were approved by the Committee. These would be signed at the end of the meeting.

442. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair confirmed that no questions were submitted for this meeting.

443. OUTSIDE BODIES

No Outside Bodies reports had been received, although the Chair advised that he and Cllr Stanley had been to the Bognor Regis Regeneration Board Forum Meeting the previous evening. The Chair would circulate a report to the Committee Members in due course.

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444. ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL'S GREEN SPACE TREE PLANTING STRATEGY 2021 - 2031

[Councillor Goodheart arrived during this item]

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Environmental Services & Strategy Manager introduced his report to the Committee. He explained this strategy was for Arun District Council's (ADC) own parks and open spaces and did not extend to land beyond ADC's control. He felt the proposal was a perfect balance between ambition and deliverability, and a huge amount of work had been put into the planning and development of the strategy and planting plan by the expert Tree Officer and the Parks Officers. The proposal was to plant 33,000 whips and 500 standard trees as a minimum. 90% of the standard trees would be native species, and the whip trees would be 100% native species. This would be phased over 10 years. The planting plans and species list would be published each year on the Council's website for information. There would also be at least 2 community tree planting events each year.

Members then took part in a question and answer session as summarised below:

- Clarification was sought on the number of trees that would be planted each year, and whether a regular update would be provided to the Committee. The Environmental Services & Strategy Manager explained they were expecting to plant around 60 standard trees and 2,000-3,000 whips in the first year. It was expected to average approximately 50 standard trees and 3500 whips each year.
- Expectation of survival rates for the whips. The Environmental Services & Strategy Manager said there would be a proactive after-care programme for 3 years.
- The reason for non-native species being introduced. The Environmental Services & Strategy Manager explained there was a place for non-native trees, some of which may be the trees of the future.
- The reasons for established trees being removed. It was confirmed that established trees would only be removed for very good reason such as being dead or dying.
- It was noted that there was no tree planting planned for Pagham. This was due to Arun District Council not owning much open space in Pagham, so no opportunity to do so.
- Would there be an opportunity for community groups to work with ADC, and for ADC to procure trees on their behalf. The Environmental Services & Strategy Manager said there would be opportunities for community groups to get involved. A discussion would need to be had with any groups wishing to plant on Arun's land, as this would need to fit with the Strategy. If Officers were in agreement with the proposals, they would be able to procure trees on behalf of community groups for this purpose.
- The Queens Canopy was a great opportunity to create a legacy for the residents, and it was asked that this be fully explained, and that community involvement be sought when building up the interpretation of what this would look like.

- Clarification was sought on the budget for the programme.
- Members were keen on the idea of tree-lined avenues, however noted this was under West Sussex County Council's remit.
- Concern was raised over the large number of whips due to be planted in West Park. The Environmental Services & Strategy Manager reassured Members that the planting would be appropriate to the location and would not interfere with how the site was used on a daily basis.
- Members welcomed the report, and sent thanks to the Environmental Services & Strategy Manager and his team.

The recommendation was Proposed by Councillor Andy Cooper and Seconded by Councillor Huntley.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the proposed Arun Greenspace Tree Planting Strategy 2021-2031 and associated planting plan be approved and adopted.

445. OFF-STREET PARKING STRATEGY 2021 - 2026

Upon the invitation of the Chair the Group Head of Neighbourhoods and the Customer & Parking Services Manager introduced the report to the Committee. They explained the vision in the Strategy which set out some key themes – to provide safe, well-maintained car parks; meeting the needs of residents, shoppers and visitors; providing an income for the Council and supporting economic growth; promoting a sustainable environment and creating a positive parking experience. It looked at the emerging new technologies and opportunities. There was a summary list of actions on Page 48 and 49. These actions picked up work already underway, but also new actions such as installation of electronic charging points and on all ticket machines being contactless by 2024.

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

- It was felt the Strategy met the aims of what it was intended for.
- It was good that climate change and sustainability were included, tree planting in car parks and sustainable surfacing alternatives would be welcomed.
- The progress around electric parking and charging was welcomed.
- Whilst contactless technology was welcomed there was concern by Members about the prospect of complete removal of cash by 2024.
- Could consideration be given to the locations of disabled bays, as it may be that not all needed to be placed at the front of the car parks as proximity wasn't always the issue for disabled users. It may be that other priority bays could be considered in addition.

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Following further debate regarding contactless payments and the removal of cash, the recommendation, and with the addition of 'all pay and display machines to be contactless and accept cash' was Proposed by Councillor Stanley. This was Seconded by Councillor Huntley.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the Councils Off-Street Parking Strategy 2021-2026 as shown on Appendix A, with the addition of 'all pay and display machines to be contactless and accept cash', be adopted

446. VARIATION TO PARKING CHARGES

[During this item Cllr Chace declared a Personal Interest as Chairman of Friends of Brookfield Park]

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Customer & Parking Services Manager introduced his report to the Committee. He explained that each year the Council was required to review its discretionary charges, which included parking charges. The report identified a set of proposed increases in parking charges plus a proposal to introduce charges in a number of car parks that currently had no charging regime. He clarified that 5.2 in the report, which stated that parking for the first hour in the car parks in which they propose to introduce charging, would be free, this would be the case with regard to Bersted Brooks and Brookfield Park, but in the case of Links Avenue, Grassmere and Shrubbs Field this would in fact be 2 hours free parking as shown on Appendix A. He also clarified that where it said 'estimated income' on Appendix A, it should actually refer to 'additional estimated income'. After completing the consultation, a report would be brought back to the Committee in March, for Members to make a decision on the charges.

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

- It was right to put this out for consultation and encourage members of the community to provide thoughts on the direction they thought the Council should take.
- It was asked whether it would be explained in the consultation documents what the income from the increase in charges would be used for. The Group Head of Neighbourhoods explained that this could be promoted across the Council's social media platforms.
- It was asked whether Friends of Bersted Brooks should be added to the list of consultees. The Customer & Parking Services Manager confirmed the Friends of Bersted Brooks would be added.

Councillor Chace declared a personal interest as Chairman of Friends of Brookfield Park. He asked that Friends of Brookfield Park also be added to the list of consultees.

The recommendation was Proposed by Councillor Andy Cooper and Seconded by Councillor Chace.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the proposed charges as set out in Appendix A be put out for consultation after which a report will be returned to Committee for final approval.

447. FUEL POVERTY FRAMEWORK

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Principal Environmental Health Officer introduced her report to the Committee. She explained that Fuel Poverty was a complex public health issue and was not the responsibility of just one agency or organisation. The West Sussex Fuel Poverty Coordinator, hosted by Arun District Council, was an externally funded post. The framework document attached to the report brought together all the actions for the coming 5 years across the County. The aim was that it would be possible to support funding bids going forward and to engage with a range of other organisations to develop initiatives.

There were no questions from Members

The recommendation was Proposed by Councillor Andy Cooper and Seconded by Councillor Stanley.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the West Sussex Fuel Poverty Framework for Action 2021-2026 be adopted.

448. EMPTY PROPERTY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Principal Environmental Health Officer introduced her report to the Committee. She explained the Council was committed to tackling empty properties in the private sector, and there was an approved 5-year strategy that came into place in 2018. The report aimed to highlight all the work and achievement in this area, including the improvements this could make to

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neighbourhoods. Properties could be empty for a number of reasons, and work was carried out with the owners to try to understand the reasons and ensure they were brought back into use. There was an approved Empty Property Assistance Programme which provided funding for grants and loans, helping to finance repairs to properties to bring them up to standard. The fund was also used for enforcement work when necessary. More could be done and they were looking to learn from good practice from other local authorities. They were trying to increase awareness and also partnership working. Additional resources were required to support the current full-time Empty Homes Officer.

Members felt Arun District Council performed well with regards to Empty Homes, and thanked the Group Head of Technical Services, the Principal Environmental Health Officer, and the Empty Homes Officer for their work. It was felt that one of the reasons this worked so well was due to the delegations given to the Officers.

The recommendations (with amended Committee names to reflect the recent change) were Proposed by Councillor Stanley and Seconded by Councillor Alison Cooper.

The Committee

RESOLVED

1. that authority be delegated to the Group Head of Technical Services to make changes resulting from identified good practise and legislative changes to the Empty Property Assistance Programme, grants and loans criteria.

RECOMMEND TO THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

2. that growth of £17,523 be included in the 2022-2023 revenue budget, to recruit on scale 4, an additional part time Technical Support Assistant for 23hrs per week to support and enhance the empty homes work.

449. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE RESIDENTIAL AND WELLBEING SERVICES COMMITTEE - 30 SEPTEMBER 2021

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Technical Services introduced the recommendations from the meeting of the Residential & Wellbeing Services Committee (which was now named Housing and Wellbeing Committee).

There were no questions from Members

The recommendations were Proposed by Councillor Chace and Seconded by Councillor Stanley.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

1. A review be undertaken of the incentives and services we (could) offer property owners to increase engagement with our Empty Homes Team and support tenant management issues and misconceptions.
2. A review be undertaken of how we promote our Empty Homes service and how we communicate success stories.

450. ANNUAL ENGINEERING SERVICE REVIEW

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Engineering Services Manager introduced his report to the Committee. He highlighted and explained key areas in the report including climate change; the South East Coastal Group; partnership funding; coastal monitoring; Pagham Beach; Climping Beach; revenue works; capital works; land drainage; drainage plans.

The Chair thanked the Engineering Services Manager for his concise and very informative report, and for all the excellent work that he and his team had done for the District.

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

- What was the long-term solution to the flood risk in Climping. The Engineering Services Manager explained that this was not the responsibility of ADC, however they do work closely with the Environment Agency (EA). The work the EA was doing was working well, however there was an issue of cost, the area was attacked by both the open coast and the river. All the work that was being done was in line with the Coastal Defence Strategy developed by the Council and EA.
- Members further acknowledged the good work done by the Engineering Services Manager and his team.
- Funding coming from the Government for the Council to do Resilience work. The Engineering Services Manager confirmed that the funding for this term would be approximately double that of last term.
- Clarification was sought around some of the figures and terminology in the report.

The recommendation (with amended Committee names to reflect the recent change) was Proposed by Councillor Andy Cooper and Seconded by Councillor Huntley.

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The Committee

RECOMMEND TO THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

- 1) additional resources of £40,000, in the Coast Protection Revenue Budget commencing in 2022/23 and for a further 4 years thereafter, to allow for shingle management works associated with West Beach and other beaches e.g. East Beach, Littlehampton.
- 2) a £180,000 contribution to the Community Flood Fund in 2022/23 and a further £100,000 in 2023/24, to enable required Partnership Contributions to continue.

RESOLVED

- 3) that the Engineering Services Manager be authorised to undertake the necessary preparatory work relating to the new Capital schemes, to make Grant in Aid funding applications to the Environment Agency accordingly and to receive and draw down related funds.

451. BOGNOR REGIS BEACH ACCESS WORKING PARTY

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Engineering Services Manager introduced his report to the Committee.

Councillor Stanley proposed an amendment to the recommendations, which was that 1 (f) would be changed to 'Chair of the Working Party: Cllr Worne'. This was seconded by Councillor Thurston.

Following a brief discussion Councillor Stanley, with the agreement of the meeting and the Seconder, altered his amendment to 1 (f) to 'the Chair of the Working Party would be elected at its first meeting'.

Following a vote, the altered amendment was CARRIED.

Councillor Stanley proposed an additional amendment to the recommendations, which was that 2 (a) would be changed to 'An invitation be extended to Bognor Regis Town Council Access Group for **three** representatives to join the Working Party (without voting rights)'. This was seconded by Councillor Thurston.

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

- There were people with varying mobility requirements that were part of the Bognor Regis Town Council Access Group, and extending the invitation to an additional person would help to gain varying views.
- Increasing the size of the Working Party could make it too large and make it difficult to make progress.

- Opinions from people living outside of Bognor should also be taken into consideration as people from across the District would travel to the site.
- The Working Party needed to look objectively at making the beach accessible.
- The Working Party should be kept small and the representatives could feed in the views of other people.
- Increasing the Working Party by one person would not make it much larger, but it would be good to have the views of other people.
- The Working Party was put together by the Group Leaders who consulted with Members.
- If Membership of the Working Party was not increased, they could invite guests to input and give opinions.

The amendment was put to the vote and there being an equality of votes, the Chair used his casting vote against the amendment, which was LOST.

The substantive recommendations (with amended Committee names to reflect the recent change) were Proposed by Councillor Edwards and Seconded by Councillor Chace.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

1. The establishment of a Bognor Regis Beach Access Working Party be supported based on the following terms:
 - (a) Terms of Reference – to consider the issues surrounding the provision of an access to the beach for the disabled and elderly persons in Bognor Regis and to examine the options available for such an access
 - (b) To determine what part of the beach to improve access to (waterline or shingle etc) and to consider options for geographic location
 - (c) The Working Party will report to Environment Committee,
 - (d) Size of the Working Party – 6 Arun District Councillor seats with two further seats (without voting rights) to be offered to the Bognor Regis Town Council Access Group.
 - (e) Nominations to the seats – Cllrs Worne, Needs, Brooks, Staniforth, Edwards and English - to be confirmed by the relevant Group Leaders immediately if the proposal is accepted by Environment Committee.
 - (f) The Chair of the Working Party would be elected at its first meeting
 - (g) Proposals for the allocation of seats if vacancies occur – to be for the relevant Group Leader / Bognor Regis Town Council Access Group to fill the vacant seat as appropriate and this information to be reported this to the next Environment Committee meeting
 - (h) The Working Party will take the form of a Task & Finish exercise and conclude in not more than 12 months from the date of the first meeting.

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- (i) Timescale for the work to be undertaken – the first meeting of the Working Party will be in Spring 2022 with the site visit timed appropriately for sufficient daylight at around the time of Low Water.
 - (j) Presentation(s) will be made by officers as soon as possible to enable the Council to progress with any recommendations it supports.
- 2.
- (a) An invitation be extended to Bognor Regis Town Council Access Group for two representatives to join the Working Party (without voting rights)
 - (b) The suggestion be made to Bognor Regis Town Council Access Group that Cllr Goodheart be one of the two Group representatives should they choose to accept the invitation – this and the second representative to be confirmed by Bognor Regis Town Council Access Group.
 - (c) Review its terms of reference at its first meeting or thereafter and recommend any change back to Environment Committee
 - (d) Make any recommendations to Environment Committee based on the Terms of Reference – it will have no decision-making authority
 - (e) Meet in private unless it agrees that it will work to the Meeting Procedure Rules at Part 5 of the Council’s Constitution. Meetings will be held virtually until such time as the Working Party considers that ‘in person’ meetings are appropriate and then they shall be held in Bognor Regis Town Hall; and
3. Consideration be given as to how to approach similar issues in other locations if they have not already been resolved

452. WORK PROGRAMME

The Group Head of Technical Services updated Members on the Work Programme.

It was raised that the Sussex Nature Partnership could be invited to a Member Briefing to provide an update, which it was felt Members would find very interesting.

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

(The meeting concluded at 8.30 pm)