

**Minutes of the Environment and Sustainability Committee
18 June 2024**

Present:

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

Councillors:

S.N. Beatty	S.M. Doran	H.R.D. Williams
L.H. Brennan	N. Islam	P.N. Woodward
T. Burrell	A. Mathur	
J.P. Caplin	J.R. Sexton	

Substitutions: Councillors K. Howkins (In place of O. Rybinski)
L. E. Nichols (In place of J.A. Turner)

Apologies: Councillors Rybinski and Turner

In Attendance: Councillors C. Bateson

26/24 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2024, and the extraordinary Committee meetings held on 29 February 2024 and 16 April 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

27/24 Disclosures of Interest

Councillor Brennan declared an interest in agenda item 8, 'Conservation Areas' and as such she would leave the room when this was discussed by the Committee.

28/24 Questions from members of the Public

There were no questions from members of the public.

29/24 Terms of Reference

The Committee received their updated Terms of Reference following a change of structure to Committees agreed by Council in April 2024.

The Committee **resolved** to note their updated Terms of Reference.

30/24 Strategic Priorities for 2024/2025

The Committee did not have any comments on their Strategic Priorities for 2024/25 and later requested this be deferred until the next meeting.

31/24 Tiny Forest Bid

The Committee considered a request to submit a funding bid for the creation of one or more Tiny Forests within the borough. The bid would be submitted in partnership with Runnymede Borough Council, and at least two suitable sites in Staines and Ashford had been identified and would be confirmed shortly. The cost of establishing each site would be approximately £32,960. There would be no cost to the Council as it would be covered by the Local Authority Treescape Fund, and extra support would be provided by Earthwatch.

The Committee expressed their support for the proposal, but raised concern that the proposed sites would exclude a large portion of the population. It was confirmed that Council owned sites with community use were being explored for future funding opportunities. The Committee provided suggestions for future sites that could be explored for the project if the first round of the project was successful.

The Committee **resolved** to

1. Authorise Spelthorne Officers to submit a funding bid to the Local Authority Treescapes Fund, and
2. Delegate authority to Head of Corporate Governance to enter a contract with Earthwatch to deliver the Tiny Forest project.

32/24 Conservation Areas

Councillor Brennan left for the consideration of this item as she had declared an interest.

The Committee considered a report from the Planning Development Management Team Leader on the draft Conservation Area Appraisals for areas in Laleham, Lower Halliford, Lower Sunbury, Manygate Lane, Shepperton, Stanwell, and Upper Halliford. PurcellUK, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, had undertaken reviews and recommended revisions to the conservation areas. The Council would undertake a six-week public

consultation on the recommended revisions, and the decision on the final appraisals would be presented to the Committee in future. Change to the boundaries in each area were identified to the Committee.

The Committee queried the criteria for extending the conservation area, and were informed this did not often happen due to the quality of new development. The Committee were advised that homes in the conservation area could not be forced to make improvements in keeping with the conservation area, only encouraged. The Committee expressed a desire for further areas of the borough to be appraised for conservation areas and were advised this would be subject to a growth bid as part of the budget process for the following year.

The Committee provided comments on individual conservation areas and were advised these would be useful to submit as part of the consultation as they reflected local knowledge that Purcell UK would not necessarily have access to. Consultation responses would be reported to the Committee in Autumn.

The Committee **resolved** to

1. Agree the draft Conservation Area Appraisals for Laleham, Lower Halliford, Lower Sunbury, Manygate Lane, Shepperton, Stanwell, and Upper Halliford
2. Undertake a six-week public consultation process, and
3. Refer the appraisals back to Environment and Sustainability Committee to agree, following the consultation process.

Meeting adjourned at: 20:14

Meeting reconvened at: 20:20

Councillor Brennan rejoined the meeting.

33/24 Housing Delivery Test Action Plan

The Committee considered the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan 2023 from the Planning Development Manager. As only 68% of the borough's housing needs have been delivered over the last three years, the Council was required to produce an Action Plan to identify actions to address under delivery against the housing requirement in the area.

The Committee noted there were a range of reasons, such as increased construction costs, for underdelivery of housing in the borough, however some neighbouring boroughs had exceeded their housing targets. The Committee queried if any of the actions would make a substantial difference in encouraging development to address the housing need. The Planning Development Manager explained the plan was to demonstrate the Council was doing everything it could to attempt to solve the issue. The Committee noted the borough's assessed need was 618 dwellings per annum and queried if that number could change. The Local Plans Manager explained that number could be changed by the Planning Inspector or Central Government.

The Committee noted that underdelivery of housing also meant there was an underdelivery of affordable housing in the borough, and were advised there was a member/officer working group who were currently exploring options to address this.

The Committee **resolved** to

1. Agree the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan 2023, and
2. Publish the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan 2023 on the Council's website.

34/24 Consultation on Major Applications

The Committee considered a report on updates to the 'Consultation on Emerging Planning Proposals' document from the Planning Development Manager. The consultation protocol was adopted in 2022, and a review of the document would take place every two years. Updates to the document were highlighted as well as the impact of the document since adoption. The protocol was not binding to developers, but existed to demonstrate the importance of consultation and engagement with the community. The Planning Development Manager reported an update to Appendix 2 of the report as follows:

Debenhams: In addition, in-person meetings had been held with local stakeholder groups, businesses and residents associations, and street canvassing and surveys had taken place.

Renshaw: Street canvassing and in-person briefings with local stakeholder groups were undertaken.

The Committee raised a recent planning application where they felt the document had not been adhered to, and the Planning Development Manager explained the applicant had not met with the Council before submitting their application.

The Committee **resolved** to agree the revised Consultation on Emerging Planning Proposals document.

35/24 Update to Design Code Task Group

The Committee considered a report on updates to the Design Code Task Group terms of reference. In order to not delay the design codes project, it was recommended that authority be delegated for 'gateway' decisions regarding the design codes project, and the terms of reference be updated to accommodate membership changes if a member appointed by the Committee was unable to continue work on the task group. Updates would be provided to members of the committee on a regular basis.

The Committee noted that if not agreed, the decisions would need to be brought to Committee and would significantly delay the project.

The Committee **resolved** to

1. Delegate authority to make decisions at 'gateway' points to the Group Head for Place, Protection and Prosperity in consultation with the Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee
2. Agree the amended version of the Design Code Task Group Terms of Reference.

36/24 Updates from Task and Finish and/or Working Groups

The Committee received an update on the work of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Task Groups, and a verbal update on the work of the Climate Change Working Group and the Design Code Task Group.

The Committee were advised that the CIL meetings mentioned in the update had been postponed and would be rescheduled.

The Chair provided a summary of topics and reports discussed at the last meetings of the Climate Change Working Group.

The Chair of the Design Code Task Group provided a summary of the work of the Design Code Task Group since it was established.

The Committee requested that the minutes of the meetings for the Climate Change Working Group and the Design Code Task Group be made available to all members, and this was agreed.

The Committee noted the role of Andy von Bradsky, Critical Friend, on the Design Code Project Board and were informed he was advising members of the task group. The Committee acknowledged the opening of the online Design Code hub and were advised it would be updated regularly.

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

37/24 Forward Plan

The Committee requested the item on the Committee's 'Strategic Priorities 2024/25' be added to the next meeting's agenda.

The Committee requested that the possibility of producing further conservation area appraisals for the borough be brought to committee in future and were advised this would form a growth bid as part of the service plans being presented at the next meeting.

The Committee noted that an Corporate Plan Action Tracker would be produced for councillors to keep track of progress on the actions set out

against the Council's Corporate Plan, and requested the Committee have oversight of its related actions.

The Committee **resolved** to note the forward plan, subject to the above inclusions.

Meeting ended: 21:27