

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

17 September 2015

7.00 pm – 8.20 pm

Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Stroud

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Minutes

Membership:

Councillor Simon Pickering**	P	Councillor Chas Fellows	P
Councillor Paul Denney *	P	Councillor Colin Fryer	A
Councillor Liz Ashton	P	Councillor Haydn Sutton	P
Councillor Tim Boxhall	A	Councillor Brian Tipper	P
Councillor Kevin Cranston	P	Councillor Ken Tucker	P
Councillor Julie Douglass	P	Councillor Tim Williams	A

** = Chair * = Vice Chair

P = Present

A = Absent

Other Members In attendance

Councillor Karon Cross.

Officers In Attendance

Strategic Head Development Services
Accountant

Senior Policy Officer
Democratic Services Assistant

EC.010 **APOLOGIES**

There were none.

EC.011 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

EC.012 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting held on June 18th 2015 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

EC.013 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were none.

EC.014 WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was agreed subject to the following amendments;

- The update on Carbon Management would be presented to the December Meeting of the Committee.
- Officers would investigate the possibility of a visit to the MBT facility at Bristol. A presentation by the Woodland Trust to be arranged for later in the civic year.
- A report in early 2016 on the impact on the district of the Climate Change Agreement.

RESOLVED To note the work programme and include the additional reports in the 2015/16 programme.

EC.015 APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODIES

RESOLVED (a) Appoint Councillor Nick Hurst as representative to the Minchinhampton and Rodborough Commons Advisory Body.

(b) Appoint Councillor Nigel Cooper as representative to the Stroud Valley Project Board.

EC.016 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Accountant presented the first budget monitoring report for 2015/16 and informed the Committee of an amendment to the report; item 13 should read (£53K Overspend).

The report highlighted an overspend of £176,000 on consultancy fees and planning inspectorate costs in respect of the Local Plan. The Strategic Head of Development Services informed Members that the Council had needed to employ consultants to assist with developing the evidence base for the Local Plan. He added that, in preparation for the five year review of the Plan, the Council would aim to set aside reserves to cover the cost of the evidence base required.

RESOLVED To note the outturn forecast for the General Fund Revenue Budget and the capital programme 2016/16.

EC.017 ECO-MANAGEMENT AND AUDIT SCHEME (EMAS)

The report, presented by the Senior Policy Officer identified that the scheme had been a key delivery and reporting mechanism for the Council and its environmental focus. Being accredited by EMAS had allowed the Council to lead by example and most of the Council's contracts had environmental elements and qualification requirements.

Members acknowledged that the Council had built up a lot of expertise in this area of work and that consideration should be given to the possibility of selling this expertise to other organisations.

The report asked for the committees support to continue the Councils EMAS registration.

RESOLVED To maintain the existing Eco-management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) registration and use the requirement to produce an annual Environment Statement to report progress against the Environmental Delivery Plans in the Corporate Delivery Plan.

EC.018 EBLEY MILL HYDRO PROGRESS REPORT

In presenting the report, the Strategic Head of Development Services informed the Committee that the project needed to be re evaluated following the planned reduction in Feed in Tariffs. Money previously budgeted for the project had been reallocated to invest in the Photo Voltaic arrays at Dursley Pool and Stratford Park. The following budget cycle allocated a sum of £360,000 to fund the installation of a hydro power scheme at Ebley Mill.

During the recent tendering process for the hydro scheme, four companies had initially expressed an interest but no tenders were received. Feedback from three companies identified two main factors influencing their reluctance to bid;

- The need to invest too much 'at risk' time in working up the bid with no certainty of winning the contract
- Constraints on the deliverability of a viable solution if served via the west bank only

Following the feedback the Council had reached an informal agreement with the landowner to provide land and access, subject to a percentage of the net profit.

To progress the project a contract could be agreed to cover the costs of the chosen contractor based on the release of four staged payments to cover the; desk top design and evaluation, detailed design, consenting and construction.

Members were informed that the risk to the Council was that theoretically, the review at stage four could indicate uncompetitive returns. This may result in the project being cancelled and costs of around £40,000.

Members noted that there were planned reductions to the Feed in Tariff from September 2016 which may make the scheme unviable. There was concern that the project could not be delivered by that time. Members enquired if there had been any comments from the Environment Agency about the project. It was confirmed that comments had been made but nothing that would prevent the project from progressing.

The Chair moved that a vote be taken on the recommendations in the report. The Vice Chair moved an amendment to add the Chair of the Environment Committee to the decision making process. The amendment was carried.

Officers were also urged to provide a further report to the December meeting of the Committee on the other options.

RESOLVED To support the development of the scheme through an updated detailed feasibility study and the subsequent commissioning of the capital works, subject to the Chair of the Environment Committee and the Strategic Head of Finance and Business Services considering that the return on the investment is competitive against other investment options.

EC.019 CARBON MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The report set out the projects and initiatives undertaken by the Council to achieve its ambition of becoming carbon zero by 2020. There was a challenge in finding affordable ways of achieving this aim. The focus had been on mitigation measures to the Council's general fund properties and HRA stock.

It was highlighted that the contract with SWEA was due to expire in April 2016 and that there was currently no clear consensus across the county to continue to support a Warm and Well Partnership, even though it had delivered £30 million worth of investment to the county since 2002. The partnership's successful bid for a £3.2m project to install central heating into off gas homes could result in £900K of support for homes in Stroud including HRA stock.

RESOLVED (a) To recognise the achievements, performance and challenges to date.
(b) To agree the appropriateness of the programme of funded works.
(c) To continue to support the Warm and Well Partnership.

EC.020 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Councillors Julie Douglass and Brian Tipper informed members that they had received an introduction to the Council's performance management system. Meetings with officers would be arranged and an update report would be provided to the December meeting of the Committee.

EC.021 RSPCA Award

The Chair announced that the Council had been awarded a Gold Award by the RSPCA in recognition of its work on animal welfare. He congratulated officers on this achievement

Meeting Ended 8.20 pm.

Chair