

CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the **SERVICES OVERVIEW COMMITTEE** held on **13 JUNE 2019**

PRESENT: Councillor J Burton - Chairman
N Varley - Vice Chairman

Councillors: D Bray
C Jackson
P Jones
S Patel
C Rouse
P Shepherd
L Smith

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from Councillors M Titterington, E Culverhouse and M Flys

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors C Ford, J Gladwin, J Rush and C Wertheim

98 MINUTES

The minutes of the Services Overview Committee meetings held on 20 February 2019 and 15 May 2019 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

99 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

100 UPDATE ON FLOOD PREVENTION IN CHALFONT ST PETER / WIDER CHILTERN DISTRICT

Thames Water

Members received a presentation from Thames Water representatives, Mr Huw Thomas, Local and Regional Government Liaison Officer and Ms Dagmara Weatherall, Infrastructure Planning Manager on the waste network arrangements and infrastructure in the Chiltern District. The presentation covered the following and can be viewed appended to these minutes:

- An overview of the Thames Valley sewerage network responsibilities.

- Drainage Strategies which had included detailed investigations that helped with the understanding of drainage problems in Chalfont St Peter (Maple Lodge) and Chesham and how they may be improved.
- An overview of the Maple Lodge sewer treatment works which served a population of 495,000 and had a typical daily treated flow of 100,000 cubed metres, this could rise to in excess of 250,000 cubed metres during wet periods.
- Proposed improvements including sewer repairs with watertight lining; new monitors at some local sewage pumping stations to identify when pumps are operating more than expected; groundwater levels being monitored in the control centre with response teams informed if thresholds passed; and to investigate if roof drainage can be separated from our sewer network.
- How proposed local plan growth and other key growth challenges in the region would be dealt with. Developers were being encouraged to contact Thames Water in advance of submission of planning applications. Customer relationship managers were proactively seeking out site developers and working to meet developers, promoters and agents for large development sites at an early stage of the planning process.
- Once a site identified as a risk to the wastewater network had been approved for planning, an impact assessment would be undertaken to identify if there was detriment to the network. Where certainty of growth from other sites was also known then a strategic scheme would be developed.
- Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans – these were the most extensive, collaborative and forward-looking plans developed within the UK wastewater industry to date. A framework was published in September 2018, this consisted of Water and wastewater companies; Defra; Environment Agency; Ofwat; Consumer Council for Water and; the National Infrastructure Commission.
- Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) which were an opportunity to remove local impermeable area that would normally contribute to surface water run-off. £150,000 would be made available to all boroughs in the region for the installation of surface water management.

The Committee recorded its thanks to Mr Thomas and Ms Weatherall for the presentation. Questions from Members were welcomed, and the following key points were made:

It was affirmed to the Committee that developers were being encouraged to make use of the free pre-planning enquiry process, following which they would receive a letter outlining whether there was sufficient capacity in the existing network or whether investment was needed. Thames Water was

consulted on and made recommendations to the local Planning authority on all significant developments.

Impact assessments would be completed once planning approval for developments had been completed. When these had concluded it would be known how large the solution would need to be and whether existing networks could handle the additional flow.

A statement of common ground agreement was formalised as part of the Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan, this was signed by Thames Water, Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils and the Environment Agency.

Following a Member comment, it was confirmed that installations which assisted collection of rainwater, avoiding heavy flow into the sewer network such as water butts could often result in a refund to the consumer. This rebate was due to less surface water being dealt with from individual properties. Members suggested that this could be marketed further to make consumers aware.

In relation to the £150,000 investment to local authorities to deal with surface water run-off, it was clarified that this had been set aside for authorities as they were now, meaning that each of the five existing Councils in Buckinghamshire would be entitled to a separate fund of £150,000 with the transition to a unitary authority not having an impact on this.

A Member raised a concern that the sewer which ran through the Misbourne valley from Amersham to Chalfont St Giles appeared to have leakage and asked whether this had been addressed. It was confirmed that the sewer had been investigated and the findings would be reported back to Members. It was understood that the pipes were relatively old and were not sealed the same way as water mains would be.

There were 14 mobile pumping station units strategically placed across the Thames Valley and these were not fixed to individual locations. The units would be moved as and where needed.

Affinity Water

Members received a presentation from Dr Di Hammond on revitalising chalk rivers in the district. The presentation included the following and can be viewed appended to these minutes:

- The reasons behind the Revitalising Chalk Rivers initiative, these included being more visible and working together to promote the great river restoration work being completed.

- River habitats and functional feeding groups as well as the effect of restoration on LIFE scores.
- Catchment changes which may affect the river including dredging and straightening of the river channel; land drainage and loss of wetlands and; urbanisation.
- Potential benefits of river restoration such as improved fish passage; increased aquatic plant diversity; natural flood risk management; water quality improvement; health and wellbeing and mitigation for climate change.
- Examples of river restoration work completed in recent years and potential projects at River Misbourne sites including Barn Meadow, the Community Orchard site and Amersham to Quarrendon Mill. An outline design was displayed for the Amersham to Quarrendon Mill river path.
- The “#whynotwater” campaign which called for government to act on mandatory water efficiency labelling so consumers could make informed choices on appliances purchased; rights for tenants to request landlords install water saving measures; ensure fixtures and fittings met minimum standards to avoid wasting water and every Local Plan in a severely water stressed area should include the target of 110 litres per person per day.

The Committee recorded its thanks to Dr Hammond for the comprehensive presentation. Questions from Members were welcomed, and the following was clarified to the Committee:

It was confirmed that the plan was for work to commence on the River Misbourne toward the end of 2019. A Member highlighted the importance of being mindful when dredging not to destroy the lining of a river as this could prevent the river from filling. It was confirmed that Affinity would plan to dig any new channels close to groundwater, maintaining inflow. The aim was to make the river more natural and resilient to river droughts.

Buckinghamshire County Council

Mr Alex Back, Senior Strategic Flood Management Officer, Buckinghamshire County Council clarified the responsibilities of each agency and reported an update on an ongoing project to increase flood resistance measures for properties in surrounding areas of culverts. This included measures such as electrics being wired high up, appliances being kept above flood level and solid wood floors. These resilience measures would reduce the time people need to spend out of their properties. Businesses were also an area of focus to ensure that the impact from flooding would not keep them closed for a significant period. The County Council was a statutory consultee on all major planning applications and the lead local flood authority who had a statutory duty to investigate any kind of flooding.

Environment Agency

Members received a presentation from Ms Natasha Gibbs, Technical Advisor on the two main rivers running through the district, the Chess and the Misbourne and the flood alerts and warnings which were in place.

The flood warnings were established based on full modelling being completed following the wider flooding of the River Misbourne in 2013/14. The Environment Agency was working closely with Affinity on the restoration of chalk streams and was also working on ensuring that the HS2 project did not have a significant impact on the Misbourne.

All options for improving the Misbourne had been deemed economically unviable at present as the Environment Agency had been unable to secure funding. It was hoped that the programme would be explored again post 2021 when grant aid and the flood risk settlement had been agreed.

Further work was being undertaken to engage riparian landowners to ensure assets and river banks were adequately maintained to reduce flood risks and meetings were being held with partners to address maintenance. Should any Member wish to know the grade of a culvert at any given time there was an asset mapping online service (link included below) which they could use.

The Environment Agency continued to monitor ground water levels to predict implications on the Misbourne network. Culvert inspection took place every 5 years as per T98 inspection. It was said that a Grade 4 culvert was deemed 'poor' and would likely see an increased number of inspections. Grade 5 culverts required immediate attention.

A Member asked what needed to be done where severe water loss could be seen and was advised that there was an incident hotline (noted below) and members were encouraged to report all expected issues, whether these were on private land or not so that these could be inspected.

Members raised the Culvert at the Maltings, Amersham as a concern, this culvert was graded as a 5 and it was advised that this would be checked by the Environment Agency prior to any expected heavy rainfall. Members were encouraged to forward any concerns to the EA.

The useful links and contact information are as follows:

The online asset map which detailed all assets the Environment Agency holds information.

<https://environment.data.gov.uk/asset-management/index.html>

The May 2019 water situation report which contained information around the Chilterns Chalk levels was also available online at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807680/Hertfordshire_and_North_London_Water_Situation_Report_May_2019.pdf

HNLenquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk – e-mail address to be used for information around certain assets or watercourses.

PSO-Thames@environment-agency.gov.uk – e-mail address to be used to provide information around works near a river. The webpage to visit beforehand for further information was <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-activities-environmental-permits>

The incident hotline: Telephone 0800 80 70 60 <https://www.gov.uk/report-an-environmental-incident>

The Chairman thanked Ms Gibbs for her detailed presentation.

101 28 DAY NOTICE

The Committee received the 28-Day Notice of executive decisions to be made by Cabinet on 9 July 2019.

RESOLVED:

That the 28 Day Notice be noted.

102 END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT 2018/19

The Committee received a report which outlined the annual performance of Council services against pre-agreed performance indicators and service objectives for the end of year, 2018-19.

RESOLVED:

That the performance reports be noted.

103 AGREEMENT TO SIGN THE MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE (MND) CHARTER

The Committee received a report which recommended that the Council supported and signed the Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Charter which recognised and respected the rights of people with MND. This would result in the Council ensuring policies and procedures enabled people with MND to receive a rapid response to their needs and good quality care and support.

It was recognised that the Council was already actively finding ways to support those people with Motor Neurone Disease as well as those living with other disabilities. Members agreed that no one should be disadvantaged because of a disability and supported the signing of the MND Charter.

RESOLVED to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet

That the Council supports and signs the Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Charter.

104 REVIEW OF REMAINING RECYCLING CENTRES

The Committee received a report which asked that Cabinet consider the closure of recycling centre sites within the Chiltern District. At its meeting in November 2018, the Committee agreed with the rationale presented but highlighted specific concerns and requested a further report be presented which provided clarity on these issues.

The appendix attached to the report outlined results from surveys carried out at recycling centres by officers over a one week period between 13 and 17 May 2019. It was summarised that for most users it was a choice to use the centres and that whilst they had recycling facilities at home, many were unaware of the Council's kerbside collection service. From this, officers agreed that kerbside collection methods would be looked at to promote the service further.

A detailed discussion followed and members raised a number of concerns. These included:

- A Member noted that the sites continued to be heavily used and the potential removal of recycling centres could lead to an increase in fly tipping.
- The charging structure recently introduced by the County Council for household recycling centres was already being misunderstood by many residents and removing facilities at this time could cause increased confusion.
- Many Members believed that the recycling centres should not be removed until residents had been educated on the kerbside collection service and until this service was promoted more widely, the centres should be kept. A member suggested a three month period be set aside to educate residents, following which the closure of the centres could be re-assessed.
- Refuse operatives needed to be fully coherent with collection policies as there had been issues reported where recycling had not been collected when placed under or on top of a recycling bin.

- Many properties in areas such as the High Street, Great Missenden had no frontage and small storage areas so further consideration would be needed for kerbside collection, such as very early collections.
- A Member suggested that given the high level of usage, and lack of public education the recycling centres should remain until the end of the Council's existence (31 March 2020), whilst an education programme was undertaken. The new Buckinghamshire Council could then make the decision on the closure of the centres.
- A Member recognised that using recycling centres had become a habit for many residents and all should be educated to use the kerbside collection service as soon as possible, so that savings can be made by closing the recycling centres.
- It was likely that the new joint waste contract would not have provision for these facilities in order to make efficiency savings so publicity of centre closure and promoting the kerbside collection service was recognised as being key.

The Head of Environment noted that 400,000 container collections were made per week and the Council was providing this service as best it could, this included the collections from recycling centre sites. The Committee was advised that these centres were introduced at a time when there was not a kerbside collection service and many residents had continued the habit. Comprehensive information could be found on the Council's website and the new customer experience strategy would also raise the profile of kerbside collection.

It was explained that by closing the recycling centres, resources could be reallocated to purchase a new refuse collection vehicle that specialised in collections from apartment blocks as these types of development were increasing across the district. Further, it was noted that the sites were often abused, being used by traders and often being subject to fly tipping. Members agreed that the re-allocation of funds for this purpose was positive, although the Committee re-iterated its wish to see a detailed implementation plan ahead of closing the recycling centres.

In response to properties with no frontage, it was said that a strategy could be introduced to ensure these collections were made prior to 7.30 a.m. It was emphasised that any complaints or issues with collections should be reported to the waste team to address to ensure the service was as efficient as possible. Members were encouraged to report issues by email direct to officers.

There was a general consensus among the Committee that a report be brought back to the Committee detailing a phased implementation which evidenced demand being reduced before the centres were removed.

RESOLVED to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet

That based upon the information presented, the sites noted in the report are not closed following Cabinet consideration on 9 July 2019. The Committee recommended a further report be presented which detailed a phased implementation period, a resident education programme, and evidence that demand was being reduced.

105 STATUTORY GUIDANCE ON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FUNCTIONS

The Committee received a report for information on new statutory guidance on overview and scrutiny in local authorities produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. This guidance aimed to increase understanding of the purpose of scrutiny, what effective scrutiny looks like, how to conduct it and the benefits it could bring. This guidance would need to be taken into account when designing the overview and scrutiny arrangements for the new unitary District Council.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

106 AFFORDABLE HOUSING CONTRIBUTIONS UPDATE

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the receipt and expenditure of Section 106 Affordable Housing Contributions in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning document.

Point 3.3 of the report included a table which summarised actual and committed expenditure to date. It was proposed that the Council enter into a strategic funding agreement with Paradigm Housing whereby Paradigm commits to delivering 28 affordable rented homes across a range of sites that it was bringing forward in the Chiltern District in return for a funding commitment of £1,000,000 from the Council. This equated to £35,000 per unit and would allow Paradigm to operate flexibly by bringing forward sites and properties for funding as and when developments were ready to proceed.

The overall revised Committed Expenditure Programme would then look as set out in the table at point 3.11 of the report.

It was highlighted that were any properties to be sold within 10 years of completion, the funding provided for that property would be repaid to the Council on a sliding scale. These funds would return to the section 106 pot in line with similar processes at other local authorities.

A Member raised concern that by turning garage sites in to residences, street parking pressure would increase. It was explained that garage sites were a valuable land resource and many of those being rented were often being used for storage rather than keeping vehicles. Any application would go through the appropriate planning process.

RESOLVED to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That the following allocations of Affordable Housing Contributions are agreed:
 - (I) Strategic Funding Agreement with Paradigm Housing (various sites) = £1,000,000
 - (II) Other affordable housing schemes approved on a scheme by scheme basis = £674,045.70

The meeting ended at 9.27 pm