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HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 19 September 2024

Attendance:

Councillors
Cramoysan (Chairperson)

Aron
Bennett
Bolton
Brophy

Latham
Lee
Power

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillors Batho, Becker (Cabinet Member for Community and Engagement), Learney (Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency), Porter (Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan) and Tod (Leader and Cabinet Member for Asset Management).

[Full Video Recording](#)

1. **APOLOGIES AND DEPUTY MEMBERS**

There were no apologies for absence given at this meeting.

2. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRPERSON FOR MUNICIPAL YEAR 2024/25**

RESOLVED:

That, Councillor Brophy be appointed Vice-Chairperson for the 2024/25 municipal year

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

4. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairperson announced that a letter had been received from Hampshire Hospitals in response to the letter that was written on behalf of the council by Councillor Becker which addresses the points raised by the council, influenced by the additional meeting of Health and Environment Policy Committee held on 31 January 2024 in response to the Hampshire Hospitals consultation.

A copy of this letter can be viewed on the councils website [here](#).

5. **TO NOTE THE DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THIS COMMITTEE.**

RESOLVED:

That the timetable of meetings for 2024/25 be agreed, as set out on the agenda.

6. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous additional meetings held on the 22 January 2024 and 31 January 2024 be approved and adopted.

7. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ian Tait addressed the committee during public participation raising the following matters as summarised briefly below.

Furthermore, Councillor Batho spoke in relation to item 8 (Council Health Priorities) and Hazel Agombar addressed the committee regarding item 9 (Air Quality Update) and their comments are summarised under the relevant minutes below.

Ian Tait

- Addressed the committee in January 2022 regarding electric powered taxi's operating in the Winchester area.
- Made reference to the challenges for taxi drivers to switch to fully electric vehicles with only one fully electric taxi in operation.
- Queried the lack of dedicated super charging points at taxi ranks to operate effectively.
- A previously arranged meeting to discuss this matter with the Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan was not rescheduled.
- The issue of electric taxi's was covered in the electric vehicle infrastructure study for the Winchester city centre and district published in October 2018, although there has been a significant increase in the number of EV charging points, none of these cater exclusively for taxi's. The report advised there should be two super charging points which are not available.
- Believed there to be 500 different taxi's operating in the Winchester district and considered that there should be at least 20 all electric taxi's operating in the area by now.
- Queried the purpose of the electric vehicle charging strategy.

In response, the Chairperson suggested that it may be beneficial for these issues to be raised at a future meeting of the Licensing and Regulation Committee when giving consideration was given to taxi licensing policies and the relevant Cabinet Member could advise accordingly.

8. **COUNCIL HEALTH PRIORITIES (PRESENTATION)**

Councillor Batho addressed the Committee on this item.

In summary, Councillor Batho made reference to the following points which were responded to accordingly by the Cabinet Member and relevant officers:

- Reminded the committee of two health-related motions he had submitted to Council in the last 18 months.
- The first motion proposed reducing speed limits to 20 mph, debated on 18th January 2023 which called for: Support of the '20 is plenty' campaign; requested that Hampshire County Council (HCC) implement a 20mph limit throughout the Winchester District and make 20mph the default speed limit in residential areas; Supported Parish Council's seeking 20mph zones; An extended 20mph area in the city centre to support active travel; and asked the Leader to write to HCC Councillors to support these changes.
- The second motion, debated on 30th November 2023, addressed vaping products and supported the Local Government Association's call for a ban on the sale and manufacture of disposable vapes by 2024; proposed regulating disposable vaping products through the Environmental Protection Act; that the Leader write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to support the ban and suggested the council respond to future consultations supporting the ban.
- Both motions were passed by the Council at their respective meetings.
- Made reference to HCC Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP 4), published in February and the plans aims to achieve better outcomes for the economy, environment and society with an environmentally friendly transport system, active travel and active lifestyles, advocates for planning that prioritises people over vehicles and suggests using a "Healthy Streets" approach, focusing on public health in transport and planning.
- Councillor Batho asked the committee to consider including the "Healthy Streets" approach in the council's health priorities.

The Chairperson welcomed Mike Newman from the Public Health Team at Hampshire County Council to the meeting who, together with the Corporate Head of Economy and Community, provided a presentation which included the context of how the council operated with its wide range of partners - agencies, institutions and stakeholders, setting out high level data to understand performance, and proposals for health priorities to test against existing and emerging strategies, policies and plans and map against the work of the council to continue to generate health benefits, both directly and indirectly.

Officers sought the committee's views to identify clear health priorities for the district and an understanding of the council's role in how it could support, facilitate and improve those priorities. Councillor Becker emphasised that the council was asked to develop a strategic approach to decide where it focussed its resources and priorities and identify the right places to achieve the maximum outcome.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and comment on the following matters which were responded to by the Cabinet Member, Mike Newman and the Corporate Head of Economy and Community.

- (a) A question was asked about the lack of quantitative data in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), specifically regarding causality, and how this affects the understanding and subsequent actions.
- (b) Clarification was sought on the inclusion of certain risk factors for children, such as access to good quality food, and the impact of Musculoskeletal (MSK) waiting lists on adult morbidity and mental health
- (c) Further clarification was requested on the decision-making process for determining the importance and influence levels of health priorities, particularly diet and weight.
- (d) Questions were raised regarding the high levels of anxiety reported and the role of social prescribing, including the use of green and blue spaces as therapeutic measures.
- (e) Clarification was sought on the involvement of rural-facing agencies and the farming community in the health priorities discussion.
- (f) Concerns were raised about the impact of switching off the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) landline in rural areas and the associated stress for residents with poor mobile network coverage.
- (g) Further information was requested on the adequacy of digital hubs and their role in addressing social isolation among the aging population.
- (h) Questions were raised regarding the adequacy of pharmacies and food insecurity, particularly access to reasonably priced, good quality fresh produce locally.
- (i) Clarification was sought on the definitions and data behind food insecurity, fuel poverty, deprivation, and income benefits, and how these factors interrelate.
- (j) A question was asked about the sharing of best practices among local authorities, particularly regarding effective interventions for weight and diet.
- (k) Further clarification was requested on how the council ensures equitable distribution of sports facilities and resources, particularly in areas of need.
- (l) Concerns were raised about the council's ability to influence road safety, cost of living, child poverty, and community safety and crime, suggesting these might be rated too high in terms of influence.
- (m) A question was asked about the importance and influence of air quality and how it relates to the council's climate change initiatives.
- (n) Clarification was sought on the next steps for progressing the health priorities and when the committee would see concrete proposals and results.

At the conclusion of debate, the committee supported the process carried out to date, welcomed future updates and thanked Mike Newman and officers for their attendance and providing an informative presentation.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be received, and the comments raised by the committee, as summarised above, be noted.

9. **AIR QUALITY STRATEGY (PRESENTATION)**

Hazel Agombar addressed the Committee on this item.

In summary, Hazel Agombar made reference to the following points which were responded to accordingly by the Cabinet Member and relevant officers:

- Wished to address the committee as a resident but worked for the Environment Centre in Southampton and delivers a wood burning engagement programme to four local authorities, including Winchester. The project raises awareness of the health impacts of wood smoke burning.
- Considered that neighbourhoods throughout the district were air pollution hotspots due to the growing trend for log burners, which contained particulate matter, tiny bits of soot and dust which can be inhaled into the lungs causing inflammation and harm.
- Public awareness of the dangers caused by woodsmoke is very low with the stove industry pushing the message that modern stoves are a cheaper and greener way of heating the home which is untrue. Even eco stoves are 450 times more polluting than a gas boiler.
- Residents aware of the dangers fear speaking out so suffer the effects of neighbouring properties using wood burners in silence.
- Urged the council for strong leadership on this matter to protect residents who suffer from wood smoke pollution and prioritise awareness of the harm caused by wood burning stoves.

The Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan introduced the item which provided an update on air quality which had continually been monitored by Winchester across the district for over a decade, where the council's ambitious air quality targets were a key part of the living well agenda. The committee were reminded that an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) was in place throughout Winchester city centre where air quality levels were worse than in other areas of the district.

The committee noted that the council are leading Hampshire in the development of an Air Quality Strategy (AQS) for the whole district, with the area of works led by both the Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and the Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan. An AQS had been commissioned following meetings of the cross-party steering group, comprising of members from all parties and stakeholders from WinACC, the Business Improvement District (BID), a representative from the Director of Public Health and relevant officers. The views of the committee on the AQS, currently out for consultation, were welcomed.

The Service Lead: Public Protection gave a presentation which set out the current position in the review of the air quality for Winchester, an overview of the AQS and the process towards adopting the AQS going forward.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and comment on the following matters which were responded to by the Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, the Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan and the Service Lead: Public Protection.

- (a) A question was asked about the potential health benefits of reducing PM2.5 levels from 10 to 5, specifically regarding the decrease in cardiovascular hospital admissions and heart failure rates. Further clarification was sought on the inclusion of PM1 in the strategy, considering its impact on climate change.
- (b) Clarification was sought on the effectiveness of electric vehicles in reducing PM2.5 emissions, particularly through regenerative braking and the impact of tire wear.
- (c) A question was raised about the current electric vehicle charging infrastructure, including the availability and funding of rapid chargers in Winchester.
- (d) Further clarification was requested on the communication strategies in place to inform the public about air quality issues, particularly regarding wood burners and how councillors could help amplify these messages.
- (e) A question was asked about the sources of air pollution in Winchester, including the relative contributions of transport emissions, domestic and commercial boilers, and agricultural activities.
- (f) Clarification was sought on the potential for engaging with local communities, such as parish councils and schools, to expand the air quality monitoring network using low-cost monitoring stations.
- (g) A question was raised about the possibility of securing funding for air quality monitoring equipment through community infrastructure levy (CIL) funding or other sources.
- (h) Further clarification was requested on the involvement of the Director of Public Health in the preparation of the Air Quality Strategy and the extent of their influence on the measures implemented.
- (i) A question was asked about the feasibility of declaring a smoke control area in Winchester, including the legislative requirements and potential impact on residents who rely on wood-burning stoves.
- (j) Clarification was sought on the current regulations and enforcement related to bonfires in the district, including the extent of the problem and any potential hotspots.

At the conclusion of debate, the committee thanked officers and Cabinet Members for the work undertaken and an informative presentation.

RESOLVED:

That the report and presentation be received, and the comments raised by the committee, as summarised above, be noted.

10. **COUNCIL PLAN 2025-30 (PRESENTATION)**

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Asset Management introduced the proposals for the Council Plan for 2025-2030, seeking the views of the

committee on the issues that related primarily to health and environment, including input on the challenges to be faced, the improvements to be made and gaps to be filled as a result of current council plan performance and asked the committee to consider where the council needed to be by 2030.

The Senior Policy and Programme Manager gave a presentation which summarised the process being followed to develop the next council plan for the period 2025 to 2030 and set out the background and a number of key factors, including the challenges faced, the engagement processes and the roles of various committees prior to the consideration of the draft council plan by Cabinet in December 2024 and its subsequent determination by full Council for adoption in January 2025.

Members were asked to review and comment on the direction of the council plan, including the vision, themes and priorities, focussing on the responsibilities of the committee in respect of health and environment, namely:

1. Living Well
2. Cost of Living
3. Climate Emergency/Greener Faster

The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary the following matters were raised which were responded to by the Leader and the Senior Policy and Programme Manager.

- (a) A question was asked about the process for engaging with the rural economy and outlying settlements, given the perceived urban-centric focus of the engagement process.
- (b) Clarification was sought on the evidence-based approach of the process, expressing concerns about the introduction of subjectivity before the full data from resident surveys was available.
- (c) A question was raised regarding the consultation with businesses, specifically how the council plans to consult all Chambers of Commerce and whether councillors could assist in this process.
- (d) Further clarification was requested on the derivation of the PESTLE analysis, particularly cooler home plans (as well as warmer) and the absence of references to the grid under technological pressures.
- (e) A question was asked about the emphasis on protecting blue spaces, in addition to green spaces, highlighting the importance of rivers and water bodies.
- (f) Clarification was sought on the changes in local health and environment challenges since 2020, with a focus on the interdependence between climate and nature challenges.
- (g) A question was raised about the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and other socio-economic factors on the council's ability to provide affordable homes.
- (h) Further clarification was requested on the potential social isolation of young people due to increased digital connectivity and the lack of physical gathering spaces.

- (i) A question was asked about the increased prevalence of mental health and anxiety issues among younger people and the council's role in addressing these challenges.
- (j) Clarification was sought on the council's biodiversity policies and their effectiveness in preventing the destruction of biodiversity.
- (k) A question was raised about the impact of smartphone use in schools and the overuse of technology on children's health and wellbeing.
- (l) Further clarification was requested on the challenges of achieving carbon neutrality for the district by 2030, given the increasing difficulty of reducing emissions outside the council's direct control.
- (m) A question was asked about the potential impact of artificial intelligence on the council's services and the need for better understanding and preparation for its effects.
- (n) Clarification was sought on the council's plans to address localised flooding and other extreme weather events expected to worsen due to climate change.
- (o) A question was raised about the importance of resilience and mitigation in the face of environmental and political instability.
- (p) Further clarification was requested on the council's plans for critical infrastructure, including water and food supply chains, and the need for cool hubs in addition to warm hubs.
- (q) A question was asked about the inclusion of dementia-friendly facilities in new developments, considering the ageing population.

At the conclusion of debate, the Leader thanked the committee for their helpful thoughts and comments and the Chairperson thanked those in attendance for their input and the Senior Policy and Programme Manager for an informative presentation.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the presentation be received, and the comments raised by the committee, as summarised above, be noted.

11. **TO NOTE THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2024/25**

Councillor Lee stated there had been a question raised at Council on 18 September 2024 in relation to community energy and renewable energy which he suggested the committee may wish to consider on its work programme going forward.

In response, the Chairperson stated that he anticipated that Council would provide feedback on this matter in due course.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme for 2024/25 be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 10.15 pm

Chairperson