

MINUTES of a meeting of the POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held in the Board Room, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 1 JUNE 2016

Present: Councillor M Specht (Chairman)

Councillors R Adams (Substitute for Councillor T Eynon), R Ashman (Substitute for Councillor D Harrison), N Clarke, J Cotterill, J Geary, G Houlton, V Richichi, A C Saffell and N Smith

In Attendance: Councillors F Fenning and J Legrys

Officers: Mr J Bright, Ms C E Fisher, Mr A Hunkin, Mr J Richardson and Mrs R Wallace

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T Eynon and D Harrison.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

3. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

No questions were received.

4. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2016.

It was moved by Councillor J Geary, seconded by Councillor N Smith and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2016 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The Chairman welcomed the Leader of the Council, Councillor R Blunt, to the meeting as an invited guest of the Committee. He also announced a change in item order on the agenda and brought forward item 6.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCRUTINY AT NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Chairman reminded Members of the discussion had at the previous meeting regarding the effectiveness of scrutiny and that the Leader of the Council, Councillor R Blunt was in attendance to discuss the matter with the Committee as requested. The Chairman invited Councillor R Blunt to address the committee.

Councillor R Blunt thanked the Committee for his invitation as he believed scrutiny was a very important issue. He went on to say that the scrutiny needed to be Member lead and it was for the committee to decide what to scrutinise rather than being told by officers, that way Members would get more from it. He explained that after he was made aware of the concerns from the Committee he took a number of steps to address them. He introduced Andrew Hunkin, the interim Director of Resources who would be the single point of contact for the Policy Development Group and had direct responsibility. He also explained that after discussion with the Labour Group Leader, it was decided to appoint

Chairman's initials

Councillor J Geary as their Scrutiny Lead Member, who would work with the Chairman and the Interim Director of Resources to move things forward.

Councillor J Geary explained that he raised the issue at the previous meeting because he had read an article about the role of scrutiny and it referred to it as being 'a talking shop' and 'toothless'. He felt that it sounded familiar and that the Cabinet did not listen to the views of the Committee. He gave a number of examples of matters that he believed should have been scrutinised but were missed including the closure of Snibston Discovery Park and the Council Offices move that did not occur. He concluded that it was imperative for the Council to have a good scrutiny system and he felt it was currently failing. He was looking forward to seeing the outcomes of the initial changes made by the Leader to improve the process of scrutinising.

Councillor R Blunt stressed that the article Councillor J Geary mentioned did not refer to North West Leicestershire. He valued the time committed by Members to scrutiny and agreed that issues such as Snibston Discovery Park should have been scrutinised. He added that if there was a particular issue that Members would like further information on, for example the proposed office move that did not come into fruition, he was happy for Members to contact him for further discussion and any information he could share, he would. He believed the decisions made by Cabinet should be scrutinised and encouraged Members to do so. He referred to Leicestershire County Council's process as the Cabinet was scrutinised by all parties and he enjoyed it. He referred to the role of Lead Scrutiny Member and assured that with regular briefings with the Interim Director of Resources improvements would be made.

Councillor J Clarke stressed that transparency was vital and he believed that the committee could work together without politics. He added that the Coalville Project was an example of good cross party working and of what was achievable. Councillor R Blunt agreed that transparency was crucial and that good communication was important. As Members, they were there to represent the public and pass information on to them. Working together across political parties was important to him. He thanked Councillor J Clarke for his positivity.

Councillor R Blunt left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

6. WASTE SERVICES RECYCLING PERFORMANCE AND TARGETS UPDATE

The Head of Community Services presented the report to Members highlighting how recycling performance was measured, comparisons with other local authorities in Leicestershire and issues that affect recycling levels. He explained that North West Leicestershire was not a poor performing authority and that statistics provided evidence of that, but he assured Members that he would still continue to make improvements to the service and referred Members to the next steps as detailed within the report. He added that the Leicestershire Waste Partnership was looking at the recycling of food waste but it was in the very early stages and not near implementation yet.

Councillor A C Saffell felt that there was a problem with the way household recycling was monitored and gave himself as an example. As he lived by himself he did not put his bin out for every collection as it often was not full, therefore it could look like he did not recycle. The Waste Services Development Officer explained that waste was monitored over three collections and an average was taken, this was due to households not always presenting their bins. He added that demographics were also used when making comparisons and then particular areas could be targeted; the current area being looked at was Greenhill.

Councillor N Smith asked what was being done about people who refused to recycle as he was aware that they could not fine individuals. He referred to a resident in his ward that had refused to move away from solid fuel and as it generated a lot of waste, asked if there was any kind of allowance available to encourage people to move away from solid fuel. He also added that he had a food cone in his garden which was excellent which he obtained from Leicestershire County Council. The Head of Community Services confirmed that the Council could not impose fines for not recycling but they did focus on educating people and targeting the lower performing areas. He reported that officers go into schools to educate the children on recycling and this has proven to be a good way of getting the message across. Regarding any kind of allowance to move away from solid fuel, the Head of Community Services was not aware of anything but would look into it.

Councillor N Clarke thanked officers for the amount of time spent on trying to improve recycling performance as he could see that a lot of work was being undertaken but he still had concerns that targets were not being reached. He understood that the District's solid fuel waste was higher than most but when compared with South Derbyshire District Council which was very similar, their performance was better. The Head of Community Services explained that South Derbyshire District Council mixed green waste with food waste which was why they achieved better targets. Unfortunately, North West Leicestershire District Council could not do this as the refuse site was an open facility which would encourage vermin. In response to a further question from Councillor N Clarke, the Head of Community Services explained that food waste was not included within the future steps as it was reliant on the Leicestershire Partnership due to the financial implications.

Councillor N Clarke commented that the report suggested that the reduction in recycling credits would make an impact and asked if it would also affect the targets. The Head of Community Services explained that the District no longer received credits for garden waste as Leicestershire County Council had directed how they wanted the waste removed. Discussions were currently being had regarding dry waste and if the decision was made to direct the District as to the removal of this also, it would result in the loss of further credits as well as the income received from source separating. If this happened the Council would need to look at the benefits that could be gained from co-mingling recyclable materials.

The Waste Services Development Officer agreed to keep Councillor N Clarke informed of any targeting activities happening in Greenhill as it was his ward and he wanted to go along.

Councillor Ashman asked for the decision timescale on the credits for dry waste collections and food waste recycling. The Head of Community Services reported that the credit issue should be decided by September and the food waste collection was an ongoing issue as it was reliant on the Leicestershire Waste Partnership.

Regarding the solid fuel waste, Councillor J Geary felt that the Council should be putting pressure on the service providers to install a gas supply to the rural areas as it did not only produce waste but was expensive and inconvenient. The Head of Community Services suggested that as the issue seemed important to Members then in accordance with the Constitution they could call in agencies to put questions to them, this is something they could do for this issue. Members agreed on the approach.

It was moved by Councillor J Geary, seconded by Councillor N Smith and

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The report be noted.

Chairman's initials

b) The next steps as detailed at paragraph 5 of the report be endorsed.

7. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor N Clarke requested that an update report be placed on the work plan for the next meeting regarding the current position of the building of new council homes.

Following on from the discussion earlier in the meeting regarding the plans for installing a gas supply into the rural areas of the district, Councillor J Geary requested that the appropriate representative be invited to the next meeting of the group. This was to allow further discussion on any plans for connection, the costs involved and the process to be aware of.

Councillor A C Saffell referred to an ongoing issue regarding the lack of action of planning enforcement in protected conservation areas as important features were being lost. He explained that he was currently working with officers from the planning department to resolve the matter but he would request an item on the work plan at a future meeting if he was not successful.

RESOVLED THAT:

The following items be placed on the work plan –

- a) Update Report on Position for New Homes Build
- b) Invite representatives from the appropriate agency to discuss the gas supply in the rural areas of the District.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.35 pm

Chairman's signature