

## **NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES,  
GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY  
ON THURSDAY, 9TH JANUARY, 2020 AT 7.30 PM**

#### **MINUTES**

**Present:** *Councillors: Steve Jarvis (Chairman) Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Val Bryant, Sam Collins, Gerald Morris, Claire Strong and Kay Tart*

**In Attendance:** *Jamie Sells (Service Manager - Waste and Recycling), Reuben Ayavoo (Policy and Community Engagement Manager), Katie Staddon (Assistant Community Engagement Officer) and Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager)*

**Also Present:** *At the commencement of the meeting County Councillor Terry Hone (Executive Member responsible for Waste) and District Councillor Carol Stanier (Deputy Executive Member for Recycling and Waste Management) and approximately 19 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

#### **38 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

*Audio recording – 41 seconds*

There were no apologies for absence.

#### **39 MINUTES - 28 NOVEMBER 2019**

*Audio Recording – 1 minute 41 seconds*

Councillor Gerald Morris advised that he did not appear on the attendance list, but was present at the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** That, subject to Councillor Gerald Morris being added to the attendance list, the Minutes of the Meeting of the Panel held on 28 November 2019 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

#### **40 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business notified.

#### **41 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Audio recording – 56 seconds*

- (1) The Chairman welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Chairman advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;

- (3) Members were reminded to make declarations of interest before an item, the detailed reminder about this and speaking rights was set out under Chairman's Announcements on the agenda.
- (4) The Chairman advised that this meeting was to discuss Waste, Recycling.
- (5) The Chairman advised that the format of the meeting would be slightly different from previous Panel meetings in that Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg would be making a presentation regarding the Waste Service prior to the public participation.

## 42 PRESENTATION BY COUNCILLOR ELIZABETH DENNIS-HARBURG

*Audio recording – 3 minutes 1 second*

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg (Executive Member for Recycling and Waste Management) introduced Councillor Terry Hone (Hertfordshire County Council Executive Member responsible for Waste), District Councillor Carol Stanier (deputy Executive Member for Recycling and Waste Management) and Jamie Sells (Service Manager – Waste Management).

She gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding the Recycling and Waste Management Service including:

- This presentation would inform on what the Council could and could not do in terms of recycling and waste management and consider whether there were ways to improve things;
- NHDC was a Collection Authority which meant they were responsible for the collection of waste from residents;
- The Council could undertake other waste collections, such as industrial waste, with the consent of the County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority;
- The controlled waste was collected by NHDC and then delivered to a place specified by the County Council and this could include landfill and energy to waste plants;
- NHDC has to comply with any direction from County Council regarding the separation of waste;
- NHDC did have the power to decide the construction size etc of the bins used;
- Hertfordshire County Council provided places for residents to deposit waste free of charge;
- The North and East Herts area covered more than half of the geographic area of Hertfordshire;
- The different sizes of the various authorities meant that it could be difficult to harmonise waste collection across the County;
- NHDC had, for several years been one of the County's highest performing districts in respect of diverting recyclable material from landfill;
- In 2018/19 NHDC was in the top ten percent of authorities Nationwide for recycling performance, although this was slightly below the EU target of 60 percent;
- NHDC would continue to try to improve performance;
- Details of the output from waste collection such as composting and recycling were given;
- Other items were collected kerbside including textiles and batteries;
- The process for processing waste was described;
- NHDC's carbon footprint was high due to the size of the district and the place to which we have to transport waste collected;
- NHDC was in the top three of the Waste Partnership for recycling;
- Residents, officers and operatives should be praised for maintaining the level of recycling despite the issues experienced with the new waste contract last year;

- In first half of 2019/20 38 percent of waste was being recycled;
- She summarised the ideal situation regarding the disposal of waste and the redesign of products to reduce residual waste at the production stage;
- NHDC would be running more WEEE events;
- The Government had consulted on a Resource and Waste Paper and the Herts Waste Partnership would be considering this together with ways in which local authorities could improve processing of waste recycling;
- The Government were considering further statutory measures on this subject;
- There were best practices from other authorities that should be considered;
- NHDC needs to make use of communications to educate residents on other actions they could take regarding their own waste.

The Chairman invited questions from members of the public and in response:

County Councillor Hone advised that North Herts was at the lower half of residual waste collected and this was reducing. The collection of waste varied depending on the local circumstances for instance collection from flats had an impact on amounts collected.

Councillor Dennis-Harburg advised that data would be posted on the Council's website.

The following Members asked made comments and questions:

- Councillor Claire Strong;
- Councillor Gerald Morris;
- Councillor Val Bryant.

Councillor Dennis-Harburg responded that trending data regarding residual waste tonnage would be placed on the NHDC website.

The Service Manager – Waste advised;

- That paper should not be out in the co-mingled waste and if this happened they would discuss this with Urbaser;
- Provision of a separate food waste caddy did encourage food waste collection;
- That approximately 60 percent of low-rise properties had brown bins.

Comments from Members included:

- That food bins, when first introduced reduced the amount of food tht was put in residual waste;
- That supermarkets should be encouraged to reduce the amount of and chnge the type of packaging on food for sale.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Dennis-Harburg for her presentation.

#### **43 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - BALDOCK BEATS WASTE**

*Audio recording – 45 minutes 8 seconds*

Christine Watson, Baldock Beats Waste, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Panel as follows:

- What the District, County and Country needed was a consistent waste disposal service which informed the public and encouraged the public to make the right choices about effective waste disposal;

- At the moment different areas seemed to do things differently meaning people are confused and therefore become less keen to recycle;
- She asked that North Herts support all efforts to get this in place;
- NHDC need to publicise more effectively what they were doing regarding waste and recycling such as the decision to cease the use of single use plastics;
- NHDC also needed to publicise what organisations and projects they were supporting with their recycling etc;
- NHDC needed to encourage schools, businesses and restaurants to reduce waste and encourage their efforts to go plastic free;
- Publicity could be achieved with items in the Comet and billboards in each Town updated monthly;
- NHDC should take more responsibility for clearing rubbish from the approach roads into towns and maybe make use of people serving community service to do this;
- NHDC could organise litter picking sessions that members of the public could join or even just lend out the apparatus required for groups to organise their own litter picking events;
- Wilding and less mowing was good and should be extended to urban areas;
- NHDC could supply information and run free courses about the use of food in order to reduce over reliance on best before dates and lack of knowledge about what could and could not be used;
- Shops, restaurants and cafes should be encouraged to give left over food to foodbanks, homeless charities and places like the Best Before Café;
- NHDC could help with transport for this leftover food and create a register of donors and receivers;
- There were lots of very successful events through North Herts, the Council could provide additional rubbish, recycling and food bins for these types of event;
- There should be litter picking stations around the Greenway;
- NHDC could operate a furniture recycling scheme.

The following Members commented and asked questions:

- Councillor Val Bryant;
- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor Gerald Morris.

Ms Watson advised that:

- She attempted to engage with schools, but this had proved difficult;
- NHDC could publicise what initiative were being taken in local schools.

Members made the following comments:

- That schools needed to educate children regarding littering and NHDC could have a role in that;
- That NHDC could have a stock of litter picking equipment that they could loan out.
- Delivery drivers and drive through food sellers needed to be educated regarding throwing litter from vehicles.

The Chairman thanked Ms Watson for her presentation.

#### 44 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - TERACYCLING

*Audio recording – 57 minutes 18 seconds*

Mr Glyn Holt thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Panel regarding Teracycling as follows:

- Teracycle was a company with a mission statement to recycle the unrecyclable;
- The scheme was delivered by free schemes that generate a small financial reward for local charities. In Letchworth it was mainly Wilbury School that benefitted;
- They currently collected 18 waste streams that would otherwise end up in landfill including crisp packets, oral care and pens;
- The list of items was available on the Transition Towns website;
- This was started in Letchworth in July 2019 and had so far raised £233 by saving 116.5kg of waste from landfill;
- Waste was collected in a bin in Bamboo Turtle, Letchworth a small group of volunteers sorted the waste;
- There was a minimum weight for each waste stream which was increasing as more people used teracycle;
- 5 school schemes were in place with pupils sorting through the waste and flattening packaging;
- It had encouraged children and adults to consider everything as a resource rather than waste;
- Parents who had previously not recycled were now doing so on a regular basis and were making enquiries about how to recycle things that they were unsure of such as Christmas cards;
- NHDC could help this initiative in the following ways:
  - Offer grant funding for scales to weigh the rubbish collected;
  - Promotion of schemes to increase the amount of waste collected;
  - Collection bins for schemes in relevant Council locations such as leisure centres and the staff canteen;
  - Encourage other schools to take place;
  - Locations for the public to sort their own waste into relevant bins;
  - Provide space for the sorting of waste;
  - Support with developing schemes such as packaging;
  - Hosting of repair workshops, for which a donation could be made to fund future endeavours;
- Since Christmas 14 bags of teracycle waste had been generated;
- Each Member could start saving their waste and spreading the word about Teracycle,

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Steve Jarvis;
- Councillor Gerald Morris;
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg;
- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor Claire Strong;
- Councillor Kay Tart.

In response Mr Holt advised:

- That Teracycle were struggling to meet the demand of private collectors and were moving to centralised public collection places;
- This did not stop people collecting, it just meant that the waste collected would need to be transported to a central place for collection by Teracycle;
- The free schemes were self-financing;
- Use of a shop unit would not only give more space, but would promote recycling and encourage people to get involved.

Members made the following comments:

- NHDC should consider introduction of centralised collection points for Teracycle;
- Area Committees could give grants to support the work being undertaken;
- Discussions could be held with the local BID regarding use of an empty shop, Councillors Hoskins and Levett could help with this;
- Discussions could be held with the Letchworth Garden City Heritage foundation;
- NHDC should publish a list of external organisations that collect recyclable materials;
- NHDC should publish a list of organisations where people could volunteer to help.

The Chairman thanked Mr Holt for his presentation.

#### **45 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - PLASTIC FREE LETCHWORTH/PLASTIC FREE HITCHON**

*Audio recording – 1 hour 11 minutes 14 seconds*

Julia Sonander, Plastic Free Letchworth and Anni Sander, Plastic Free Hitchin, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Panel as follows:

- Plastic Free Letchworth had been going some time and had achieved the award, Plastic Free Hitchin was working towards the award;
- Royston and Baldock were now working on Plastic Free;
- They had realised that, as more people were working towards this, they could be more efficient and work more effectively;
- NHDC had been talking about becoming a Plastic Free District and it would be useful to appoint an officer to be responsible for this;
- To achieve the award Councillors need to attend strategic meetings, it was time for NHDC to consider setting up a district strategic group, This would reduce the number of meetings and the time spent discussing the same issues town by town;
- The District strategic Group would consist of Councillors, Lead Officer, Group representatives and a Council Waste Officer;
- The Council could manage district wide campaigns so that the same message is communicated at the same time;
- NHDC could ensure the supporting services, such as litter picking were in place;
- This would leave the Plastic Free teams in the towns to do the on the ground work;
- NHDC may well already be meeting some of the requirements for achieving the award, but this has not been communicated;
- Plastic Free campaigns helped change behaviour and themes could be chosen for each campaign ie reusable nappies, avoiding wet wipes, use of refillable bottles and purchasing recyclable Christmas cards;
- Could facilitate business packaging recycling;
- Look at sorting out the litter picking equipment and how to dispose of the rubbish collected during litter pick events;

- Need to promote the use of reusable take-away container by offering a discount for using a reusable container
- Need to promote reusable cups.

The following Members made comment and asked questions:

- Councillor Steve Jarvis;
- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor Val Bryant;
- Councillor Claire Strong.

Members made the following comments:

- NHDC should investigate the possibility of a “scores on the doors” type scheme for businesses using reusable take-away containers;
- That NHDC should consider introducing litter picking stations;
- That the litter pickers and other equipment be stored more locally;
- That litter picking stations could be locked into a space that required a deposit, much like the supermarket trolley schemes;
- Litter picking in rural areas was, in general, covered by Parish Councils;
- Litter increased wherever there was building works being undertaken.
- Litter was blowing into fields and was having an impact on agriculture;
- Billboards could be used to raise awareness.

The Service Manager – Waste advised that:

- There was some litter picking equipment stored at Works Road, Letchworth;
- That he would look into undertaking a survey of organisations that undertake litter picking to see how this could be better managed.

The Chairman thanked Ms Sonander and Ms Sander for their presentation.

## **46 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - BEST BEFORE CAFE**

*Audio recording – 1 hour 30 minutes 46 seconds*

Suzi Holding, Best Before Café, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Panel as follows:

- Best Before Cafe decided to take food donation on Christmas Eve and were shocked at the amount of food waste that was handed out;
- Last week Aldi announce they had given 185,000 tonnes of food to charities;
- The Café and other local charities took 1 tonne of food from 6 local supermarkets, they normally collected from 15;
- Best before Café struggled on Christmas Eve to pick up the food and to operate with a low number of volunteers and there were issues about who to distribute the food to;
- There was concern that, if this was the amount picked up from less than half the usual supermarkets, how much went to waste;
- She asked Members to consider what could be done about the food waste;
- Wilbury Community Forum and St Paul’s Church are would work with Best Before Café to open doors for people to collect food, although the problem was that people wanted to stay at home on Christmas Eve.

The following Members took part in the debate and asked questions:

- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg;
- Councillor Val Bryant;
- Councillor Steve Jarvis.

In response to comments and questions Ms Holding advised that:

- One of the reasons that there was so much waste from supermarkets on Christmas Eve was that each store got allocated food to sell, rather than being able to order it;
- Methane was 30 percent more potent than CO2 which was extremely worrying;
- There an education issue in that people needed to understand that the Best Before Date on produce was not about the suitability to eat a product, but about the need for supermarkets to sell the product;
- Iceland had stopped selling loose products as it had resulted in a reduction in sales of 30 percent.

Comments made by Councillors included:

- Supermarkets were not being responsible as providers;
- Members could consider what lobbying powers were available;
- Could contact groups to add some of this food into food parcels;
- That supermarkets obviously found it more profitable to over supply and throw away than estimate what they would sell;
- That there was a substantial amount of food waste from households.

The Assistant Community Engagement Officer advised that she facilitated the North Herts Food Provision Network and invited those present to attend the next meeting of the Network on Monday 3 February 2020 at 9.30 am in the Council Offices.

The network was established in July 2019 and there had been three meetings so far and there were 50 organisations on the distribution list with 20-25 attendees for each meeting.

The Chairman thanked Ms Holding for her presentation.

## **47 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - TRANSITION TOWNS LETCHWORTH**

*Audio Recording – 1 hour 45 minutes 33 seconds*

Julia Sonander, Transition Towns Letchworth, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Panel as follows:

- The aim was to reduce waste and it was time to consider smaller residual waste bins or move to 3 or 4 week collection of waste;
- Need to persuade people to throw away less;
- NHDC needs a strategy to show what they would be willing to collect and how they were moving forward;
- Reducing collection of waste would help people focus on the amount of waste they produced;
- A discount or benefit could be offered to residents willing to move to a 4 week collection;
- It was good to see water fountains being installed;
- Free cloth nappy packs were a great incentive, but could consider getting packs that had not been used reissued;



- Encourage the use of reusable cups;
- Could the Council help set up repair services;
- Consider education for the skills required for repair;
- Can businesses, schools and organisations be helped to maximise recycling;
- Should provide recycling as well as general waste bins in public areas;
- An education and promotion programme was needed to persuade people to change to reusable or recyclable products, This could be done on a product by product basis;
- Have community composters and composting workshops;
- Would be good to have a recycling plant within the District.

Mr John Webb advised that he had provided some research on several waste and energy resources.

The following Members commented and asked questions:

- County Councillor Terry Hone;
- Councillor Claire Strong;
- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor Gerald Morris

The Service Manager – Waste advised that:

- NHDC had a comprehensive recycling service for businesses;
- Reusable nappies were promoted;

County Councillor Hone advised that:

- The waste tips had moved to 5 days per week some time ago;
- Most sites had approx. 300,000 visits per year;
- It was planned that future waste tips had facilities for repairing and selling repaired goods.

Comments from Members included:

- What percentage of waste was nappies or older people continence equipment;
- Need to send a delegate to the Alternative Vehicles Fair to consider options for future vehicles.

The Chairman thanked Ms Sonander for her presentation.

## **48 DISCUSSION REGARDING WASTE, RECYCLING AND FOOD WASTE**

*Audio recording – 2 hours 8 minutes*

Prior to the discussion Councillor Dennis-Harburg summarised some of the ideas that had been presented during the meeting including:

- That the Council needed to be better at publicity and consider different methods of communication such as a weekly bulletin in the Comet;
- Litter picking issues including equipment;
- Promotion and support of organisations such as Teracycle;
- Support of organisations to access use of shops, and funding;
- Promotion on the NHDC website of where to recycle things not currently collected by NHDC such as crisp packets;

- Consideration to be given to a Plastic Free Officer;
- Consideration of Town Centre Recycling bins, provisions of butt bins and Gumdrops;
- Investigation into provision of a recycled furniture shop;
- Consider the size of bins and/or reduction of the collection of the residual waste bins;
- Education on various subjects;
- Look into alternative solutions regarding food waste.

Councillor Kay Tart stated that she would like NHDC to organise a sustainability event that could go from Town to Town.

#### **49 INFORMATION NOTE - WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER FOR 2019/20**

*Audio recording – 2 hour 18 minute 22 seconds*

The Policy and Community Engagement Manager presented the information note entitled Work Programme and Action Plan 2019.2020 and drew attention to the following:

- There were approximately 30 items from this evening's meeting;
- Dr Porter would be providing slides with voiceover following his presentation prior to the last meeting of the Panel;
- The presentation from Alex Inzia regarding tree planting had been sent to the Grounds Maintenance team.
- Water saving measures had been circulated on social media and this would be followed up.

The following Members asked questions and took part in the debate:

- Councillor Gerald Morris;
- Councillor Steve Jarvis.

In response to questions the Policy and Community Engagement Manager advised that this Panel made recommendation to either Cabinet or the relevant Executive Member who could then decide to take forward.

Councillor Jarvis advised that an implementation group would be established to ensure that matters were taken forward.

The meeting closed at 9.56 pm

Chairman