

Minutes of a Meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee held in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE, on Thursday, 21 March 2024 at 10.00 am

**Present:**

Cllr Andy Soughton (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Steve Ashton

Cllr Simon Coles

Cllr Wes Read

Cllr Mike Caswell

Cllr Michael Dunk

Cllr Martin Wale

**Other Members present remotely:**

Cllr Ros Wyke

Cllr Mike Rigby

**25 Apologies for Absence** - Agenda Item 1

Apologies were received from Councillors Tony Lock, Matt Martin and Edric Hobbs – Councillor Hobbs was substituted by Councillor Henry Hobhouse.

**26 Minutes from the Previous Meeting** - Agenda Item 2

Resolved that the minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee held on 19 October 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

**27 Declarations of Interest** - Agenda Item 3

There were no additional declarations of Interest.

**28 Public Question Time** - Agenda Item 4

There was one member of the Public who had registered to speak and attended the meeting. Mr Orr read his statement out and asked 6 questions relating to P

Mitigation, treatments proposed projects (full details published).

Officers responded to Mr Orr as follows:

This was an interim delivery strategy and the council were working closely with Wessex Water and they were present on-line for this meeting to answer any relevant questions.

Monitoring and evaluation requirements of the Government funding are yet to be provided by DLUHC and it was anticipated that they would do any benchmarking exercise.

Housing supply was impacted by a range of measures not just nutrient neutrality. Trials being undertaken to test Reverse Batch Osmosis and the pilot was being funded from the Nutrient Mitigation funding.

A written response to all the questions was sent to Mr Orr as agreed at the meeting.

## **29 Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund Award - Agenda Item 5**

The planning officer introduced their report to the committee with the help of a power point presentation and with other officers giving additional information. The presentation and report were to update the committee on recent work undertaken in relation to nutrient neutrality in the Somerset Levels and Moors and River Axe SAC., along with an update on the Local Nutrient Mitigation fund and the delivery of phosphate mitigation projects in the Levels and Moors.

After the presentation, committee members asked for further information on the following matters:

Confirmation requested on number of homes in the pipeline affected by the nutrients issue – this will be confirmed after the meeting as to whether it was 14,000 or 1400 homes.

In response to a question, Wessex Water confirmed that they were unable to accept income outside the revenue cap as set by the Economic Regulator, respect to waste water sites and the processes involved in providing mitigation, there was also an issue with the supply chain as part of the Asset Management Plan that is in place and so there is nothing more that Wessex Water can do currently.

The officer went through the details of the funding received from the Government and also the proposed projects and benefits that they were hoping to achieve with this funding, highlighting other opportunities for the use of some of the materials being used for salinity solutions, e.g. use of willow as well as miscanthus being used for packaging, biofuel burning.

It was also agreed that the legal advice on the phosphates issues would be distributed to Councillors and for the presentations be published on the website.

The recommendations were then proposed by Councillor Coles and seconded by

Councillor Dunk.

Resolved:

That the Strategic Planning Committee noted:

- a. The content of the report and the activity across the three affected river catchments that feed into the Somerset Levels and Moors (Tone, Parrett, and Brue) which continues to unlock the delivery of housing and affected development to ensure nutrient neutrality.

b. The recent legislative changes introduced by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, (as summarised in paragraphs 37 to 39 of the report).

That the Strategic Planning Committee agreed:

c. to delegate authority to the Head of Planning / Chief Planning Officer in consultation with the Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee to:

- i. oversee the delivery of the interim delivery strategy including approving any documents (e.g. Section 106 agreements) needed to support implementation of the interim delivery strategy, enclosed as Appendix A.
- ii. spend up to £9.6m from the Local Nutrient Mitigation Capital Funding to deliver nutrient mitigation schemes in line with grant conditions and promised outstanding government funding in financial year 2024/25.
- iii. commit to the spend of the Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund, on the delivery of nutrient mitigation with the indicative programme of spend as detailed in Table 4 of Appendix A; to the report

For 4, Against 1, Abstention 1

(Cllrs Caswell and Hobhouse were unable to vote as they had the room during the item)

### **30 Quarterly Report on Planning Service Performance Q2 & Q3 - Agenda Item 6**

The head of the planning service gave a short presentation on the performance figures for Quarters 2 and 3 of 2023/2024, the presentation covered:

- Planning applications received.
- Major, minor and other applications determined within national targets.
- Pre-application enquiries
- Appeal decisions.
- Enforcement cases on hand and resolved/closed.

The following areas highlighted for the committee:

- Information on the volume of work received by each area team plus the waste

and minerals team.

- Nationally applications submitted were down and this is reflected within Somerset, this then has an impact on the amount of planning fees received.
- A number of applications have an extension of time or agreements, it was noted that Government are looking to withdraw this facility and may therefore impact targets. Applicants could then go to the Planning Inspectorate to agree applications through non-determination, government may also look at the number of applications that go to appeal and this also may trigger the Planning Inspectorate becoming involved in the Council's decision making process.

The Vice-Chair thanked officers for attending and for the information provided.

Resolved:

To note the contents of the report.

(Unanimous)

**(The meeting ended at 11.45 am)**

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**CHAIR**