

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 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

Councillors Present: Stuart Gourley (Chairman), Nick Carter, Carlyne Culver and Martha Vickers

Also Present: Councillor Adrian Abbs, Kofi Adu-Gyamfi, Emily Ashton-Jelly, Gordon Oliver, Thomas Radbourne, Daniel Warne, and Jon Winstanley, Kelvin Hughes and Susan Millington.

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Dennis Benneyworth, Councillor Owen Jeffery, Jenny Graham and Jo Watt.

PART I

20 Apologies

Apologies received from Councillors Owen Jeffery and Dennis Benneyworth.

Apologies received from Jo Watt and Jenny Graham, with Emily Ashton-Jelly substituting.

21 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record.

22 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Martha Vickers declared an interest in Agenda Item 5 by virtue of the fact that she was a member of Newbury Friends of the Earth, but as her interest was a personal or an other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest she determined to remain to take part in discussion.

23 Community Reuse Project

Kelvin Hughes (Chief Executive, Newbury Community Resource Centre) gave a presentation on the Community Reuse Project which can be viewed on the recording: [Environment Advisory Group Open Forum - \(Monday 30 September 2024\)](#)

Kelvin Hughes was asked a number of questions and responded as follows:

- 82% of the outgoings of the Charity was paid for from activities within the Charity. The balance of 18% was provided largely from Greenham Trust for the maintenance of their sites in Newbury and Cottesmore.
- The Charity had a policy of not taking part in a project if it would not become sustainable within two years with internal support.
- There was often criticism from some item donators when their donations were not accepted, but £32,000 was spent on disposal of items that could not be sold.
- There were environmental benefits as well as social benefits from the reuse of items, taking into consideration the carbon tied up in the production of new items.

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- There had been a change in government legislation regarding persistent organic pollutants (POPs) which prohibited the reupholstering of furniture.
- The more the local community used the furniture project, the more projects NCRC would be able to provide.
- All laptops or digital devices that were donated underwent digital wiping by Green Machine Computers, who certified that each device was wiped. NCRC were in the process of setting up a charity with Green Machine Computers.
- NCRC had a minimum specification of computer, which if it could not be reused, it would be recycled.
- NCRC had recently formed an agreement with Microsoft to become an educational vendor, which meant that they would be able to supply Microsoft software at a reduced cost.
- NCRC did not have a 'library of things' where tools could be borrowed from, as they were unable to provide liability insurance through their insurance provider.
- The quality of donations had not diminished. Donators were asked to upload photos of their donations to the NCRC website, in order for NCRC staff to decide whether or not to accept it.
- Victoria Park Nursery were active users of the Forest School, and NCRC noted the distance that schools had to travel to use the Forest School.

Action: The Council to promote the donation of old laptops to NCRC.

24 Newbury Nature Corridor - Lockwood Woods Project

Susan Millington (Newbury Friends of the Earth) gave a presentation on the Lockdown Woods Project, which can be viewed on the recording: [Environment Advisory Group Open Forum - \(Monday 30 September 2024\)](#).

Susan Millington was asked a number of questions, and responded as follows:

- The Nature Corridor was in its early stages, but Susan Millington had spoken to Parish groups and would be speaking to Greenham Parish councillors.
- She was in contact with Councillor David Marsh regarding the Members' Community Bids for capital expenditures which were due to be submitted in November.
- The aim of the projects was to inspire people to do something for themselves, with regular wellbeing walks and other activities to involve people. There were over 70 people on the first walk.
- By getting buy-in from schools and scouts, Newbury Friends of the Earth aimed to get more families involved.
- In the future when the bulbs and hedges had grown, it would be possible to add notices along the route highlighting that it was a nature corridor.
- She had given a talk to one of the workshops for the Nature Recovery Strategy and was in contact with Rosie Street.
- She was aware of the Greenham Trust project to supply trees, and a number of their trees had been planted in Goldwell Park.

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Members highlighted the previous public petition regarding Hedgehog Highways in new developments, which had been rejected by Council on a technicality and asked for this to be reconsidered.

Action: Kofi Adu-Gyamfi to investigate whether the Hedgehog Highway petition could be reconsidered.

It was noted that Nature Corridors were discussed at a recent meeting about reimagining the Kennet and Avon Canal.

25 **Draft Waste Strategy - Public Consultation**

Daniel Warne (WBC Waste manager) gave a presentation on the Draft Waste Strategy – Public Consultation which can be viewed on the recording: [Environment Advisory Group Open Forum - \(Monday 30 September 2024\)](#)

Daniel Warne was asked a number of questions and responded as follows:

- Veolia were able to collect cardboard even if it was wet.
- The Waste Team believed the messaging was clear, that the Council was proposing to collect more items for recycling, and the consultation had been worded in a way that suggested that to residents. Daniel Warne would be happy to receive feedback from people who had already filled out the survey.
- The proposal to change the frequency of collection of black bins would not change the frequency of collections of other items such as dry recycling and separate food waste.
- Bracknell was a good example for comparison as it was a unitary authority, and they had introduced weekly separate food waste collections.
- The three-weekly collection of the black bin waste in the public consultation had been designed to be clear and obvious to residents as something that was being proposed.
- The Veolia contract review was due to end in 2032, and any service changes would be made within contract through a variation agreement. Daniel Warne noted that since 2008 all service changes had been made within the contract.
- There were currently separate crews for black bins, and for recycling. The proposed changes to the frequency of collections could mean that there would not be the need for as many crews. Depending on how the resourcing worked, it could push more resources towards recycling.
- The vehicles were fully utilised currently, and they would likely continue to be going forward, but there could be reductions and reshuffling of current resources.
- Bracknell Council saw an 11% increase in their recycling rate when they changed to three-weekly general waste collections at the same time as introducing weekly food waste collections.
- The Council had been discussing electric collection vehicles with Veolia, there had been initial discussions with Dennis Eagle and Mercedes. The Waste Team would look into receiving one with a view to investigating how effective they could be in West Berkshire.
- The Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility would come into force in 2025 and would put the responsibility for funding the collection and disposal of

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packaging waste onto the producers. This funding would be distributed across waste collection and disposal authorities.

- The Council was part of many different industrial or local council organisations which lobby government – such as NAWDO, LARAC and ADEPT.
- The Waste Team was in contact with other local authorities and communicated with them about the strategies used in West Berkshire.

Members noted that the waste strategy should be seen holistically as a strategy and waste was more than just black bin residual waste. There were at least eight waste streams collected at the kerbside.

It was suggested that in the long term, waste collection could be brought in-house. There were already a number of other areas in which the Council provided services in house. Officers confirmed that the full range of deliverable options were being considered. The Council would be looking to deliver value for money for Council Tax payers and ensuring that any solution adopted was the best practicable option. If analysis showed that bringing the waste service in-house was the best solution, it would be considered.

Officers noted that if decision makers moved to three-weekly general waste collections, the Council would work with Veolia to implement it using due sensitivity and effectiveness.

It was explained that the aim was to achieve at least 60% recycling rate, and the Council would push for as higher a percentage as possible, given the constraints and the resources available.

Officers noted that Councillor Gourley had set ambitious aims to move to lower carbon fuels, and that shortly the Council would begin using hydro-treated vegetable oil in some of its fleet, with a view to expanding it as funding availability allows.

Officers stated that the aim of the Council had been to balance good quality recycling with a good quantity of recycling. While comingling of waste was easier for residents, it diminished quality through contamination and the waste was less attractive to the market. West Berkshire Council's recycling was of good quality. There was no appetite within the Council or Veolia to change course.

Action: Kofi Adu-Gyamfi and Daniel Warne to communicate with Kelvin Hughes regarding the recycling education displays that were previously used at Padworth.

26 **Question RE. Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty**

Dr Pat Watson was unable to attend the meeting, and it was agreed that the item would be discussed at the next meeting.

27 **Future Meeting Dates**

The next meeting date was proposed for 25 November 2024

28 **Any Other Business**

Councillor Abbs questioned when there would be an update on the energy related projects that were undergoing with the waterways.

Action: Add to the November Action Log updates on the other activities.

The Chairman invited Councillor Abbs to stay for the closed part of the meeting.

29 **Exclusion of Press and Public**

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Members voted to exclude the press and public and moved into a Part II session.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.39 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

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