

## **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY 14<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021**

Minutes of the meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE** held via Zoom and in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY, 14<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021 at 7.15 p.m.**

### **PRESENT**

#### **Councillor Martin Ashcroft (Chairman) and**

Councillors Eddy Adam, Jim Atkinson, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M. Chandran, Barbara A. Clare, John D. Clare, Neil Collinson, Bob Fleming, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Mrs Sandra Haigh, Brian Hall, Dave Hardaker, Phillip Hawkins, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Kate Hopper, Neville Jones, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Maureen Shelton and Michael Stead

### **OFFICERS**

Mr D. Austin (Town Clerk)  
Mrs C.A. Walton (Corporate and Policy Officer)  
Mr S. Cooper (Works and Environment Manager)  
Mr L. Williams (Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator)  
Miss A. Donald (Town Clerk's PA)

### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Councillor Joanne Jones  
Mr D Edwardson – Environment Agency – Via Zoom  
Mr S Woodward – Environment Agency – Via Zoom  
Mr K Ayrton – ELG Planning – Via Zoom

### **17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Tony Armstrong, Peter Bergg, John Clark and Andrea Miller.

### **18. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS**

No applications for dispensations had been received.

### **19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **20. GUEST SPEAKER**

Representatives from the Environment Agency gave a presentation explaining its role regarding the processes surrounding the granting and subsequent regulation of environmental permits, linked to the Council's consideration of a planning application for a high temperature thermal treatment facility on Aycliffe Business Park.

This was followed by a question and answer session, which is summarised below.

Q1 If there is more than one site producing emissions in a specific area, is the cumulative effect of these on the local population taken into consideration?

A *The proximity of other sites is considered, in consultation with the Health and Safety Executive. An air quality monitoring process must be undertaken and any cumulative effect is considered at the permit stage.*

Q2 Having noted the separate but overlapping roles of the Environment Agency as a statutory consultee in the planning stage and its responsibility for the subsequent granting of an environmental permit, have the claims made in the environmental statement in the planning application been checked or will this be left to the permitting process? No mention is made of the impact of emissions in the environmental statement and no air pollution model is evident yet.

A *Developers tend to seek planning permission first to determine any obvious major problems before applying for a permit. Detailed checks will therefore be made during the permitting process. The Environment Agency will check that modelling has been carried at the emission limit value, i.e. the highest level permitted and this is the basis for the application to date.*

Q3 Has an application been granted for a similar installation elsewhere in the UK and is there any data on limits being exceeded and, if so, how often?

A *This is a rotary kiln incinerator, which is a recognised method of disposal. There are no others in the north east region and data for others elsewhere in the country would have to be obtained from the appropriate regional office.*

(It was confirmed that this information could be obtained on written application to the Environment Agency).

Q4 Companies are required to use Best Available Techniques when carrying out an installation but these may not necessarily be used to the fullest extent if the cost is excessive. How would this affect this application?

A *The Environment Agency has no influence over cost and can only ensure compliance with Best Available Techniques. However, it checks which equipment is used and installed and has the power to inspect this to ensure it meets requirements. It works with the operator during the commissioning phase to ensure everything is working properly and is compliant with regulations. In the case of future legislative changes, a permit may be reviewed to ensure the operator is still compliant.*

Q5 Looking at an 'acceptable impact on human health', the prevailing west/south westerly wind will concentrate emissions in one area, in close proximity to local populations and the mixed businesses of the business

park. Will this be taken into account, bearing in mind that the EU is clamping down on incinerators located near to populated areas?

- A *A detailed assessment of dispersion will be made through modelling – this will detail the area of maximum impact in the direction of the prevailing wind when the permit application is made.*
- Q6 The application did not mention hazardous waste – why? Do you have the power to shut down the operation if it is not compliant?
- A *It will be clinical waste but the nature and quantity will be assessed. The Environment Agency has the power to suspend or even revoke a permit if necessary, depending on the nature of the breach.*
- Q7 Are hospital-based incinerators still used and are there any comparison figures?
- A *Hospitals no longer operate incinerators and any figures available from the 1980s and 1990s should be viewed with caution in comparison with modern technology.*

The following question was asked by a member of the public under Agenda Item 6. Public Questions:

- Q8 An incinerator in the Croydon area has had 20 breaches but still appears to be operating. Since the operator reports on a quarterly basis, damage could have been occurring for up to three months. Could you comment on this?
- A *This site is the responsibility of a different regional office of the Environment Agency and therefore specific details are not known. However, breaches must be reported and continuous monitoring takes place. Regulatory officers receive this information and determine any action to be taken. Systems are sophisticated and auditing takes place regularly.*

The Chairman thanked the representatives of the Environment Agency for attending and expressed the appreciation of the members for their helpful and comprehensive presentation.

## **21. GUEST SPEAKER**

A representative from ELG Planning provided members with information regarding their potential assistance with issues surrounding a planning application for a high temperature thermal treatment facility on Aycliffe Business Park.

It was noted that an item would be placed on the agenda of the next Policy and Resources Committee to ask members to agree, in principle, to:

- i) Obtain a quote from ELG Planning to prepare evidence and a written report on the Council's objections to the planning application and to represent the Council at the planning meeting.

- ii) Agree to the use of monies from the Consultancy Budget and, if necessary, the Contingency Sum Budget, to meet the costs of this support, subject to monitoring and control of the costs by officers.

The Chairman thanked Mr Ayrton for his attendance and the information he had provided.

## **22. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

A member of the public addressed a question to the representatives of the Environment Agency, as summarised above.

## **23. MINUTES**

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, seconded by Councillor Ken Robson, and

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee, held on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2021, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **24. ALLOTMENTS REPORT**

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator submitted a report updating members on issues relating to the Council's allotments for the six-week period ended 4<sup>th</sup> July 2021, including an update on beekeeping activity as requested at the previous meeting.

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that the report be received.

## **25. ENVIRONMENT REPORT**

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report to update members on issues relating to the environment.

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) Councillor Ian Gray be thanked for his work removing Himalayan Balsam on the Council's land.

## **26. CEMETERIES REPORT**

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator submitted a report giving information regarding burials and grants of grave space.

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that the report be received.

## 27. NOTICE OF MOTION

**Councillor Dorothy Bowman left the meeting during discussion of this item.**

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Phillip Hawkins, seconded by Councillor Neville Jones:

*“That the Council sets up a Parking Issues Working Group to consider Car Parking problems within the Parish. The remit of the Working Group shall be:*

*To invite residents of Great Aycliffe via Newton News, to identify and submit to the Working Group areas of the parish they consider to have a parking problem, primarily due to lack of space etc and for these areas to be clearly identified, mapped and land ownership confirmed, then where possible, to try to come up with solutions to each one. Then to liaise with the land owner e.g. DCC or Livin to see about getting a phased programme of work over a period of years to try to resolve and reduce these parking issues. The Working Group will not deal with Parking enforcement issues.*

*The Working Group will be made up of five Councillors, to meet as and when required, and shall have the power to co-opt non-voting representatives, including from Durham County Council and Livin when appropriate”.*

Following considerable discussion, a vote was taken and the motion was carried by 13 votes to 10.

It was agreed that the Working Group would comprise:

Councillors Phillip Hawkins, Neville Jones, Ken Robson and George C. Gray and one place to be filled in due course.

## 28. NOTICE OF MOTION

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Neville Jones, seconded by Councillor Ken Robson:

*“That the Council sets up a Town Centre Regeneration and Development Working Group. The remit of the Working Group shall be:*

*To look at all aspects and possibilities of regenerating and developing the Town Centre, in co-operation with Durham County Council, our Member of Parliament, and the Town Centre Owners, and the Government’s levelling up Agenda.*

*The Working Group will be made up of 9 Councillors (made up of 3 Liberal Democrat Members, 3 Independent Members and 3 Labour Members) and shall have the power to co-opt non-voting representatives, as follows:*

- *the Member of Parliament Paul Howell MP and one of his nominated staff*
- *Representatives of the Town Centre Owners*
- *Representatives of Durham County Council Economic Development Department*
- *All County Councillors covering Great Aycliffe*
- *Representatives of the local Police*

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam, seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson:

*“That the Council investigates the feasibility of setting up a formal Town Centre Regeneration and Development Working Group”*

A vote was held and the amendment was defeated by 13 votes to 10.

A vote was then held on the original motion and this was carried by 16 votes to 5, with 3 abstentions.

It was agreed that the working group would comprise Councillors Andrea Miller, Neville Jones, Joanne Jones, Ken Robson, Phillip Hawkins, Sandra Haigh, Neil Collinson, Arun M. Chandran and Martin Ashcroft.

## **29. GARDEN COMPETITION**

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report updating members regarding the organisation of the annual garden and allotment awards.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor Jed Hillary, that the annual garden and allotment competitions be merged.

It was proposed by Councillor Jed Hillary, seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, that the prizes for the Best Community Display should mirror those of the Overall Best Garden; being £100, £75 and £50.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor Dave Hardaker, that the allotment competition prizes be awarded in line with the officers' suggestions and in proportion to the number of plots at each site, as set out below.

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The Garden and Allotment competitions be merged.
- iii) The prize values for the Best Community Display should mirror those of the Overall Best Garden; these being 1<sup>st</sup> prize - £100, 2<sup>nd</sup> prize £75 and 3<sup>rd</sup> prize £50.
- iv) The allotment competition prizes be awarded as follows:  
Best Plot at Aycliffe Village - £75  
Best Plot at Byerley Park - £75  
Best Plot at Clarence Chare – 1<sup>st</sup> - £75, 2<sup>nd</sup> - £50, 3<sup>rd</sup> - £25  
Best Plot at Finchale Road – 1<sup>st</sup> - £75, 2<sup>nd</sup> - £50  
Best Plot at St Oswald's – 1<sup>st</sup> - £75, 2<sup>nd</sup> - £50, 3<sup>rd</sup> - £25  
Best New/Most Improved Allotment - £75  
Best Overall Allotment - £75

### 30. POSSIBLE SECTION 106 FUNDING

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report regarding ideas for a possible bid for Section 106 Agreement funds from Durham County Council to improve facilities and infrastructure within the parish.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Bob Fleming, and seconded by Councillor Arun M. Chandran and

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) An application for funding from monies related to the Middridge Road development be made to carry out improvement works to the Great Aycliffe Way in the section of the route in proximity to the Middridge Road, and for the upgrade of Byerley Park play area.
- iii) An application for funding from monies related to the Traveller's Green development be made to upgrade the Great Aycliffe Way in the section of the route in proximity to Traveller's Green.

It was further proposed by Councillor John Clare, and seconded by Councillor Bob Fleming, and

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i) An application be made for funding from monies related to the Middridge Road development, specifically intended to encourage biodiversity, and that this be used to improve the environmental aspects of the Cobbler's Hall play area.

**CHAIRMAN.**