

Review Committee – 4 October 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **4 October 2016** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr J C Burton
Vice-Chairman: Cllr B T Hazlewood

Cllr N L Cooper	Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Cllr Mrs J R Gooding	Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr N J Hookway	Cllr R Milne
Cllr M Hoy	Cllr A L Williams
Cllr M J Lucas-Gill	

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R R Dray and Mrs L Shaw.

OFFICERS PRESENT

L Moss	-	Assistant Director, Community and Housing Services
A Law	-	Assistant Director, Legal Services
M Howlett	-	Principal Environmental Health Officer
P Gowers	-	Overview and Scrutiny Officer
M Power	-	Committee Administrator

217 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2016 were agreed as a correct and signed by the Chairman.

218 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs M Hoy and B T Hazlewood each declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 5 of the Agenda by virtue of being Chairman and Member respectively of the Rochford District Local Highways Panel. Cllr J C Burton declared an interest in item 5 of the Agenda by virtue of his being the Ward Member for Wheatley Ward and living in the AQMA. Cllr M Hoy declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of his position as Treasurer of the Rayleigh Town Team.

219 LOCAL AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Community and Housing Services, which provided Members with a summary of local authority responsibilities regarding local air quality management and the Council's progress with the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Rayleigh.

In response to questions from the Committee, the following responses were provided:

- There are only two affected properties within the AQMA, both of which are residential. It was noted that an improvement in the traffic flow may help to

reduce car emissions. The District Council has no additional powers or funding but is responsible for achieving set objectives. Essex County Council is represented on the Steering Group and has been involved in the preparation of the Action Plan.

- The Council will engage with the bus companies, Abellio trains and taxi drivers to see if there are any direct actions they can take to reduce emissions. However, the focus is on reducing emissions from cars as this is where the greatest impact can be made.
- The traffic modelling of Rayleigh town centre undertaken for the Rochford Local Highways Panel tracked the journey of each vehicle travelling through the town centre at different times during the day over a period of time. This provided a picture of the options for traffic management in Rayleigh.
- Phase One of the AQAP project focused on analysing specific aspects of the air quality issues and will be incorporated into the Action Plan, which will be put out for consultation. The impact of existing development schemes on the locality and the AQMA has been factored in to the AQAP. In respect of the reference in the officer report to consideration of 'current and planned policies and actions and other pressures such as development', it was acknowledged that many of the proposed actions fall within the scope of Essex County Council Highways but Rochford District Council can look to amend and introduce planning policies in particular, which may help infrastructure be in place before future large developments occur. The impact on air quality of new housing developments is recognised and measures, such as the inclusion of electric charging points for cars in the AQMA and for new developments, are recognised. Development outside of the District that will impact on the air quality in the District will be dealt with as and when the situation arises.
- In order to get a maximised level of feedback from the public the consultation scheduled to commence in autumn 2016 should clearly lay out the principal issues of concern to residents and prompt them to give their opinion on the proposals put forward.
- If congestion is reduced adjacent to the receptors it will result in reduction of pollution in the whole of the AQMA. The aim of the AQAP is to improve and protect public health.
- The current automatic monitoring system, which is placed on pavements, doesn't accurately represent pollution levels at locations where there is exposure. To provide a more accurate picture it is proposed to remove the automatic monitoring and employ additional diffusion tubes in locations where it is recognised that there is an issue.
- In respect of proposed timescales for achievement of the Plan's objectives, the actions in the AQAP are for 2016-20: measures that are implemented

are likely to achieve the objective levels of air quality by 2018.

- There are annual reviews of air quality which look at where there may be new exposure to pollution or changes in vehicle throughput. Where large housing developments are proposed, they are accompanied by air quality assessments. Monitoring can be expanded to include areas outside the AQMA: there are currently two such locations in Rochford.
- A newspaper article stated that higher levels of car emissions correlated to an increase in traffic accidents. The general trend in Rochford in 2012 saw a maximum exceedance of 43.1 mg, which is 5% over the threshold. Currently there is just one property, at an exceedance of 2.5%, which equates to a halving of exceedance. The exceedance is predicted to be eradicated by 2018. The peak threshold of nitrogen dioxide is nowhere near being reached.
- The Local Authority pays for air quality although there is no statutory obligation for it to do so: the cost is mainly in officer time. The Council is charged with trying to achieve the objectives set and co-operation with Essex County Council as the Highways Authority is key. This can include the promotion of cycling/walking to school in areas where there are known issues around air quality.
- If a Member has concern, they can ask for an area to be monitored by way of additional infusion tubes being deployed: the main cost will be officer time. Monitoring by way of diffusion tubes will need to be undertaken for at least nine months in order that useful data can be provided. Because of the volume of traffic there is a particular problem with air quality in Rayleigh: it is unlikely that anywhere else in the District will be classified as an AQMA. If the Council can say that locations have been monitored but that no issue has been found this could provide a positive message to residents.
- The Council is confident that the currently proposed actions for the AQMA will be sufficient to resolve the issue, although there is an option to expand the area. Actions may take place outside of the AQMA that will positively impact on the air quality within AQMA. Castle Road was not included in the AQMA because there was no indication of exceedance of air pollution in that road.
- Every property within the AQMA received a letter in 2014 with information inviting comments; however, it was appreciated that public awareness of the process since, especially for those residents who are affected by the AQMA, could be improved by better information on the website. Every document the Council has produced is in the public domain. All residents within the AQMA will be direct mailed with the forthcoming consultation.
- When the objectives of the AQAP have been achieved, the focus will be on maintenance of the air quality levels.

- It was requested that the resource implications and full cost estimates of the options will be added to the AQAP report to be submitted to Members in 2017.
- Rochford town centre does not have an AQMA area. In respect of the diffusion tubes deployed in Rochford, they show that both areas are in compliance with air quality levels.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) That the resources implications and full cost estimates of the options be added to the Air Quality Action Plan report to be submitted to Members in 2017.

220 DISABLED FACILITY GRANTS

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Community and Housing Services, which updated Members on the current arrangements with regard to Disabled Facility Grants (DFG).

In response to questions, the following was noted:

- The current provider responsible for the core DFG service for Rochford is Home Improvement Agency, Papworth Trust, which is commissioned by Essex County Council up until June 2017, after which time the Council can explore the option of using other providers going forward. In the meantime, Papworth Trust has begun to meet the new time targets set for a client's DFG journey, that is, from point of enquiry to completion. The time for new cases is currently averaging 30 weeks, which is on target. The cases actually completed in the last quarter are showing a higher time (34 weeks) as older cases, which are now being progressed more quickly, are impacting on the times. The direction of travel, however, shown by the new average times is good.
- The original trial by Basildon Borough Council to link Occupational Therapists (OTs) with the Local Authority has not been continued. There is now a hub of independent OTs, which is working well across Essex.
- Social housing providers have their own policy for adaptations for their tenants and it is usually only owner occupiers who go through the DFG process.
- At its review in 2012 the Review Committee made recommendations on the DFG process. Since this time the process in Essex has changed and resulted in the establishment of a central OT hub, which is felt to be an improvement for residents.

- If a client decides to use their own contractor Papworth Trust would offer support and an officer and/or surveyor would undertake interim and final inspections. Clients would be advised to get a minimum of contractor estimates, which would then be price checked prior to grant approval.
- In respect of consultations, the Council's internal auditors have recommended that the Council ask clients about the DFG 'journey' as it will give a more accurate picture of satisfaction rates: this will be put in place from the next quarter. To ensure an objective understanding, the Council must be thoughtful in the way questions are asked and have a personal conversation with the client, rather than rely solely on a questionnaire.
- The 2016/17 DFG budget has been fully allocated/committed, which means a prioritised waiting list is in place and no further clients can have DFG grants approved until 2017/18. Works will continue this year in respect of those residents who have had works approved, that is committed works. The pre-approval waiting list currently stands at 57 residents (a lower figure than previously reported). The cost of an average adaptation is £7,000; the maximum grant award is £30,000.
- The Assistant Director, Community and Housing advised that the potential for reducing the cost of the DFG process is being explored. The number of approvals is constant; however the number of applications is approximately double. The Papworth Trust has introduced fixed prices for level access showers, ramps and minor extensions, which has reduced costs.
- An allocation from the capital budget of £150,000 as a 'top-up' for the DFG works is likely to be sought as part of the continuing budget process. £150,000 is the sum that was allocated in previous years.

Resolved

That the work to streamline the Disabled Facilities Grants journey and the ongoing need to demand manage the service, as outlined in the officer report, be noted.

221 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA)

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Legal Services, which provided Members with an update on the use of RIPA over the past year and allowed for the review of the Council's RIPA Policy.

Recommended to Council

That the amendments to the Council's RIPA policy, as set out in paragraph 4.2 of the officer report, be approved.

Resolved

That the Council's annual usage of RIPA powers be noted.

222 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT

The Committee considered the Key Decisions Document and noted its comments.

10/16 Fee Policy – Caravan Sites. The Mobile Homes Act 2013 gave Councils the power to charge fees to licenced sites within the District: a draft fee policy has now been produced. Site owners have been consulted and site visits are in progress. There are six caravan sites in the District that fall within the policy and an income of approximately £4,000 per year is likely to be achieved. The fee will apply to residential home site owners, not holiday homes and not for individuals.

223 WORK PLAN

The Committee considered its Work Plan and noted the following:

- **Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust:** Members requested that the representative attending be advised that one hour only will be allocated for this item.
- **Homelessness strategy:** The Assistant Director, Community and Housing Service and the Council's Housing Allocations and Homeless Team Manager will be invited to attend this meeting.
- **Update on Planning Enforcement:** It was noted that in response to a previous recommendation from the Review Committee that all Members receive a quarterly report on the outstanding planning enforcement caseload, the Executive resolved that this be provided on a monthly basis. Although the report had not been received regularly following this resolution, Members have been advised that it would be resumed imminently: if Members get this report on monthly basis it won't be necessary for this item to come back to the Review Committee.

The meeting closed at 9.44 pm.

Chairman

Date

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