

# GREENER SELECT COMMITTEE

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 8 JUNE 2010

**Councillors Present:** Peter Argyle, Howard Bairstow, Tim Metcalfe and Emma Webster (Chairman) and Keith Woodhams.

**Also Present:** Councillor Paul Bryant, Leigh Hogan, Mike Sullivan, Andrew Deacon and David Cook.

**Apologies:** Councillor Lee Dillon and Councillor Tony Vickers

### PART I

#### 4. Apologies

Apologies for the inability to attend the meeting were received on behalf of Councillor Lee Dillon and Councillor Tony Vickers. Councillor Keith Woodhams attended as a substitute for Councillor Tony Vickers.

#### 5. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2010 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment:

**Page 4 – Review of Local Food.** A presentation by Newbury Town Council on the potential for allotments and other land owned by local councils to contribute to local food production was suggested for a future meeting.

#### 6. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

#### 7. Procurement of Local Food

As part of the ongoing review into the use of local food, Leigh Hogan, Team Leader, Legal and Electoral Services and Mike Sullivan, Contracts and Procurement Officer, attended the meeting to give evidence on the Council's procurement process.

Members were informed that under the Council's Contract Rules of Procedure and The Public Contracts Regulations 2006, the authority was not allowed to discriminate when awarding contracts. This meant that they could not offer a contract to a supplier on the grounds of their locality.

The Council did not procure food directly; however there were contracts to supply meals to schools and Council owned care homes. When setting these contracts the authority was able to insert a clause that the contractor would explore the use of local businesses. This was not always possible as consideration to the producers' ability to produce the right quality and quantity was more important than locality.

Members were also informed that the concept of locality varied between organisations, for example the food industry classed local food as being from the United Kingdom. There was also a growing number of food assurance schemes established over the

## **Greener SELECT COMMITTEE - 8 June 2010 - MINUTES**

years, one such scheme being the Red Tractor Scheme that was established by the Prime Minister in 2000 as an assurance kitemark for quality and locality.

Whilst discussing the evidence given Members raised the following points:

- The agricultural industry had questioned the 'Red Tractor' scheme as emphasis was given to where a product was manufactured rather than where the ingredients were produced, for example a pie may have been manufactured in a village but the meat could be from outside the United Kingdom.
- Members considered the importance of reducing 'food miles' by promoting local and seasonal produce.
- Members discussed the negative impact the European Economic Community (Common Market) had on the milk industry and how local production in the United Kingdom had been limited to allow over-production in other countries.
- Members questioned if the Council's policy on awarding tender contracts could have a clause added requesting that consideration be given to the use of local producers whenever possible.
- As the authority was considering the introduction of a Sustainable Procurement Impact Assessment integrated within the procurement process, Members considered if locality could be part of the assessment.
- It was felt that the procurement conference should be an annual event.

The Committee thanked Leigh Hogan and Mike Sullivan for attending the meeting.

### **8. Flooding Update Report**

Carolyn Murison, Civil Contingencies Manager, attended the meeting to provide an update on progress made following the flooding incident of July 2007 and the outcome of the review by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.

Members were informed that although work had been done since the review, there were still actions planned to help prevent the impact of a future flood event.

Since the scrutiny review, communities had returned to normality with all households now back in their own homes. The Council's help to communities had moved on from counselling and distributing aid to supporting community projects and providing information. There were now a number of community flood groups in operation who worked with the Council and other agencies.

A number of action plans were put in place and were progressing well:

- OSMC Action plan – only 3 items from the original 41 were not completed in full. A substantial amount of progress has been made in these 3 outstanding actions; however due to complexities they have taken longer than anticipated.

## Greener SELECT COMMITTEE - 8 June 2010 - MINUTES

- Highways and Transport Flood Alleviation schemes for 2008/09 – 100% completed. The other works which were not completed for 2009/10 had all commenced; however due to landowner agreements, external funding and the severe weather, not all had been completed as intended. This will however continue and it was anticipated that the majority of the actions in the 3 year programme would be completed by March 2011.
- The actions in the Highways and Transport Service Recommendations Plan were currently 75% complete with 3 actions outstanding. It was noted that one of the actions forms part of a 3 year programme and would not be completed until March 2011.

As well as the actions arising from the scrutiny review the Council had also made a number of other achievements, such as the Thatcham Surface Water Management Plan, successful bidding for external funding to aid communities, improved working relationships with other agencies and improved working relationships with our town and parish councils.

Members were informed that there were still challenges ahead including providing advice regarding insurance issues, additional highway improvements, progress with the Pitt Review and emergency planning for our reservoir. There would also be a national flood exercise in March 2011 that would test the plans that were in place.

Whilst discussing the evidence given Members raised the following points:

- It was recommended that the Flood Action Group had greater Member participation.
- Members asked for the timescale of the retention basins project in and around Thatcham.
- Members requested the list of Town and Parish Councils who had received financial support or equipment purchased for them as part of the support provided by the Council.
- It was noted that the Sustainable Urban Drainage System, when implemented, would help support a change in planning policy.
- Although a lot of work had been undertaken this would not prevent flooding if the same volume of rain fell as seen in the 2007 floods. The district would, however be in a better position to deal with the situation.

Members expressed their appreciation for the work undertaken by Carolyn Murison and Stuart Clark, Principal Engineer, since the 2007 floods.

### 9. **Waste Management**

Emma Webster informed the Greener Select Committee that since the Waste Contract had been introduced it had been decided to disband the Waste Management Task Group, who had overseen its implementation. Andy Deacon, Waste Manager, had been invited to the meeting to discuss with Members what role the Greener Select Committee would have in monitoring the contract.

Andy Deacon circulated a list of key performance indicators relating to the performance of the Waste Management Contract and a set of associated environmental performance indicators. Members were informed that recycling figures were up from 20% to about 40% since the contract was introduced and West Berkshire Council was the 4<sup>th</sup> most improved authority. If the targets in the contract were met we would be in the top 1% of

## Greener SELECT COMMITTEE - 8 June 2010 - MINUTES

authorities with regards to waste management. Veolia Environmental Services were currently meeting 97% of their contractual obligations.

Andy Deacon said he was happy to attend future meetings of the Greener Select Committee to provide an update on the contract's performance.

Whilst discussing the evidence given Members raised the following points:

- Members requested a site visit to Padworth Sidings. Andrew Deacon agreed to arrange this.
- Members asked how accurate the recycling figures were. Andrew Deacon replied that every vehicle was checked and that the Department for Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs and the Environment Agency verified the data.
- Members asked what happened to plastics that could not be recycled. Andrew Deacon replied that the majority of plastics that could not be recycled would be used for energy recovery or would go to landfill. It was the Council's aim to have all plastics recycled; however this would have to wait until the demand made it economically viable.
- Members asked if the figures related to domestic waste and commercial waste. Andrew Deacon replied that all waste collected by the authority was domestic and if every household recycled it was estimated that 60% of our waste collection could be recycled.
- Andrew Deacon was asked if existing landfill sites could be excavated to recycle past waste. Members were informed that land fill re-engineering did exist, however it was not established in this country due to the cost.
- Concern was raised about the Waste Management Task Group being disbanded as the meeting dealt with a variety of issues and not just the introduction of the Waste Management Contract. Members were informed that operational issues discussed at the task group should be sent to StreetCare. Councillor Emma Webster replied that issues that might have previously been addressed by the task group could come to the Greener Select Committee if it was felt to be appropriate.
- Andrew Deacon was asked what the level of complaints were regarding the waste service. Members were informed that initially the level of complaints increased as the new service bedded in and as a consequence of the bad weather. The levels of complaints had now come down and were below that seen under the previous contract.

Members thanked Andrew Deacon for attending the meeting.

### 10. Work Programme

The Greener Select Committee considered a report (agenda item 7) concerning its future work programme.

**Resolved that** a future discussion be held on fly tipping.

*(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.30 pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

**Date of Signature** .....