

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 10 November 2022** at **5.00pm** in the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present **Councillors**

Chair Ian Shipp
Vice Chair Stephen Frost

Diane Hind
Mike Chester
James Lay
Margaret Marks
Joe Mason
David Palmer

Sarah Pugh
Marion Rushbrook
Sarah Stamp
Trevor Beckwith
Julia Wakelam

In attendance

Andy Drummond, Cabinet Member for Regulatory and Environment
Robert Everitt, Chair of Bury St Edmunds Air Quality Residents Group
Peter Stevens, Cabinet Member for Operations

190. **Substitutes**

No substitutions were declared.

191. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Patrick Chung.

192. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2022 were confirmed as correct record and signed by the Chair.

193. **Declarations of interest**

Members' declarations of interest are recorded under the item to which the declaration relates.

194. **Announcements from the Chair regarding responses from the Cabinet to reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Chair informed members the Vice-Chair attended Cabinet on 18 October 2022 and presented the Committee's report from its meeting held on 14 July 2022. As per the minutes confirmed above, the Vice-Chair updated Cabinet

on the draft Annual Report presented to the Committee by the Leader of the Council, which was duly noted by Cabinet.

195. Public participation

There were no members of the public in attendance on this occasion.

196. Air Quality and Vehicle Idling

[Councillor Julia Wakelam arrived at 5.20pm during the consideration of this item, and prior to the vote taking place.]

The Committee received report number OAS/WS/22/016, which was requested by Councillors Diane Hind and Julia Wakelam following updates on air quality and anti-idling campaigns reported to the Committee on 11 November 2021.

Prior to this report being prepared, a scope was agreed with Councillors Hind and Wakelam, attached at Appendix A to this report, setting out key lines of enquiry; outcomes; approach; information required; resources and support and timetable and key dates.

The report contained detailed information on air quality in West Suffolk; vehicle idling and air quality; enforcement powers; a summary of anti-idling research and best practice; West Suffolk enforcement implications and costs; existing air quality actions; electric vehicles and options and recommendations.

The Committee considered the report and the options provided in detail and asked questions to which comprehensive responses were provided. In particular discussions were held on traffic systems, poorly managed road works and the need for Highways to re-examine the flow of traffic lights; education and more work needed on appropriate idling signage and social media campaigns for example advertising on buses, digital boards; omissions from electric vehicles via their braking systems; raising air quality concerns with businesses and Cambridge park and ride.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Diane Hind relating to paragraph 2.4 of the report and the World Health Organisation (WHO) targets, officers explained that the WHO had revised their air quality targets, which included a number of interim targets set as part of their guidelines. The Council had to meet the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) law and explained that it would be difficult for the Council to deviate outside of the legal framework.

In response to a question raised regarding taxis idling in Newmarket High Street, officers advised that the Council had an Anti-Idling Policy and work had been carried out with taxi drivers regarding idling. However, if this had started again, officers would be happy to revisit and provide advice to taxi drivers.

Councillor Julia Wakelam thanked officers for the report. However, she felt the evidence provided in the report was partial and not peer reviewed, and every small reduction in pollution was a reduction. She understood the issues around costs for implementing enforcement but stated that idling in St Johns Street, Bury St Edmunds was an issue. She then explained that she objected to the idling exemptions regarding demisting windscreens. Councillor Wakelam advised that she supported options 2 and 3 in the report and suggested a small budget for school education.

In response the Environment Officer explained that ten workshops at schools would be held in the Spring term in 2023 with Suffolk County Council and would be promoted nearer the time. Work around idling had to be proportionate against air quality.

Councillor Robert Everitt attended the meeting as the Chair of the Bury St Edmunds Air Quality Residents Group and wished to thank Councillors Diane Hind and Julia Wakelam for bringing vehicle idling to the Committee. He felt the Committee had made valid points during its debate and agreed that to reduce idling it was about more education.

Councillor Andy Drummond, Cabinet Member for Regulatory and Environment informed the Committee that he was happy to work with the communications team to develop communications with the local press around promoting the "rest button" in vehicles and to highlight how much it was costing people whilst idling.

Councillor Peter Stevens, Cabinet Member for Operations thanked officers for the comprehensive report and options, and the interesting detailed debate carried out by the Committee on all the options presented.

Councillor Hind informed the Committee that she had listened and was disappointed at first regarding the outcome regarding enforcement but agreed that education was key in reducing idling as well as social media events. She advised that she was reluctant to support options 2 and 3 but would propose the recommendations subject to additional wording being included at option 3 in that education was not just for schools, but should also include the general public with signs, leaflets and more social media. This was duly seconded by Councillor Julia Wakelam, and with the vote being unanimous it was:

RECOMMENDED: That Cabinet endorses

- 1. Option 2: Civil enforcement officers continue to provide informal advice and guidance to drivers as part of their day-to-day activities; and**
- 2. Option 3: The Council continues to undertake general air quality improvement work, focusing on vehicle idling where proportionate, *including education not just in schools but also includes the general public, signs, leaflets and social media.***

197. **Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee - 12 October 2022**

Councillor Margaret Marks, the Council's appointed representative on the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee presented report number OAS/WS/22/017, which set out what was considered at its meeting held on 12 October 2022. The primary focus of the meeting was:

- Improving palliative and end of life care in Suffolk.

Attached to the report were the following appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Report from Councillor Marks
- Appendix A – West Suffolk Hospital Future System Programme update.

Councillor Marks informed the Committee that she was firstly saddened that nurses would be going on strike. She then drew the Committee's attention to specific parts of the report. In particular the progress and improvements made to date by the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust following a report from the Care Quality Commission in April 2022 setting numerous failures. She then went on to explain that the health service was currently failing people in the community and stated the NHS needed to get more people working in the community.

The Committee considered the report in detail and asked questions to which Councillor Marks provided comprehensive responses. In particular discussions were held on issues in the mental health trust and young people not being able to get the help they needed to stop them becoming acute; mobile dentistry; whether there was engagement with local pharmacies and GPs; the high number of nursing vacancies in England and eConsult (online consultation and triage platform).

Detailed discussions were also held on the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, due to it being the only Trust not meeting the standards and its legal obligations.

In response to a question raised regarding dental contracts, Councillor Marks advised that she had seen the new dental contract, which still did not meet the criteria and had requested that this be revisited in early 2023 by the Health Scrutiny Committee.

In response to a question raised regarding orthopaedics, Councillor Marks advised that Colchester hospital was building three new theatres for elective orthopaedic surgery and was on track to be completed in a couple of years.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Lay regarding what had happened to the £15m which was going to be used to build a specialist unit for hip/knee replacements in Newmarket, Councillor Marks confirmed that she would look into this further and provide a response to Councillor Lay.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the report on the Suffolk County Health Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 12 October 2022.

198. **Work programme update**

The Committee received report number: OAS/WS/22/018, which updated members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items for scrutiny during 2023 (Appendix 1).

The Committee considered its future work programme of topics which had not yet been scheduled to be brought forward. The Committee therefore requested that Havebury Partnership be invited back to its 12 January 2023 meeting to provide a progress update on their Older Persons; Homelessness and Community Investment Strategies.

The Committee discussed registered housing providers and their boards and accountability. In response members were informed that anyone with experience could apply to sit on a registered housing providers board as an Independent Member when vacancies were advertised. Registered Housing providers also had to comply with the regulatory framework and there was the ombudsman in place for housing associations.

Councillor Julia Wakelam raised the possibility of also inviting Flagship Housing to a future meeting of the Committee. Officers advised that to progress this further a work programme suggestion form would need to be submitted then a scoping document would be drafted setting out the purpose of the review; key lines of enquiry; outcomes; approach; information required and timeframe. The Chair of the Committee agreed to discuss this further with Councillor Wakelam outside of the meeting regarding completing the suggestion form.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the work programme update, including the request to invite Havebury Partnership to its meeting on 12 January 2023.

The meeting concluded at 7.05pm

Signed by:

Chair
