

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)
held at 2.30 pm on Wednesday, 26 June 2019

Present:

Members: Councillor J McNicholas (Chair)
Councillor J Birdi
Councillor T Jandu
Councillor R Lancaster
Councillor A Lucas
Councillor C Miks
Councillor E Ruane
Councillor B Singh

Other Members By Invitation: Councillor P Hetherton (Cabinet Member for City Services)

By Invitation: Kathy Fletcher, Coventry Tree Wardens Network
Adrian Spray, CFP Consultant

Employees (by Directorate):

Place: R Haigh, G Holmes, G Hood, R Penlington, M Salmon,
J Seddon, T Wetherhill

Apologies from Members By Invitation: Councillor J O'Boyle (Cabinet Member for Jobs and Regeneration)
Councillor D Welsh (Deputy Cabinet Member for Jobs and Regeneration)
Councillor A S Khan (Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities)
Councillor P Akhtar (Deputy Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities)
Councillor G Lloyd (Deputy Cabinet Member for City Services)

Public Business

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd April 2019 were agreed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

3. **Tree Wardens**

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) received a presentation by a Tree Warden, Kathy Fletcher, on the work of the Tree Wardens.

The Coventry Tree Warden Network was constituted in the Spring of 2014. Tree Wardens could get involved with a range of activities, from practical projects such as planting and caring for trees, to gathering information about local trees and developing imaginative projects to encourage others, including schoolchildren, to value their local trees and woods. The organisation was run and managed by volunteers.

The Network aimed to:

- Raise the profile of trees and hedgerows around Coventry and its environs.
- Provide a forum for tree and hedgerow related issues.
- Gather and disseminate information about trees and hedgerows to aid proper
- Management and maintenance.
- Promote the benefits of trees and hedgerows by raising awareness and through education.
- Liaise with statutory bodies and other organisations to influence policy and decision making.
- Encourage, promote and support practical projects associated with trees, woods and hedgerows.
- Raise public awareness of the Network, its objectives and activities.

Activities that the Network had been involved in included:

- Tree Council Forum at Coombe in October 2018
- Heritage Open Days, September 2018
- Godiva Festival, September 2018
- Kingsfield Gardens (aka Kingsway orchard)
- Cut and sold mistletoe (Lord Mayor's Charity)
- Monthly training
- Commented on planning applications
- Grant applications
- Trips and events
- Tree evaluations
- Answered questions
- Planted trees

The Local Authority supported the Wardens daily with advice and information, provided tools and equipment, and consulted them where Council projects would affect trees or hedgerow. They had an excellent working relationship with the Tree Wardens.

The Board questioned the Tree Warden and officers and discussed the following issues:

- Encouraging the inclusion of landscaping in industrial and urban developments
- The health and wellbeing benefits of trees and hedgerows
- Innovative examples of urban living that includes green space and landscaping, across the world
- Tree evaluations – most expensive evaluation £500,000
- The location and species of the oldest trees in the City
- The diversity of tree species that the City offers that combat a range of issues i.e. pests and diseases
- Further planting for the City Centre area
- The Local Plan's Tree Protection Policy
- Mapping of the city's trees and identification of areas for new tree and hedgerow planting
- Working with schools
- Creating woodland environments where appropriate/where there are no development proposals
- The need for financial modelling in addition to tree planting
- The established working relationship between the Local Authority and the Tree Wardens
- Review of the Tree pollarding schedule
- Review of grass growth around trees - limiting the growth of grass to a distance from the base of the trunk that would offer better protection for trees and their roots.

The Board thanked Kathy Fletcher for her attendance at the meeting and the interesting presentation she provided for Members and acknowledged the good working relationship that the Tree Wardens had established with the City Council.

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3):

- 1) Notes the presentation by Tree Warden, Kathy Fletcher.**
- 2) Notes the work undertaken by the Coventry Trees Wardens Network and the working relationship established between the Wardens and the City Council.**
- 3) Agrees that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities be requested to:**
 - i) Consider including vegetation when developing public realm in the City Centre**
 - ii) Request that officers undertake a definitive mapping exercise of tree stock across the City, where resources are available.**

4. **Draft Green Space Strategy**

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) considered a Briefing Note of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) on the draft Green Space Strategy, attached as an Appendix to the Note.

Evidence demonstrated how the City's Green Spaces including parks, recreation grounds, playing fields, children's playgrounds, ornamental gardens, golf courses, and woodlands, directly contributed to people's health and wellbeing. They help create thriving communities providing significant them with opportunities to develop and enhance their social, recreational, environmental, educational and economic wellbeing.

The importance of Councils developing a strategy for greenspaces was recognised and promoted as good practice by a number of bodies including The Design Council (formally CABE Space) and Mayor of London's Open Space Strategies Best Practice Guidance. Social and demographic changes, reductions in government spending and budgets affecting parks and open spaces along with environmental changes such as the impacts of global warming and the strains on wildlife, policy changes and changes in greenspace provision, meant that the city was in a different place to that of 10 years ago. The role and importance of greenspace was increasing, and it needed to meet the changing needs and demands placed on it and provide value and benefit to the community into the future.

Through its action plan, the Greenspace Strategy adopted by the City Council in 2008 for a period of 10 years, delivered significant achievements. These included an increase in customer satisfaction with the city's greenspaces and in the number of voluntary groups supporting parks, the achievement of 6 national awards, the establishment of successful partnerships, improvement made to over 60 park sites, an increase in sites designated as important to wildlife, the production of management and maintenance plans and success in obtaining external income. The 2019 - 2024 Strategy builds on those achievements setting the scene for the management and development of our greenspaces over the next 5 years.

The revised strategy has been developed through stages, including: Policy Review; An assessment of greenspace quality, quantity and accessibility; Stakeholder Consultation; Analysis and Evaluation; and recommendations and Action Plan.

The Strategy presented key recommendations which sought to:

- Ensure parks remained safe and vibrant spaces to visit, supporting community use and made an important contribution to the delivery of the City of Culture programme.
- Address barriers to use and encourage greater usage and value through the better reporting and recording of anti-social behaviour including issues relating to the management and maintenance of greenspaces and dog fouling and control.
- Increase park use, promoting greenspace as venues for activities, developing event and activity programmes, creating community hubs and community champions and provide facilities that appeal to all sections of the community.

- Address deficiencies in the quality, quantity and accessibility of greenspace and playing pitch provision through the adoption of local standards, improve community access to education facilities, increase provision for young people.
- Address deficiencies in greenspace and quality of facilities through the development of local standards and measure changes delivered through the strategy.
- Establish effective partnerships to safeguard and enhance biodiversity assets, promote and improve access to green corridors and canals and associated features, creation of flower rich habitats which support invertebrates and implemented the Council's Tree Strategy.
- Support and work with Friends and other voluntary community groups. Fostering the development of new groups and assisting with community led events, securing external funding and opportunities for community asset transfers.
- Maintain the existing Green Flag Awards and continue to develop management and maintenance plans for greenspaces improving biodiversity and accessibility to greenspace.
- Establish a robust framework to secure developer contributions to maintain and improve greenspace and to explore diverse external funding streams to increase income.

A five-year action plan had been produced which would enable the identification of priorities and progress on the implementation and delivery of the strategy to be monitored and tracked. The action plan was included with the Strategy.

The Board also considered a Briefing Note, that was tabled at the meeting, that informed Members of the recommendations from the Green Space Strategy Task and Finish Group on the Draft Green Space Strategy.

The Board questioned officers and discussed the need to ensure that the City Council claimed Community Infrastructure Levy and 106 monies associated with developments, in particular for those that were located in the City Centre and for student accommodation.

The Board agreed that the Green Space Strategy Task and Finish Group continue to meet to consider the Green Space Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning document on Green Space Development Contributions.

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3):

- 1) Agrees the recommendations of the Green Space Strategy Task and Finish Group to:**
 - a) Endorse the approach to green spaces in the city as proposed in the draft Green Space Strategy.**
 - b) Recommend to Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities that the Green Space Strategy addresses the following before it is presented to Cabinet for approval:**

- i. The Strategy should contain a clear definition of a “green space”
 - ii. That the Council should be ambitious in its approach to Green Flag status and look to expand the number of parks awarded, encouraging the local community to be actively involved
 - iii. Strengthen the link to an emerging Climate Change Strategy and how the Green Space Strategy can support Coventry reducing its carbon foot print
 - iv. Strengthen the link to the Council’s Biodiversity Strategy
 - v. Emphasise accessibility in parks, such as circular routes round parks to encourage walking
 - vi. The role of the canal as a "blue corridor" in the strategy to be further highlighted (recommendation 34)
 - vii. Recommendations 40 – 45 should include providing training to volunteers
 - viii. Consider an aspiration for planting a tree for every citizen in the city. This should be linked in with other planting schemes such as the 550 trees for Guru Nanak anniversary and in line with the Climate Change strategy.
 - ix. Recommendations contained in the strategy should be included as part of the Executive Summary as well as distributed through the report.
 - x. Schools should be encouraged to develop green spaces in line with the strategy. There should be stronger links with schools and Friends organisations, including parents.
 - xi. There should be a green space map of all Coventry schools developed to support recommendation 1)b) x above.
- c) Support Recommendation 8 in the draft Green Space Strategy regarding the development of a Park Watch scheme and add this to the Board’s Work Programme.
 - d) Green Space Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning document on Green Space Development Contributions to be considered by the Green Space Strategy Task and Finish Group and a report submitted to the Board in due course.
- 2) Green Space Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning document on Green Space Development Contributions to be considered by the Green Space Strategy Task and Finish Group and a report submitted to the Board in due course.

5. **Air Quality Action Plan**

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) received a Briefing Note of the Deputy Chief executive (Place) on the development of the Coventry Local Air Quality Action Plan and the current position in relation to the Plan.

Coventry had been identified by Government as one of 40 towns and cities in the UK where roadside nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels are likely to exceed legal limits by 2021. The Government issued a Direction instructing the City Council to develop and submit a Local Air Quality Action Plan setting out how the Council intended to reduce NO₂ levels within the city below legal limits in the shortest possible time. The Board received progress reports on the development of the Action Plan July 2018 (minute 4/18 referred) and November 2018 (minute 18/18 referred)

The Action Plan, outlining the preferred package of measures that would achieve the objective of reducing NO₂ levels, and which did not propose a Clean Air Zone, was approved by the Cabinet in February 2019 (their minute 106/18 referred) and submitted to Government. The Board received an update on the Action Plan in April 2019 (Minute 50/18 referred), when they requested a further report once Government feedback on the Plan had been properly reviewed.

Government responded to the Action Plan in March 2019 with a new Direction imposing the following duties upon the Council:

- Duty to implement the benchmark option [this being the implementation of a Clean Air Zone (CAZ) Category D as set out in the LAQAP submission] – to achieve compliance with the legal limit for nitrogen dioxide by 2023 at the latest.
- Duty to submit additional documentation—covering revised air quality modelling by 14th June at the latest. This modelling should demonstrate the applicable class of a charging CAZ and outline the additional measures that would be required to achieve compliance in the shortest possible time.
- Duty to prepare and submit a full business case by 27th September 2019 at the latest.

A Clean Air Zone Category D would result in a charge being imposed upon non-compliant vehicles entering the zone, including all categories of vehicle (bus, taxi, vans, lorries, motorcycles and cars). The Cabinet has consistently opposed the principle of putting a CAZ in place in the city, and this has been supported by the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) in their previous meetings.

The Council was complying with the latest Direction by undertaking additional air quality modelling work testing different options for the Action Plan which would result in an updated Action Plan being submitted to Government later in 2019. The aim remains to deliver an Action Plan that achieves the reduction in NO₂ levels in the shortest possible time without the need for the imposition of a CAZ.

The Holyhead Road route into the city records the highest levels of NO₂ therefore, the Council was developing a revised package of measures that focussed upon reducing traffic flows on Holyhead Road, including removing a pinch point at Spon End to provide greater capacity on the parallel route into the city from the west. Coundon Road would remain open at the level crossing, with Upper Hill Street opened out onto the Ring Road to enable the closure of Barras Lane and the removal of the existing traffic signals at the Holyhead Road/Barras Lane junction. These measures would be complemented by investment in improved cycle routes, travel planning and traffic management. In addition, the Council was investing

heavily, using Government grant, in upgrading the bus fleet, supporting a transition to electric taxis, and encouraging uptake of electric cars by extending the network of charging points across the city.

The Council's strategy was therefore to improve air quality in the city by upgrading the fleet of vehicles operating within the city, encouraging modal shift away from the car for local journeys, and to implement traffic management measures to encourage traffic away from the most polluted areas of the city whilst ensuring that displaced traffic didn't result in NO₂ levels being breached on other routes.

The process involved the submission of updated evidence based on the additional air quality modelling work testing a variety of additional measures, as well as variants on the Clean Air Zone approach. This was submitted to Government on 14th June 2019, with some further supplementary technical reports being submitted by 28th June 2019.

Once Government feedback on the evidence was received, expected to be during July 2019, the Council would publish for consultation, the updated Local Air Quality Action Plan. The consultation feedback would help to refine the proposals outlined in the Plan, and a Full Business Case would then be submitted to Government later in the year outlining the precise funding requirement being sought by the Council to deliver the measures contained in the Action Plan. Under the current Direction, the Government required submission of the Full Business Case by 27th September 2019, but the ability to comply with this date depended on the nature of Government feedback, the timing of the feedback, and the consequential impact on the consultation programme. If necessary, the Council would make representation to Government seeking a review of the submission date.

The Government had agreed to issue additional grant funding of £500,000 to support the Council in the preparation of the Full Business Case. In addition, a further £4.5 million of grant funding had been made available to the Council, linked to the work should a Clean Air Zone be required. Whilst this funding had been accepted by the Council, to comply with Government funding procedures, it was being held on account pending the outcome of the Action Plan development work.

There had been significant publicity relating to a charging Clean Air Zone being introduced in the City. The Council's consistent view has been that a charging Zone is unnecessary, and that the NO₂ levels in the city can be reduced below legal limits through a range of alternative measures. This position has not changed.

Members questioned officers and discussed the following issues:

- Ensuring that any road proposals do not adversely affect traffic flow, particularly on entrance to/exit of the Ring Road
- Comparisons with other towns and cities in the UK where roadside nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels are likely to exceed legal limits – use of Government Model, strategies for passing emission level limit, progress of other Authorities in the process

- Consideration/monitoring of particulates that could contribute to poor air quality and/or improve air quality, including tree planting and landscaping
- Encouraging the use of public transport – subsidised travel, better routes, reliable and punctual buses
- Electric vehicle charging points – location and usage
- Effects of road proposals on emission levels around St Osburg's Primary School

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3):

- 1) Notes the content of the Briefing Note.**
- 2) Supports the steps being taken to improve air quality in the city.**
- 3) Supports the Council's opposition to the implementation of a Clean Air Zone in the City.**
- 4) Supports the Cabinet Members' in their direction of travel on the Air Quality Action Plan.**

6. Outstanding Issues

There were no outstanding issues.

7. Draft Work Programme 2019/2020

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) Work Programme for 2019/2020 be updated to include the following items of business, as discussed at the Informal meeting of the Board held prior to this meeting:**
 - a) Tourism Strategy 2019-2023 – Progress**
 - b) Progress on City Centre South**
 - c) St Mary's Guildhall**
 - d) Canal and Canal Basin - Progress**
 - e) Very Light Rail - Progress**
 - f) Ring and Ride – Review delivery of service**
 - g) Electric Vehicle Charging Points – Review of installation and usage**
 - h) Air Quality Action Plan – Progress updates**
 - i) Coventry and Warwickshire LEP – Work of the LEP including grant funding**
- 2) The following items of business be considered for future meetings of the Board:**
 - a) Very Light Rail test track in Dudley**
 - b) A canal basin where development has taken place, for example Sheffield or Leeds**

8. **Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved**

There were no other items of business.

(Meeting closed at 4.30 pm)