



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the Economy, Environment & Infrastructure Policy Development Committee

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Thursday, 22 April 2021 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor C Anderson (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

J E Burtonshaw
P K Jones
P M Matthews

Councillor(s)

P Downing
M A Langstone
T M White

Councillor(s)

P R Hood-Williams
W G Lewis

Officer(s)

Jeremy Davies
Scott Dummett
Deb Hill
Chris Howell
Martin Nicholls
Samantha Woon

Group Leader Parks and Cleansing
Senior Lawyer
Nature Conservation Team Leader
Head of Waste Management
Director of Place
Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): P Lloyd

31 To receive Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interests from Members.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

32 Minutes:

Resolved that the minutes of the Economy, Environment and Infrastructure Policy Development Committee held on 18 March, 2021, be approved as a correct record subject to the following additions:

- 1) Councillor A S Lewis, Cabinet Member for Energy and Service Transformation be added to the list of attendees; and
- 2) The typographical error 'cited' be replaced with 'sited'.

33 Management & Maintenance of Open Spaces (Biodiversity).

The Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement and Infrastructure Management referred to the Council Policies in place to manage open spaces and the Council's commitment to biodiversity and climate change.

He detailed the issues associated with wildflower meadows, grass cutting and the need to ensure consultation/engagement with communities in order to achieve a compromise and adhere to biodiversity and climate change.

The Chris Howell, assisted by Officers, summarised the current maintenance practices and offered areas of consideration on how the Council could manage its green spaces differently to achieve the corporate priority of maintaining and enhancing Swansea's natural resources and biodiversity - so that we maintain and enhance biodiversity, reduce our carbon footprint, improve our knowledge and understanding of our natural environment and benefit health and well-being.

Members' noted the scope, roadside verges, other grassed areas and amenity spaces, potential areas for consideration of review and general issues.

He referred to a typographical error in 4.2 of the report which refers to the cutting of amenity areas being cut 2 times a year. These areas are cut up to 14 times a year.

Members discussions focussed around:

- 1) Roadside grass verges and the need for drivers to be mindful of their actions when parking vehicles.
- 2) Long grass on banks/slopes which to attract litter, fly-tipping and dog fouling.
- 3) Involvement of schools in any consultation.
- 4) The recommendations of the Natural Environment Inquiry Review (undertaken in 2019).
- 5) Awareness of Section 6 of the Environment Act (2016) and the duties it places on the Council.
- 6) Ensuring all groups (Plantlife, Buglife and the RSBP) are consulted.
- 7) Types of annual seed mixes.
- 8) The use of wildflower turf.
- 9) Local properties taking over verges (similar to the organisations who maintain our roundabouts).
- 10) Support for the cut and collect vehicle pilot.
- 11) The need to ensure the differences of opinion within community regarding the management of open spaces.

The Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration and Tourism referred to consultation/engagement with organisations such as Plantlife, Buglife and the RSPB, along with the electorate. The need to maintain balance within our parks in relation to enabling participation in sports whilst having regard to biodiversity issues.

He referred to the development of an action plan and the involvement of the Welsh Government in supporting these initiatives.

In response to Member questions, Officers stated that:

- a) There is a need to consider the use of perennial mixes and wildflower turf.
- b) Highways and Planning colleagues would need to be consulted regarding the legalities of households taking over grass verges.

- c) Vehicle damage of verges was a highways issue and each site would need to be considered on its merits.
- d) Allowing grass to grow freely does necessitate the need for litter to be picked and thorny plants do pose a problem.
- e) Engaging schools is a positive consideration as they are more secure to external influences.
- f) Whilst consultation with organisations and local residents is paramount, statutory requirements often conflict with what majority of residents would prefer.
- g) There is a need for greater public awareness on initiatives, e.g., the Mumbles to Margam pollinator corridor.
- h) Examination of small areas of authority where we would leave the management of grass as it is and areas where we would change it would need to be rolled out in a controlled manner. Ultimately, decisions need to be operationally manageable and affordable.

The Chair thanked Officers for their informative presentation.

Resolved that:

- 1) the scope of this review is confined initially to the maintenance of grassed areas.
- 2) The Parks Operations and Nature Conservation Teams liaise with Plantlife and other relevant organisations in a review of the Council's green space maintenance regime.
- 3) That a further report will be brought back to the PDC in due course setting out the proposed future policy context prior to seeking approval by Cabinet.
- 4) A workshop be organised to determine a co-ordinated and effective method of consultation to ensure continuity.

34 Workplan 2020-2022.

The Chair referred to the work plan. It was noted that the Council Diary for 2021-2022 Municipal Year would be considered at Annual Council on 20 May, 2021.

The Democratic Services Officer stated that the first meeting of the Economy, Environment and Infrastructure Policy Development Committee would take place on Thursday, 17 June, 2021.

Resolved that:

- 1) The Annual Report would be considered at the first meeting of the Municipal Year.
- 2) The Work Plan for the 2021-2022 would be presented for consideration.

The meeting ended at 3.29 pm

Chair