

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 THURSDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2023

Councillors Present: Adrian Abbs (Chairman), Richard Somner (Vice-Chairman), Nick Carter, Carlyne Culver, Stuart Gourley, Martha Vickers and Joanne Stewart (Substitute) (In place of Dennis Benneyworth)

Also Present: Jon Winstanley (Service Director (Environment)), Kofi Adu-Gyamfi (Service Lead - Climate Change), Jenny Graham (Environment Delivery Manager), Emily Ashton-Jelley (Principal Environment Delivery Officer), Daniel Warne (Waste Manager) and Stephen Chard (Democratic Services Manager)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Dennis Benneyworth and Paul Hendry

PART I

1 Chairman's Opening Remarks

Councillor Adrian Abbs advised attendees of the purpose of the Environment Advisory Group Open Forum. The Forum provided an opportunity to receive ideas and views from external agencies and cross-party Members prior to decisions being taken. The Forum was not a decision-making body, rather it could inform decisions.

2 Apologies

An apology for inability to attend the meeting was received from Councillor Dennis Benneyworth. Councillor Jo Stewart was present as his substitute.

Apology also received from Paul Hendry, Countryside Manager.

3 Declarations of Interest

None received.

4 Update on Household Waste Collection Vehicle Replacement

Andrew Hope, Fleet Development Manager for Veolia, gave a presentation to the Open Forum which provided an update on the following:

- The latest Veolia UK alternative fuel achievements
- Vehicle decarbonisation landscape
- Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV) development timeline
- Hydrogen vehicle development
- Proposed West Berkshire fleet and decarbonisation options

The full presentation is attached to these minutes.

Members posed a number of questions and Mr Hope responded as follows:

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- There was some anecdotal evidence to suggest that Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel could achieve savings to maintenance costs. Firmer evidence was being collated to prove this was the case.
- New vehicles being procured by Veolia would be ULEV (ultra-low emissions vehicles). The use of these may not impact significantly on net zero, however would result in clean air improvements.

Action: Mr Hope agreed to provide further information on this.

- It was the expectation that HVO fuel would remain more expensive than diesel (currently 25% more expensive). HVO costs could decrease in future but this would depend upon levels of demand and supply.
- Electric waste trucks had been used by Veolia for some years in some areas and there were no reliability concerns. EVs were not currently used in West Berkshire. The new fleet of West Berkshire vehicles would be diesel and introduced in 2024. The fleet would be fully HVO compliant. Kofi Adu-Gyamfi added that it was time to replace the existing fleet, with technological advances to be monitored in the coming years. He pointed out that the bin lifting mechanism would be electric, creating savings on fuel and reducing noise levels.
- The additional costs linked with the provision of alternative vehicles would need to be funded by clients. However, battery/electric vehicles were being trialled.
- Kofi explained that electric only sweepers could be considered when the sweeper fleet was due for replacement. However, the current sweepers were relatively new. Members felt it was appropriate for replacement to take place on a phased basis.
- The range achieved by battery/electric vehicles was an issue due to the geography of West Berkshire. Currently, this could not be achieved but the technology continued to be improved.
- There were no financial incentives being offered to move to HVO waste trucks. However, opportunities would continue to be monitored. Financial support was generally being made available to domestic EVs.

Councillor Adrian Abbs asked officers to explore a move to electric vehicles as part of options being considered in the new Waste Strategy.

It was noted that the current PFI contract was lengthy and had a further nine years left to run. Councillor Carlyne Culver felt that the next contract should have greater flexibility in allowing for technological developments to be adopted as they occurred.

5 Improving Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

Jenny Graham, Environment Delivery Manager, gave a presentation to the Open Forum which provided an update on the following:

- Current position
- Evidence from Local Area Energy Plan
- Refreshing the Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Strategy (ULEV)
- Delivery of on-street charging points
- Delivery of off-street charging points
- Opportunities to lever in external funding

The full presentation is attached to these minutes.

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

- There was a demand for cycle parking, particularly in Newbury and opportunities were being considered. A cycle hub was in place at Newbury Railway Station.

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- Charging points in car parks and community areas were faster charging than on-street chargers. Taxis and private hire firms required access to rapid charging points. The need for dedicated spaces alongside the on-street charging points was being looked at and trials undertaken.

Action: Jon Winstanley to provide an update on timescales and potential locations for on-street charging points.

Action: The location of existing EV points would be reviewed and future locations considered.

- E-cargo bikes were being trialled and were available to Council officers. E-cargo bikes with large storage containers were also being trialled by local businesses and these were fulfilling a need and enabling more sustainable practices to be followed.
- Infrastructure costs had increased in some areas for delivery of EVCPs as a result of limited grid capacity. Pressure points had been identified and these were being discussed with other local authorities and the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership. The Government had also been lobbied on these pressures.
- EV charging points were being looked at in rural areas. Parishes and community groups were encouraged to come forward with potential locations, i.e. village halls. There was a dedicated e-mail address for this purpose and anything related to electric vehicles and charging points: ev@westberks.gov.uk
- Options to enhance bus services in rural areas were being considered, including the potential for a demand led service.

Action: Jon Winstanley to provide further information with regards to the Downs area to Councillor Carlyne Culver.

- The receipt of a time limited grant would enable the rollout of some on-street charging points. Residents had been invited to suggest locations, these locations would be reviewed and, where possible, installed or potentially relocated.

The point was made that more could be done to make walking more attractive and accessible.

6 Any Other Business

Soil conditioner giveaway – Daniel Warne, Waste Manager, gave a brief presentation to the Open Forum on a recent soil conditioner giveaway. This was held over the weekend of 23 and 24 September and was the second such event of the year. It was agreed that further publicity was needed in advance of future occasions. It was suggested that schools be made aware, particularly forest schools.

Food waste – a greater level of food waste needed to be disposed of in the food caddies. This needed to be promoted and it was suggested that this could include through schools.

Action: Councillor Adrian Abbs would e-mail fellow Councillors to ensure this information was shared and communicated more widely.

Future topics – Councillor Abbs explained that ideas could be put forward for future discussions. These could come from Members and from environmental groups. Suggestions could be operational or strategic. The following were suggested:

- Biodiversity net gain – suggestion that this topic could be discussed at a future meeting to consider how this could support the local economy and benefit farming/food security locally, while giving consideration to wildlife and nature.
- Christmas waste – circulation of information needed advising residents on disposal of packaging and food waste.
- Dog waste – consider what more the Council could do to encourage more responsible disposal.

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7 Future meeting date

Monday 27 November 2023 at 5.00pm in the Market Street Council Offices.

(The meeting commenced at 5.00pm and closed at 6.45pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature