



EAST
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4(b)
REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Regulatory Services Committee held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on 4 June 2018 at 4.30 p.m.

P R E S E N T

Cllr Anna Bailey (Chairman)
Cllr Mike Bradley (as a Substitute)
Cllr Lorna Dupre (as a Substitute)
Cllr Elaine Griffin-Singh
Cllr Neil Hitchin
Cllr Julia Huffer
Cllr Chris Morris
Cllr Stuart Smith (as a Substitute)
Cllr Jo Webber

ALSO PRESENT

Cllr Mike Rouse
Jo Brooks – Director Operations
Julia Atkins – Senior Environmental Health Officer (Domestic)
Liz Knox – Environmental Services Manager
Andrew Lamb – Travellers Liaison Officer
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer
Jenny Winslet – Senior Environmental Health Officer
Members of the public and press - 2

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

5. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Councillors Sue Austen, Hamish Ross and Carol Sennitt.

Councillors Mike Bradley, Lorna Dupre and Stuart Smith attended as Substitute Members.

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declaration of interest.

7. MINUTES

It was resolved:

That the minutes of the Regulatory Services Committee meeting held on 19th March 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

Councillor Lorna Dupre noted that there were instances recorded in the minutes where officers were to have reported back, specifically relating to the definition of poverty and Section 106 contributions for education, and asked whether this had been done.

The Director Operations had no updates at that time but would report back to the next meeting.

The Chairman asked that any similar actions required in the future be highlighted within the minutes.

8. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman did not make any announcements.

9. **PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO) FOR DOG FOULING**

The Committee considered a report, reference T10, previously circulated, that outlined the powers given to local authorities to introduce PSPOs to control a range of issues linked to anti-social behaviour, including dog fouling.

The Senior Environmental Health Officer (Domestic) advised the Committee that the Council had an Order in place but it only covered certain areas throughout the district and was difficult to enforce. A new Act of Parliament allowed the Council to introduce a Protection Order for the whole of East Cambridgeshire with all areas covered and simpler opportunities for enforcement. A consultation period of 4 weeks was suggested so the matter could return to Committee in July, with adoption by the end of August. In line with the new powers, it was recommended that the Fixed Penalty Notice charge be increased to £80 to show that the Council had a zero tolerance of dog fouling and to ensure the area was clean. Publicity would be carried out to inform residents.

Councillor Mike Bradley questioned why, as it was currently difficult to enforce the existing scheme, it would be any easier. What should the public do if they see any examples of dog fouling? The Committee was informed that the current regime did not cover some lands or roads where the speed limit was over 40mph. The new Order would make it simpler for officers and the public to understand. Ideally the public would provide sufficient evidence to enable action to be taken, usually via a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Councillor Lorna Dupre hoped that parish councils would be included in the consultation. Current protocols suggested a 6 week period for the consultation and this would help engage those councils as this would fit in with their meetings cycle. So it would be better to engage them in this.

In relation to enforcement, some other local authorities had started 'green dog walker' schemes where responsible dog walkers had been identified to lead by example and carry spare bags to give out. They also reported instances of dog fouling, so this acted like a community mentoring support scheme. This could be something to consider, as it was a positive approach to the problem.

Fenland District Council had introduced such a scheme only a couple of months ago.

Councillor Jo Webber knew that these schemes ran in several areas and Wimblington even used an interactive map to highlight areas where dog fouling was a problem. The Council should support parish councils in their endeavours to tackle this issue.

Councillor Stuart Smith sought guidance on what constituted a public area, as some country areas could not be covered by enforcement, such as woodlands or farmland. The Senior Environmental Health Officer stated that, although these areas could also be covered under a different Act, they would be covered by this Order.

In response to Councillor Anna Bailey's question, on clarification on the number of 'hotspots' that could not be enforced, it was revealed that there were relatively few that could not be covered. The Order would explicitly explain the areas that would be covered.

Councillor Bailey thought the suggested consultation period would make it difficult for parish councils to be involved. The Director Operations then recommended a 6 week period, but would not want to prolong it further. The Democratic Services Officer reminded the Committee that there was a 'call in' period after the decision list for this meeting was published, to allow Members to ask for the decision to be reviewed.

Therefore it was proposed that the second recommendation (paragraph 2.1, part 2 in the report) be amended to read "That a consultation period of 6 weeks commencing 6 working days after the publication of the decision list providing there is no 'call in' be agreed". The recommendations, as revised, were then proposed and agreed.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the principles and content of a proposed new PSPO covering the control of dog fouling; be approved
- (ii) That a consultation period of 6 weeks commencing 6 working days after the publication of the decision list providing there is no 'call in' be agreed;
- (iii) That the Fixed Penalty Notice charge for breaches of dog fouling rules under the PSPO be set at £80.

10. **FOOD AND SAFETY SERVICE PLAN**

The Committee considered a report, reference T11, previously circulated, that updated the service plan for both food and safety to satisfy the requirements of the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) and Food Standards Agency (FSA).

The Senior Environmental Health Officer advised the Committee that the Service Plan was required by the HSE and FSA annually. The Plan incorporated both the food safety and health and safety requirements. It set out

the type of work required, including advisory visits by officers or recording instances of infectious diseases, which varied year-on-year. There were no major changes to the Plan from the previous version.

Councillor Lorna Dupre asked how the 'broadly compliant' standard compared to neighbouring authorities and why there appeared a large rise in the number of inspections for Category B businesses. Why had the number of reported food poisonings dropped off and the number of investigations had changed? Did the promotional work include for non-statutory tasks? If that was the case, then the team should promote the non-use of single-use plastics.

The Senior Environmental Health Officer acknowledged that it was a challenge to compare its standards with that of neighbouring councils. However, **this would be looked into and reported back**. Category A businesses were the worst and Category B businesses might be poorer premises or if dealing with vulnerable people. There had been a rash of new businesses so time had been spent with them. The way that food poisonings were recorded had not changed, so the changes in numbers was probably down to a cluster of cases. The numbers were expected to have peaks and troughs. There were also variations in the number of investigations. These could change again as new guidance was anticipated, though no major amendments were expected. The service could promote other issues besides statutory ones and it would be an exciting opportunity to get involved with promotions around recycling plastics, and officers also checked on health and safety matters when completing food health inspections.

Councillor Mike Bradley queried how standards were applied for businesses in the market compared to those which used premises. Fixed businesses had to pay rates but when would a 'pop up' business become 'fixed'? The Committee was informed that the law was weaker when it came to mobile businesses. Officers provided advice and encouragement to all types of business.

Councillor Chris Morris questioned how and why there was a prediction about the number of expected food complaints for 2018/19. It was revealed that the FSA expected predictions to be made, so they had been included although the numbers may be considered pessimistic.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the East Cambridgeshire District Council Food and Health and Safety Service Plan at Appendix 1 be approved.

11. **TRAVELLER SITES REVIEW INCLUDING SERVICE CHARGES**

The Committee considered a report, reference T12, previously circulated, that reviewed Traveller sites.

The Chairman advised the Committee that a revised set of recommendations had been tabled and had been circulated to the Committee.

The Traveller Liaison Officer advised the Committee that, following the review, the rents and service charges would remain at the existing levels as, compared to other local authorities, the levels were the highest in the area. This had

resulted in a surplus which could be used to maintain both traveller sites in the district. This could also include refurbishment of those sites. Short term spending aided the residents in taking more responsibility for their sites and this had already resulted in some clearing up of those locations. The district was one of the most densely populated Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) communities in the country and it had seen a rise in private sites. The overall number of pitches needed to be determined, though this would take time to complete.

Work was ongoing with that community on relevant projects, including community centres. Work had already begun on the Earith site for youngsters, with support and interest from other outside agencies. This would help integrate that community. This had been paid for by the Community Safety Partnership and gave an opportunity for this Council to apply for additional funding.

Councillor Anna Bailey commended the Officer on the enormous amount of work done. She asked for clarification about whether the maintenance costs were covered within the Housing budget and whether the surplus charges would cover them.

Councillor Mike Bradley acknowledged that the district had to look after this community and thought that the rental income should also be used to address their cultural needs as well. He also stated that the community would not use the site at Burwell. A lot of the traveller community liked to stick together and he asked whether they would use spaces on private or public sites. The Committee was told that they would use both types of site.

Councillor Lorna Dupre was impressed with the work done and that there was some work being taken forward at Earith. She supported the recommendation that the surplus be retained for that community to get things done. It was noted that both travellers' sites were owed by the County Council and that they were expected to be handed over to this Council, but when was that likely? If they were passed over would there be an effect on the Local Plan? If the Burwell site would not be used then where else would be?

The Traveller Liaison Officer reminded the Committee that the Burwell site had temporarily closed in 2016 and had 8 pitches at that time. An additional 8 pitches would be needed by 2036, some of which could be on private land. This issue would be looked at in depth so that the targets were hit.

Councillor Anna Bailey highlighted the additional need for pitches as the children grew up and asked if this was in the Local Plan. This could mean that the Earith and Wentworth sites would have to expand. The Housing & Community Manager stated that if there was an identified need for extra accommodation then anywhere in East Cambridgeshire could be considered. The two sites were well settled and the residents would not want to use the Burwell site. The handing over of the 2 sites was close to completion, as there were just a few last issues to sort out.

Councillor Bailey then asked whether there was a limited time on getting the immediate maintenance issues sorted out and whether there would be a

maintenance review of those sites. The Committee could review the whole situation in a year's time.

The Director Operations suggested that the surplus money could be put into a reserve account for use in the future.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted;
- (ii) That the rents and service charges remain at their existing level;
- (iii) That any surplus service charges may be used to cover immediate maintenance issues on the sites;
- (iv) That the rental income be utilised to cover refurbishment requests for the sites;
- (v) That the Traveller Liaison Officer be authorised to determine the level of need of the travelling community within the district and to report on his findings at a later committee.

12. **HOUSING UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report, reference T13, previously circulated, that provided Members with an update on the Housing Service.

The Housing & Community Safety Manager advised the Committee that this would be an interesting year, following the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017. The Act focussed on addressing the homelessness issue through early intervention, which was crucial and something the department excelled at. As a consequence, other local authorities were asking for our help to tackling their problems. The department had received additional funding, some of which had been spent on re-structuring the Housing team to provide a more holistic service.

The team had dealt with a massive increase in mental health clients, which had been addressed by obtaining more resources. All clients were assessed and set a housing plan. The Ely community hub was going from strength to strength and this project would be rolled out to Littleport, Soham, Bottisham and Sutton.

A 'life skills' programme had been developed and would be rolled out to schools. Work was ongoing with the migrant community and this work was funded externally. The Rosmini Centre was helping to support this initiative and this helped to avoid using bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Clients had been identified for assistance in preparation for the introduction of Universal Credit, so their budgets could be worked out. 106 homelessness applications had been made, but only 94 had been accepted. Work with 8 Houses in Multiple Occupation had been undertaken to ensure the proper health and safety standards, with an additional 3 outside of the district. Support

had also been secured for properties suitable for people with learning disabilities.

There had been an issue with rough beggars, none of whom were homeless. The team had worked with the Police to tackle this, though if any were genuinely homeless then they would be offered help. The team was also looking to aid the reduction in domestic violence. The Community Eyes and Ears programme would be re-launched to help identify vulnerable people in the district.

Overall the team was working towards the Gold Standard in Housing Advice and Prevention Services, having achieved the Bronze Standard last year. Thanks were given for the support received from the Members.

Councillor Mike Rouse, Housing Service Champion, noted that the team covered a lot of ground and the key to its success had been working alongside other agencies. The Rosmini Centre was a case in point, where a Syrian family had escaped from Aleppo and had been given support for re-housing and was now flourishing. The report was commended as it showed how the team gave people hope, direction and real support.

Councillor Elaine Griffin-Singh suggested that Centre E in Ely could be used for a youth hub and it would welcome any approach from the Council.

Councillor Mike Bradley thought the team deserved a 'platinum' standard award for the work they had done. He was concerned that there were 4 vacancies within the team and questioned how this affected the service. Would the team have the resources to successfully complete its work? The Housing & Community Safety Manager stated that one of the vacancies had been incorporated into the duties of one other officer. The Housing Practitioner was just a host post and was not part of the Council's team. The intention was to bring in trainees to help fill vacancies, though a more experienced officer may be sought later.

Councillor Anna Bailey thought the team was 'ahead of the curve' and could identify vulnerable families quickly. The school programme looked fantastic and getting some 2 bedroom properties into Band C showed that the team was on top of the homelessness problem.

It was resolved:

That the update in the report be noted.

13. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Committee noted its forward agenda plan with the moving of the Public Space Protection Order report to the September 2018 meeting.

The meeting concluded at 5:44 p.m.