

DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY GROUP OPEN FORUM MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2023

Councillors Present: Stuart Gourley (Chairman), Richard Somner (Vice-Chairman), Adrian Abbs, Dennis Benneyworth, Nick Carter, Carolyne Culver, Paul Kander, Geoff Mayes, Vicky Poole and Martha Vickers

Also Present: Jon Winstanley (Service Director – Environment), Kofi Adu-Gyamfi (Service Lead – Climate Change), Jenny Graham (Environment Delivery Manager), Daniel Warne (Waste Manager), Jo Watt (Environment delivery Officer), Stephen Chard (Clerk and Zoom Host), Peter Jones (Eunomia Research and Consulting), Michael Duppa-Miller (Grundon), Philip Atkinson (Grundon) and Nick Swift (Hydrogen Hub Proposal)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Owen Jeffery

PART I

1 Election of Chairman for the remainder of the 2023/24 Municipal Year

RESOLVED that Councillor Stuart Gourley be elected as Chairman for the remainder of the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

2 Apologies

A apology for inability to attend the meeting was received from Councillor Owen Jeffery.

3 Declarations of Interest

None received.

4 Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

5 Overview of Government's Simpler Recycling Requirements

Peter Jones (Eunomia Research and Consulting), gave a presentation to the Open Forum which provided an update of the following:

- The recent proposals on Simpler Recycling
- Development of West Berkshire's new Waste Strategy

The full presentation is attached to these minutes.

Members posed a number of questions and Peter Jones responded as follows:

ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY GROUP OPEN FORUM - 27 NOVEMBER 2023 - MINUTES

- The long term Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract meant it would be costly to move away from the current system. A departure from the current system would involve significant financial and practical ramifications.
- The new requirements for the collection of dry recyclable materials (except plastic film) were as follows. For Households: by the end of the financial year in which Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging would commence. For businesses and relevant non-domestic premises: by 31 March 2025. Micro-firms: by 31 March 2027.
- New requirements for collections of plastic film from: households, businesses, non-domestic premises and micro-firms: by 31 March 2027.
- New requirements for minimum collections of residual waste from households by 31 March 2026.
- Statutory change, refuse must be collected no later than every two weeks.
- Producers of packaging would be required to fund (through producer responsibility) greater awareness and publicity around services they provided. They had an obligation to meet recycling targets.
- There was currently no indication that central government would contribute to the cost involved in removing fees for garden waste collection. Central government would not ban charges for garden waste collection.
- The Scheme Administrator would calculate the cost of all waste collection services across the county, then allocate those across different materials, and the more of a particular material type on the market the bigger the overall share of the cost they would meet. There was currently no indication that it would not become a new income stream for the Council.
- Councillor Martha Vickers highlighted the issue of additional bins blocking pavements. She also expressed the view that the government should be doing more promotion, with a focus on reducing waste and seeking to ensure that waste was separated and recycled.

6 **Business Decarbonisation Highlight: Beenham Solar Farm**

Michael Duppa-Miller and Philip Atkinson (Grundon), gave a presentation to the open forum which provided an overview of the following:

- Commitment to sustainability and carbon reduction
- The project's origins, the challenges overcome, and community engagement.
- How the project supported both Grundon's decarbonisation strategy and the Council's environmental objectives, contributing to regional carbon neutrality.

The full presentation is attached to these minutes.

Members posed a number of questions and the presenters responded as follows:

- Any power generated from the site would be directed to the national grid, and not to domestic residences in the local area.
- There would be a large amount of planting (increasing biodiversity) on the site. This would be in liaison with local green farmers.
- The initial plan was for 25 Megawatts, however, this was dropped to 12 Megawatts for the current plan.
- Grundon had applied for the connection to the grid and were subsequently in a queue.
- Grundon would use part of the power generated to supply their electric heavy goods vehicles.

ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY GROUP OPEN FORUM - 27 NOVEMBER 2023 - MINUTES

- There would be battery storage on site.
- Prior to landfill, it was agricultural land.

Councillor Richard Somner and Councillor Geoff Mayes declared an interest, as they were on the Eastern Area Planning Committee and the presentation contained a focus on planning. They would do likewise at the Planning Committee should an application on the site be considered by that body.

7 **Padworth Hydrogen Hub Proposal**

Nick Swift gave a presentation to the open forum which provided an overview of the following:

- Why Hydrogen
- What can you do with it
- Padworth Hydrogen Hub

The full presentation is attached to these minutes.

Members posed a number of questions and Nick Swift responded as follows:

- The time frame to replace the Council's main fleet was in seven year's time. However, street sweepers / smaller vehicles could be available. Mr Swift gave some examples of the different hydrogen products that would be procured.
- It was possible that ten kilowatts an hour of hydrogen could be produced. This would need to be supplemented by another energy source to power the Council's vehicles.
- The cost of green hydrogen was £25-£30 per kilowatt. Grey hydrogen was £130-150 per kilowatt.
- The substantial number of stakeholders involved was a challenge, but efforts would be made to work together on common goals.

8 **Environment Delivery Updates**

Jenny Graham (Environment Delivery Manager), gave a presentation to the open forum which provided an update of the following:

- Annual Progress Report
- Enterprise Car Club
- ECargo Bikes – Supporting local businesses
- Council-installed charging points
- Trial – Kerbo Charge cable channel
- Decarbonising our estate
- How can you find out more and engage

The full presentation is attached to these minutes.

Members posed a number of questions and Jenny Graham responded as follows:

- Stated that information on the contract award to deliver charging points in public car parks and subsequent location of chargers would be available soon. This was a different contract to that for the delivery of on-street charging facilities.
- Plans were progressing on the Bloomfield Hatch Solar Farm. This was on track to start delivery in 2025, building would begin in late summer 2024.
- The solar farm received planning permission in September 2022. This was on Council owned land.

ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY GROUP OPEN FORUM - 27 NOVEMBER 2023 - MINUTES

- The last figure for West Berkshire Council (WBC) was a 15% reduction from the baseline carbon emissions in 2019/20. The solar farm would have a significant contribution to future progress, alongside other significant projects.
- WBC sought to reduce carbon in the district as much as possible by the 2030 net zero target. It would be necessary to establish the offsetting need to support that.
- WBC would allocate the carbon impact to the delivery plan and use that to focus the team to what would have the biggest carbon impact and prioritise the most relevant projects.
- The town and parish climate forums were just for town and parish councils, for it to be a focus group relevant to town and parish councils.
- The widening of the Environmental Advisory Group into the Open Forum aimed to capture the views of environment groups across the district and gave them a forum to engage with.
- Environmental groups could seek to present their ideas to town and parish councils.
- Regarding the car club, Members would be welcome to promote the car club that operated in the central Newbury area. As the Car Club grew, the Council would be in contact with the relevant parish and town councils.
- Regarding the electric vehicle charge points and designated bays close to the charging points, Jenny Graham stated that information would be shared with interested Councillors. Trials were planned for dedicated spaces.
- Jenny Graham to confirm the next locations for charging points before updating the relevant Councillors.
- The Council's target was to be net zero by 2030, the whole district was not expected to be net zero by 2030, but WBC would do all it could to facilitate this and encourage this across the district.

9 Waste - Christmas and New Year Service Updates

Daniel Warne (Waste Manager) gave a presentation to the Open Forum which provided an update on the following:

- Waste less this Christmas – it was estimated that an additional 30% of waste was generated over the Christmas period.
- Collection days
- Garden Waste

The full presentation is attached to these minutes.

Councillor Stuart Gourley gave thanks for all the presentations given at the meeting.

10 Any Other Business

- Living afloat: issue highlighted of bins designated for those who used the canal, being used instead by local homeowners / local businesses. Recycling facilities were also limited. This concerned approximately 150 dwellings.
- The Chairman thanked Councillor Abbs for his time as Portfolio Holder and Chairman of the EAG.

11 Future meeting dates

Monday 29 January and Monday 25 March 2024.

The Chairman noted that Mondays were not feasible for all Members of the Committee. Potential rescheduling would be discussed over email correspondence.

ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY GROUP OPEN FORUM - 27 NOVEMBER 2023 - MINUTES

The Chairman asked Members to come forward with ideas for future agenda items.

(The meeting commenced at 5.00pm and closed at 7.15pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature