

**Minutes of the Environment and Sustainability Committee
5 September 2023**

Present:

Councillor M. Beecher (Chair)
Councillor K.M. Grant (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:

| | | |
|-------------|---------------|-----------------|
| S.N. Beatty | S.M. Doran | K. Rutherford |
| L. Brennan | K. Howkins | J. Turner |
| T. Burrell | M. Lee | H.R.D. Williams |
| J. Caplin | A. Mathur | |
| D. Clarke | L. E. Nichols | |

Apologies: Councillors J.R. Sexton

In Attendance: Councillors C. Bateson

44/23 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

45/23 Disclosures of Interest

Councillor Nichols declared he was a board member of Knowle Green Estates.

46/23 Questions from members of the Public

There were no questions from members of the public.

47/23 Ward Issues

There were no ward issues raised.

48/23 Staines Conservation Area Appraisal

The Committee considered a report from the Planning Development Manager and the Team Leader of Planning Development Management on an appraisal of the Staines Conservation Area, Staines Conservation Area Appraisal and the proposed revisions to its boundary.

The draft appraisal had previously been agreed by the Environment and Sustainability Committee in May 2022 for public consultation. However, in approving the final document, it emerged that five responses had not been taken into account, four of support and one an objection on behalf of the owner of the former Debenhams building. A subsequent Judicial Review quashed the decision to extend the area around the former Debenhams store and the Memorial Gardens on three grounds. The report before the Environment and Sustainability Committee now was, therefore, to consider the Appraisal and the extensions afresh in light of all the public consultation responses received, including those originally missed.

The Committee was advised that a conservation area across the river in Runnymede that had been recently assessed. The Committee explored how the Conservation could help enhance the areas it extended into, and it was explained that any changes to those areas could not deteriorate the area and would need to make improvements to the existing area.

The Committee queried the two areas being removed from the Conservation Area. It was explained that around the Travelodge, the area had changed so significantly that there was very little of intrinsic value to the Conservation Area. The Committee also queried the exclusion of the north side of the High Street, and it was noted that it would dilute the Conservation Area. The Committee also sought clarification on how conservation areas are affected by design codes.

The Committee **resolved** to

- 1) Agree the revisions to the boundary of the Staines Conservation Area ("SCA");
- 2) Agree the Staines Conservation Area Appraisal as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

49/23 Planning Development Management Performance Report

The Committee considered a report on the performance of Planning Development Management from the Planning Development Manager. The report was presented annually to advise members of the performance of Planning Development Management against government targets and requirements. The performance was measured over a two year period and was assessed against the speed of determining applications for major and non-major development, the quality of decisions made by the authority on applications for major and non-major development. The increase in the

number of applications received was highlighted along with the future changes in fees related to planning applications.

The Committee noted the timeline to deal with applications and raised awareness of an application that had been taken to appeal on non-determination. The Planning Development Manager explained that the number of weeks to determine an application could be extended through negotiation with applicants as some statutory consultees required more time to respond and input into applications. That particular appeal had been lodged as there was not enough time to take the application to the next Planning Committee. Non-determination was a route that applicants could take and was not uncommon.

The Committee requested that actual housing delivery test percentage numbers for 2020-21 and 2021-22 be provided. The Planning Development Manager agreed to circulate these after the meeting.

The Committee **resolved** to note the report.

50/23 Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document

The Committee considered a request to go to consultation on a supplementary planning document (SPD) from the Senior Planning Officer. The Committee had previously approved for a Green Initiatives Fund bid to produce an SPD. Following a procurement process, David Locke Associates had produced a Climate Change SPD that would support the delivery of planning policies. The SPD, if adopted, would be required to be submitted alongside planning applications. Other local authority Climate Change SPD's had been reviewed when compiling the information.

The Committee expressed concern that the language used in the SPD was not strong enough. The Senior Planning Officer advised that the SPD could not introduce new policy that the parent policy did not require. When an up-to-date Local Plan was adopted, the SPD would have more weight.

The Committee **resolved** to approve to commence a statutory 4 week consultation on a new Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document.

In accordance with Standing Order 21.6, Councillor Nichols requested that his abstention be recorded.

51/23 Green Initiatives Fund Bids

The Committee considered two requests for funding from the Green Initiatives Fund.

The Chief Accountant presented his request for funding for a review of the Council's investment portfolio in terms of Environmental, Social and Governance Credentials. The Investment portfolio would be scrutinized and

recommendations would be made to help the Council invest ethically. Since submission of the bid, Arlingclose had altered their fee estimate to carry out the review to £11,500 plus VAT and the Chief Accountant confirmed this would be the amount requested. The Chief Accountant confirmed there were no resources in-house to undertake this exercise.

The Committee noted that depending on the outcome of the review, any recommendations would be acted on over a phased period of time to manage yields and help produce a balanced budget for the Council. The Chief Accountant advised that the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy were asking all local authorities to consider their investments in light of Environmental Social and Governance information, and this would become standard practice.

The Committee **resolved** to agree the request for funding for a review of the Council's investment portfolio in terms of Environmental, Social and Governance credentials of £11,500 plus VAT.

The Group Head Commissioning and Transformation presented a bid from Cocoon Kids relating to the purchase of a cargo e-trike.

The Committee suggested that the cargo section of the e-trike be used to promote climate issues or the Council's involvement in climate issues, and the Group Head agreed this could be raised with them.

The Committee noted that the bid would complement funding from another source and Cocoon Kids had been runners up for two categories in the Spelthorne Business Awards 2022.

The Committee **resolved** to agree the request for funding by Cocoon Kids of an EAV cargo e-trike of £5,876.

52/23 Rivers and Watercourses Update

The Committee received an update on rivers and watercourses in the borough from the Group Head – Commissioning and Transformation. The report outlined details for each main watercourse in Spelthorne as well as the Council's watercourse responsibilities and recent known issues. The Committee were notified there was an error regarding the flow of the River Ash at Nutty Lane and the report required updating to read "*This is consented to discharge wastewater into the Ash at a rate of 45 cubic meters over 24 hours a day...it typically discharges at a rate of 40 cubic meters, for 4-5 hours a day on average.*" (edited section attached)

The Committee raised concern for residents with riparian responsibilities who were not able to undertake the work required of them. The Group Head confirmed that the Council could not undertake the work for them due to budget constraints, but alternative options, such as Community Payback, could be explored.

The Committee raised concern over sewage discharge into the River Thames, but the Group Head confirmed that the River Thames was under the remit of the Environment Agency and not the Council.

The Committee expressed support for a future growth bid to increase the budget to look after the rivers and waterways in the borough.

The Committee **resolved** to note the update.

53/23 Update on Climate Change Strategy

The Committee received an update on the Climate Change Strategy from the Group Head Commissioning and Transformation.

Of the 74 actions on the strategy, 45 were currently in progress. A new Climate Change officer would commence work in September, so there may be a delay in progress while they were getting settled in the role.

A committee member asked if the power usage of the IT equipment and information storage could be assessed, and the Group Head agreed she would investigate if this could be done.

The Committee **resolved** to note the update.

54/23 Updates from Task and Finish and/or Working Groups

The Committee received a written update on the work of the Community Infrastructure Levy Task Groups and a verbal update on the work of the Climate Change Working Group.

The Group Head Commissioning and Transformation provided a summary of topics and reports discussed at the first meeting of the Climate Change Working Group of this municipal year.

The Committee **resolved** to note the update.

55/23 Forward Plan

The Committee considered the forward plan for future Committee business.

A committee member requested that provisional committee dates for the further conservation area appraisals be added to the plan in future.

The Committee **resolved** to note the forward plan subject to the suggested change.

The meeting ended at approximately 20:45.