



GREAT YARMOUTH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Environment Committee

Minutes

Tuesday, 07 March 2023 at 18:30

PRESENT: -

Councillor Wells (in the Chair); Councillors Annison, Bensly, Bird, Cameron, P Carpenter, D Hammond, Fairhead, Martin, Robinson-Payne, Waters-Bunn, B Wright and Talbot

Also in attendance at the above meeting were:

Mrs P Boyce (Strategic Director), Mr J Wilson (Head of Environment & Sustainability), Mr C Silverwood (Director of Operational Services), Mr D Glason (Director of Planning and Growth), Mr D Zimmerling (IT Support), Ms C Webb (Democratic Services Officer) & Miss R Downie (Democratic Services Officer)

Mr Matthew Philpot (IDB and Water Management Norfolk Area Manager)

01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence at this meeting.

02 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Wells declared an interest in Item 8 in his capacity as a Director on the GYBS Limited Board.

03 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2023 were confirmed.

04 MATTERS ARISING

Councillor Bensly passed on his thanks and appreciation to the officers who aided members of the public during a recent spell of high winds and high tides in Hemsby which had caused further coastal erosion resulting in the unfortunate loss of properties. Officers showed professionalism working with emergency services and the lifeboat crew to assist vulnerable residents in their homes at that time. The Chair echoed these comments and suggested a formal letter of thanks be sent to the staff involved on behalf of the Committee.

Councillor Waters-Bunn referenced page 5 of the minutes regarding the communication and media plan for the recycling strategy and whether or not this information will be circulated to Members as requested. The Head of Environment and Sustainability reported that the information surrounding what could be and could not be recycled has been circulated, however he will double check. Additionally, the communications team have been working on a social media campaign regarding what can and cannot be recycled and there are also plans to display this information on the side of Council vehicles.

Councillor Waters-Bunn asked for an update on the Community Marshalls and whether their fixed term contracts will be extended. The Strategic Director explained that a management staff restructure began on 1 March 2023 and staff are currently included in the consultation process. There will be a reduction in the number of Community Marshalls with a core team remaining that will continue to be externally funded.

05 FORWARD PLAN

The Chair requested that the Committee note the forward plan as this would be the last committee meeting before the upcoming election.

06 INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD UPDATE

Members received a presentation from Mr Matthew Philpot (Internal Drainage Board and Water Management Norfolk Area Manager) which looked at the role of the Internal Drainage Board (IDB) in Great Yarmouth and the wider Norfolk area.

The Chair thanked Matthew for the presentation.

Councillor P Carpenter passed on her thanks to Matthew for the presentation and to the IDB for assisting in recent flooding issues around Tan Lane, Caister.

Councillor Fairhead thanked Matthew for the presentation and stated that she is hopeful that this presentation would highlight to Members how important the IDB is in this area, particularly when the IDB was consulted in planning applications and flooding issues. For example, the work along Burgh Road, Gorleston has addressed the issue of regular flooding following periods of heavy rain. Additionally, IDB had provided funding to start an education facility involving local schools within the

Gorleston allotments. However, work on this has come to a standstill due to Covid restrictions but Councillor Fairhead is hopeful that it will start up again. Matthew explained that the public sector co-operation agreement with the Council allows the IDB to deliver projects and help with issues such as those experienced on Burgh Road.

The Chair asked if there is a similar relationship between the IDB and the Broads Authority. Matthew explained that there is no public sector agreement in place, however the IDB does work closely with the Broads Authority.

The Chair asked for clarification in regard to the election of landowners to the IDB Board and who oversees these elections. Matthew stated that these elections are overseen by the Board and the Chairman. Moreover, landowners on the board are typically those who owned a large amount of land within the IDB area and therefore had a significant financial interest.

The Chair enquired about the total revenue from the two IDB's within the Great Yarmouth Borough. Matthew explained that he did not have the exact figures to hand, however the capital programme over the next six years projected a revenue of £30million – exact figures could be provided if required following the meeting.

Councillor Talbot asked how long it takes to replace a water pump and does this have any effect on drainage whilst this work is undertaken. Matthew stated that these works were carried out in stages, though generally the IDB built a new pump next to the original pump which would remain in use until the new pump is up and running resulting in no effects on drainage. Councillor Talbot enquired whether the original pumps remained in situ for a certain period should the new pump fail after installation. Matthew explained that there may be a grace period of 3 months where the original pump is left in situ, however, due to a team of experienced mechanical and electrical engineers, new stations are reliable and have shown little problems in the past.

RESOLVED :-

That the Committee receives and notes the report.

07 RATIFICATION OF NORFOLK STRATEGIC FLOODING ALLIANCE STRATEGY

The Director of Planning and Growth reported that the strategy included a minor update with no significant amendments.

Councillor Bensly shared his appreciation for the alliance which brought over thirty partners together which was a massive achievement in driving the strategy forward. Furthermore, he is sure that the incoming chair, Henry Cator, will continue to drive the aims of the alliance forward, championing water as a resource, not just a hindrance when it comes to flooding. The Chair echoed these comments and stated that incumbent Chair, Lord Dannett, has done an excellent job in driving the strategy forward.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee endorse the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance's updated Strategy

08 GYBS - PRE SUMMER UPDATE AND TRANSITION

The Director of Operational Services provided an update on Pre-Summer work and the transition of GYS Services.

The Chair thanked Chris for his update and that the electric vehicle procurement in Great Yarmouth had evoked a positive reaction at the recent Norfolk Waste Partnership meeting which he had attended. In addition, the Chair highlighted how important business waste disposal was for the long term success of the company due to the stress on commercial services and the competitive advantage that this company can provide. The Chair asked that consideration should be given to the proposed new logo and whether the colours should be stronger and clearer as it currently looks like the Centrica logo.

Councillor P Carpenter highlighted the amount of work that has been undertaken to bring the transition to this point. She further stated that there has been a positive impact at the depot and passed on her thanks for all work that has been undertaken and the work that there is still to do.

Councillor D Hammond echoed the previous comments and asked whether the proposed managed grass cutting areas at Blake Road included just the bank area. The Director of Operational Services confirmed that this is correct.

Councillor D Hammond asked if it would be possible for signage to be erected regarding leaving the grass to grow as well as the benefits that this could have for the wildlife and, in particular, the bees. The Director of Operational Services stated that this can be looked in to and the Head of Environment and Sustainability explained that designs for this type of signage are ready to go for these areas and the communications team are working on information for the public. Councillor Talbot suggested a phrase that she had seen previously 'please excuse the weeds, we are looking after the bees'.

Councillor Talbot stated that the deep clean in the Market Gates bus interchange has had a positive effect, emphasising the importance of looking after the shopping centre and surrounding areas. Additionally, though the area under Market Gates is a hotspot for graffiti, these issues are dealt with quickly by GYBS.

Councillor Talbot thanked Chris for employing local companies to provide the new PPE as keeping production local has a positive impact on the local economy. The Director of Operational Services stated that the company are producing samples of PPE for staff and staff will be consulted to ensure that the quality is up to standard.

Councillor Bensly referred to the deep clean and sand clearance highlighted in the presentation and asked where this would be taking place. The Director of Operational

Services stated that this would be taking place in various locations and would involve returning sand from walkways back onto the beach. Councillor Bensly asked if there is any chance of this happening in the northern villages as he is unsure whether the parish councils are picking up this issue.

Councillor Bensly asked if the managed grass cutting locations shown on slide nine could be expanded to include the northern villages and whether local members are engaged in this process. The Director for Operational Services stated that he would double check this and that local members will be engaged. The Head of Environment and Sustainability stated that there had been a northern village that provided a list of area for managed grass cutting, however, they came back to the Council after a month asking for the grass to be cut due to the number of complaints from residents.

Councillor Fairhead enquired whether staff would keep their jobs. The Director of Operational Services explained that there are no planned staff cuts and that staff will have job security through the transition.

Councillor Martin passed on her thanks for the hard work undertaken and wanted confirmation that the colour of the Hi-Vis PPE would be orange rather than blue which had been alluded to at a previous meeting. The Director of Operational Services stated that the Hi-Vis PPE would be orange as shown in the presentation and that staff would be provided with blue trousers that would include reflective strips for safety.

Councillor Robinson-Payne referred to the sustainability action plan and asked what level of training the gardeners would receive, as recent hedge cutting in her ward has left the hedges noticeably sparse leading to complaints from residents. Additionally, it appears that this sub-standard work has been checked and signed off by a supervisor. The Director of Operational Services stated that staff undertake various training sessions and refresher courses and all work was monitored by a supervisor, however, he would look into this issue after the meeting and confirm.

Councillor Talbot suggested the use of wildflower seed bombs as this could potentially help in reducing complaints about managed grass cutting as the areas would be more aesthetically pleasing. The Director of Operational Services explained that enquiries have been made and wildflower seeds are surprisingly expensive and that the use of them would have to be managed in a controlled, budgeted way. The Head of Environment and Sustainability added that this would be an expensive venture that is being considered and several sites would be suitable, however it would need managed as part of a long-term plan. Councillor Talbot asked if there is a way to invite residents to manage areas themselves for wildflower planting. The Chair stated that whilst these projects sounded lovely, succession planning is required. The Head of Environment and Sustainability explained that this is something that could be considered if community groups are interested.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee receives and notes the report.

09 PARKS, OPEN SPACES AND BEACHES

The Head of Environment and Sustainability delivered a report on Parks, Open Spaces and Beaches which included an update on the condition of St George's Park after its use as the site of the Autumn Fair as well as an update on the ongoing work to maintain the tourist beaches and reduce the vegetation growth in key areas of Great Yarmouth Beach.

Councillor Waters-Bunn commented on the beach ploughing work, stating that she is pleased the central beach is being considered for this as it appears to have been extremely successful along the north side of Britannia Pier. It was also noted in reference to the St George's Park update that the Easter Fair was not held at the park, this was the site for the October and Christmas Fairs. Additionally, Councillor Waters-Bunn asked if an invoice had been sent to the Showman's Guild as paving slabs within the park were broken because of the placement of a ride and, if so, whether the invoice had been paid. The Head of Environment and Sustainability stated that he would follow this up as he did not have the information to hand, as to whether the Showman's Guild had paid the invoice, however it was confirmed that they had been billed for the damage.

Councillor P Carpenter requested clarification regarding the tiles in St George's Park as they appeared to have been semi-professionally removed and she enquired whether this removal was done by the Council or, whether a member of the public has taken them for their own garden, as this would be classified as theft. The Head of Environment and Sustainability explained that these tiles were damaged and would have been removed by the Council for safety reasons before being replaced, there is no report of this being a theft. Councillor P Carpenter also asked why the Showman's Guild were allowed to place a ride on these tiles in the first instance. The Head of Environment and Sustainability stated that the fair is not responsible for all the damaged tiles.

Councillor Fairhead sought clarification on how far north the marram grass clearance on the beach would go and whether this would impede on the protected SSI area. The Head of Environment and Sustainability explained that this work would be focused on the area between Britannia Pier and the start of the main dunes, therefore this work would be taking place outside of any designated SSI protection area. The Chair stated that diagrams of where the marram grass clearance will be taken place could be found on page 25 of the agenda pack.

Councillor Robinson-Payne enquired whether a profit was made from the fee that the Showman's Guild paid to use Council land for the fairs. Additionally, it was noted that as per section 4.1 of the report 'any ongoing repair at St George's Park will be taken from the existing repairs and maintenance budget', however Councillor Robinson-Payne highlighted that the Showman's Guild should have to pay for the damage caused by the fairs as it was a significant amount and that the fair should not be held in St. Georges Park in the future as this is not a suitable location. The Head of Environment and Sustainability stated that he would investigate and report back. Furthermore, the existing repairs and maintenance budget would be use for the

additional work to reinstate the damage in St Georges Park.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee note the content of the report and endorse the planned maintenance activities.

10 LOW NOISE FIREWORKS

The Committee received and considered the report from the Head of Environment and Sustainability.

Councillor Waters-Bunn commented that encouraging the use of low noise fireworks is a positive step, however she was disappointed that the report did not include a recommendation that any display on the beach would have to use low noise fireworks. It was noted that the Pleasure Beach had used a combination of loud noise and low noise fireworks in their displays last year, with the latter being more visually impressive. Councillor Waters-Bunn stated that she felt strongly towards the implementation of low noise fireworks on Great Yarmouth beaches. The Head of Environment and Sustainability explained that banning the use of loud noise fireworks on Council land would be difficult as officers would have to check every firework at every display which would take a significant amount of officer time and resources. Additionally, if a member of the public was to complain that a loud noise firework was used in a display it would be difficult to prove otherwise, therefore the proposal is to encourage the use of low noise fireworks by promoting the benefits compared to loud noise fireworks.

Councillor Waters-Bunn clarified that she was not suggesting a ban, but stipulation that the large-scale BID displays at Great Yarmouth/Hemsby and Pleasure Beach displays on Council land should be low noise fireworks only. The Strategic Director explained that there is a lack of enforcement powers when it comes to loud noise fireworks as there is no current legislation in place that would support a ban. It was suggested that the Council can write to the BID to ask that any fireworks used in their displays are low noise. In addition, the Strategic Director stated that if member feel strongly about this topic, then a policy change would be required in terms of use of Council land such as a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) and this would be a separate piece of work altogether. The Strategic Director further stated that this report outlines a pragmatic approach to tackling the issue of loud noise fireworks as the Council do not have the officer resources or legal enforcement powers to instate a ban.

Councillor B Wright stated that she is disappointed nothing will be done regarding a ban and could a condition for using Council land for these displays be that low noise fireworks must be used, as the Council should make a stand to prevent the detrimental mental and physical people impact and animals. The Head of Environment and Sustainability explained that he understood the members' passion for this subject, however this would be the Council's first time promoting low noise fireworks and this report outlines the start of journey where conversations and policies could develop using guidance and current resources and that this report is the first step in

the right direction.

The Chair suggested that there may be a market shift to low noise fireworks becoming more prevalent so in time, we may see displays switch to low noise naturally due to the increase in popularity. Additionally, the Chair referenced Councillor Waters-Bunn's mention of the BID displays in Hemsby and stated that Whatlings owned Hemsby Beach, not the Council, and the BID is an independent body so the Council can only encourage the use of low noise fireworks in this area as there are no legal enforcement powers on this land.

Councillor P Carpenter asked when the Council would begin to actively promote the use of low noise fireworks as the message should be sent out as soon as possible in preparation for the summer season. The Head of Environment and Sustainability stated that work will begin with the Communications team and promotion can be expected quickly via social media as this campaign should not take too long to pull together. The Chair commented that these campaigns should be an ongoing process rather than a one-time promotion.

Councillor Talbot commented that she was happy to see the inclusion of vulnerable people in the report as the push for low noise fireworks is important due to the significant effect that loud noise fireworks can have on vulnerable individuals. Councillor Talbot asked whether the price difference between loud noise and low noise fireworks is known, as if there is little difference between the cost, why would a display choose to use loud noise fireworks. The Head of Environment and Sustainability stated that research shows that costs are equivalent, or thereabouts, between the two types of fireworks when it comes to public purchase, however many of the larger professional fireworks are bespoke so it is difficult to comment on the cost difference at this level. Councillor Talbot enquired if prices are similar can the Council drive home the point that the preference would be for the use of low noise fireworks, particularly on Council owned land, as prevention is better than a cure. In addition, Councillor Talbot asked if officers could go to these large displays ahead of time to check the fireworks. The Chair commented that the officer time and degree of specialism needed to check these fireworks would cause difficulty. The Head of Environment and Sustainability explained that the fireworks used in professional displays are often level four fireworks which are not labelled in the same way as those that are readily available to the public, therefore these fireworks are more difficult to inspect.

Councillor Robsinson-Payne stated that she was glad language had changed surrounding this topic, however she does not understand why the Council do not lead by example and why officers cannot check the fireworks used as these large-scale displays do not happen all year round, only occurring on specific days in the summer months. Additionally, Councillor Robsinson-Payne commented that we must start somewhere, and she is hopeful that once the Council start encouraging the use of low noise fireworks then others will follow.

Councillor Bensly noted that this document is commencing at floor level and can be evolved, thus it should not be considered as a starting point. In addition, Councillor Bensly asked whether the Committee could write to BID to encourage the use of low noise fireworks in an attempt to start the ball rolling as this would be a positive start.

Moreover, Councillor Bensly stated that he fully agreed with the recommendations presented within the report. The Chair stated that he would have thought a letter to BID would be part of the process and is sure this is something that could be picked up, the Head of Environment and Sustainability agreed that this could be actioned. The Chair added that there is uncertainty around how long the supply chain lead-in is for this year as it is possible that fireworks have already been purchased for the 2023 displays, however this encouragement would hopefully help to influence the use of low noise fireworks moving forward.

Councillor D Hammond enquired whether the plan going forward can incorporate communicating the need to be considerate to neighbours when randomly setting off fireworks to provide time for pet owners and vulnerable people to make arrangements that could mitigate the effects that loud noise fireworks can have. The Chair highlighted that this could be part of the planned public awareness campaign. The Head of Environment and Sustainability explained that this is a difficult issue to enforce as fireworks can be bought at all times of the year by the public so the focus would be on trying to get the public to have social awareness around responsibilities to their neighbours.

Proposer: Councillor Waters-Bunn

Seconder: Councillor P Carpenter

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee agree for officers to undertake the following actions to encourage the use of low noise fireworks throughout the Borough:-

1. Encourage public firework displays within the local authority boundary to be advertised in advance of the event allowing residents to take precautions for their animals and vulnerable people.
2. To encourage public fireworks displays within the local authority boundary to consider using low noise fireworks through updated guidance and direct communication.
3. To actively promote public awareness campaign about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people.
4. To encourage local suppliers of fireworks to stock low noise fireworks for public and private displays.

11 UPDATE ON DOG FOULING

The Committee received and considered the report from the Head of Environment and Sustainability.

The Chair commented that he believes that there is less dog fouling in the borough and understands why work has been concentrated on fly-tipping rather than dog fouling with the Council performing well in terms of prosecutions for dog fouling compared to other local authorities in the Norfolk area. The Chair asked if recordings from private Ring doorbells could be used as evidence against dog fouling. The Head of Environment and Sustainability stated that any evidence passed to Environmental Health such as Ring doorbells and CCTV can be utilised for prosecution. Additionally, it was noted that in some areas, the work to reduce fly tipping made the issue of dog fouling appear to be more prevalent, as it was easier to spot when the detritus was removed, however, a public awareness exercise was undertaken in these areas.

Councillor Talbot thanked the officer for the report and stated that she had spoken to an Environmental Ranger about dog fouling in the alleyway next to Vauxhall Terrace. Following this conversation, the signage was renewed and the alleyway has been clear since. It was noted that the alleyway next to Vauxhall Terrace has become a new hotspot for dog fouling, therefore Councillor Talbot asked if signage could be renewed there as well. The Chair commented that specific locations should be flagged up for officers to know where the issues are occurring. The Head of Environment and Sustainability explained that signage can be renewed in problem areas and that Members would just need to let officers know where the signage is needed.

Councillor B Wright stated that she has noticed an issue of dog owners picking up excrement and then dumping the bags. The Head of Environment and Sustainability explained that once excrement is bagged and then dropped it becomes a littering offence and this offence attracted the same fixed penalty notice as dog fouling, but within different legislation, and fines will be issued if witnessed.

Councillor Waters-Bunn asked how many rangers are in the team and has this number decreased since the years where dog fouling prosecutions were high. The Head of Environment and Sustainability stated that there are currently four Environmental Rangers, and this number has not decreased in recent years. Additionally, the team's priority has been around fly tipping and there have been more complaints from the public about this compared to dog fouling. The Head of Environment and Sustainability explained that the team of rangers are still investigating dog fouling, however they would have to witness the full act to prosecute, which unfortunately relies on them being in the right place at the right time. Councillor Waters-Bunn asked if something can be done on social media to highlight the fact that bagging dog excrement and throwing it away can lead to a littering prosecution and fine. The Head of Environment and Sustainability stated that he is happy to work with the Communications team in relation to highlighting fines associated with bagged excrement, though campaigns surrounding dog fouling tend to be launched in the winter months when numbers increase during the dark winter mornings and evenings.

Councillor Annison commented that many residents complain about dog fouling and bags of dog excrement hanging off trees in Bluebell Woods and are asking for more bins, though he understands that this is not an issue of needing more bins but an issue of personal responsibility.

Councillor Robinson-Payne stated that dog fouling needs to be made a bigger issue as the public do not see enough stories of people being prosecuted and making this a bigger issue through social media could act as a deterrent.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee receive and note the report.

12 RENEWAL OF PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER NO.3 - DOG CONTROL

The Head of Environment and Sustainability delivered a report on the renewal of Public Space Protection Order No.3. There are no proposed changes to the PSPO and based on feedback it has been requested to extend for three years.

Councillor Talbot commented that she regularly walks through Great Yarmouth graveyard and there are dogs off lead in this area daily despite there being a dog on lead requirement in this area, with people appearing to ignore the signage. In addition, Councillor Talbot stated that she appreciates the feasibility of officer time, though is concerned that dogs off lead in this area could be a danger to other dogs, as well as people. The Head of Environment and Sustainability explained that enforcing this policy is difficult due to being labour intensive, however officers could potentially look to enhance signage and target these areas at specific times of high traffic – though it should be noted that continuous monitoring would be difficult and expensive to keep going.

Proposer: Councillor Annison

Seconder: Councillor Bensly

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee recommends to Council that the Public Space Protection Order No.3 be extended by a further three years.

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair thanked all Members and officers who had been involved in the Committee now and in previous years, stating that the Committee had worked well on a broadly apolitical basis. The Chair noted that some Members are standing down and some are standing again for election in May 2023.

The meeting ended at: 20:00