

HEALTH, WELLBEING & ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 14th June, 2023
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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Present: Councillor Ian Wilkes (Chair)

Councillors:	Adcock	Dymond	Reece
	Barker MBE	Hutchison	Richards
	Brown	S Jones	
	Crisp	Northcott	

Apologies: Councillor(s) Wright

Substitutes: Councillor Joel Edgington-Plunkett (In place of Councillor Ruth Wright)

Officers:	Nesta Barker	Service Director - Regulatory Services
	Andrew Bird	Service Director - Sustainable Environment

1. **APOLOGIES**

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Northcott declared a non-pecuniary interest as County Council Cabinet Support Member for Public Health and Integrated Care which would be relevant to item 5.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 6th March 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

4. **UPDATE FROM CABINET**

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment reported on his first Cabinet meeting and recommendation for the Council to adopt the Staffordshire Adaptation Strategy. As an active member of Staffordshire Sustainability Board the Council was in a good position to help facilitate actions in relation to the strategy which included the following objectives:

- infrastructure and buildings resilient to climate related hazards;
- natural environment and green spaces allowing for biodiversity, recreation and reduction of air pollution;
- health, wellbeing and safety, e.g. minimising the impacts of heat related stress and reduced air quality in the summer;

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- local economy taking into account that extreme weather events and change in weather can disrupt business operations e.g. overheating premises, flooding etc.

The Staffordshire Adaptation Strategy was supported unanimously by Cabinet.

Questions were asked and responses were provided as follows:

- Cllr Northcott found the decision encouraging and asked if this would imply pursuing law makers to change the law. Land owners and developers for instance could be asked to put measures in place to help mitigate risks of flooding and other drainage issues. – The Service Director for Sustainable Environment confirmed that the Board as an organisation gathering local authorities had some lobbying powers and that changes at government level should be sought. The Council would be developing its own adaptation strategy through the Local Plan.
- Cllr Brown asked if there were any contingency plans with regard to tree planting and the assumption that trees would look after themselves after a while, which may be compromised by the climate crisis. – While it was to be acknowledge that tree planting would always include a percentage of failure as it had in the past, a management strategy seating on the back of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy was currently being pulled together. The Chair commented that 10% of trees planted would usually die before reaching maturity.

Resolved: That the update from Cabinet be noted.

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5. STAFFORDSHIRE HEALTH & CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

Resolved: That the District and Borough Council Digest from Staffordshire County Council Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee be received.

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6. WALLEYS QUARRY UPDATE

The Head of Regulatory Services presented an update on Walleys Quarry as previously submitted to Cabinet.

Questions were asked and responses were provided as follows:

- Cllr Adcock: with the rise of complaints over the last couple of months, would the Council consider re-using the drones monitoring devices previously in place around the site? – The drones were used to support officers' visits which had proven to be most effective.
- Cllr Barker: could the odours coming from Walleys Quarry be confused with those originating from the old Mc Guinness site? – Complaints had been made assuming it was Walleys and efforts were put to differentiate the potential sources of odours. Complaints relating to the Mc Guinness site could be addressed to Stoke-On-Trent City Council or the Environment Agency.

Newcastle residents who were affected could also complain to the Council using the general pollution online form as opposed to the Walleys Quarry one.

- Cllr Adcock: things had been happening since the report was drafted, Walleys having been doing permanent capping on the Eastern flank and the Environment Agency having announced a public dropping at the fire station on the 20th June which the Council would need to advertise. – It was confirmed that the capping would indeed help contain the odours and that the team would be present at the dropping session, talking to people about the Council's activities.

Resolved: That the contents of the update report be noted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

7. **POLICE COMMANDER REVIEW OF THE NEW POLICING MODEL**

The Police Commander gave a verbal report on the new policing model.

Questions were asked and responses were provided as follows:

- Cllr Brown: crime nationally was on the rise; did we know what this related to? – This was intrinsically linked to drug and alcohol addiction.
- Cllr Barker: was it correct to say that people were very reluctant to report crimes and this may be part of the problem? – Indeed crime and antisocial behaviours were not always reported by people however it was now possible to do this online which would hopefully make things easier.
- Cllr Adcock: was the new model under continuous review or was it something done on a quarterly or yearly basis? – The model was under constant evaluation regarding what is working and what isn't. A new Chief had recently joined and started implementing successful changes, leading the organisation in the right direction.
- Cllr Dymond: what was the best way to report off-road bikes? – They should be reported through 101 or the online reporting system. Drones were used to help catching them although this was mainly after the event.

Cllr Dymond expressed her concern over one particular bike she had been repeatedly reporting with a girl wearing no helmet at the back. The Police Commander asked that all details be emailed to him so that he could investigate the case.

- Cllr Northcott: would it be possible to have an update on any improvements of the 101 service regarding response time as well as initiatives in the rural area to combat crime? – There had been improvement in response time for both 101 and 999 calls. There were now also officers dedicated to rural areas which hadn't always been the case, with one of two stationary people per shift.
- The Chair: following the announcement that the METs were no longer going to be called out for mental health, would it be likely to be the same here? – Indeed the decision was taken nationally by various forces and the Staffordshire Police was following that track, partnering with the NHS so that

there weren't gap in service. The police would also still be there in situations when there was a risk that someone would get hurt or someone would harm somebody.

- Cllr Crisp: how was a situation categorised as mental health issue? – It would differ depending on the circumstances but typically this was when someone was in a crisis requiring medical attention and support for which the Police was not the best qualified and equipped.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

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8. **MODULAR HOUSING**

A presentation on modular housing modern methods of construction through the case study of a pilot project undertaken in Wolverhampton had been shared with the meeting documents.

As the author was unable to attend the Chair gave an overview of the benefits of modular housing including non-reliance on the weather during the construction phase, lower cost of material and manpower flexibility. Modular housing meant more affordable houses and was used by governments to combat homelessness.

Questions were asked and responses were provided as follows:

- Cllr Northcott wished that more information be provided on the maintenance regime and costs of repairs to assess the viability of the project. – Modular housing had a sixty years lifespan but could last even longer if appropriate maintenance was carried out. This could be discussed further with Wolverhampton Housing at a later meeting.
- Cllr Crisp asked what the walls were made of. – The interior was usually wooden frame with an exterior cladding such as bricks and PVC.

Resolved: That Wolverhampton Housing be invited to come to a later meeting to do their presentation and respond to questions.

[Watch the debate here](#)

9. **WORK PROGRAMME**

Members requested that the presentation on Modular Housing be postponed to the September meeting and that the Sustainable Environment Strategy Annual Report be moved to the November meeting along with a review of the 850 Celebrations.

Resolved: That the work programme be received.

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10. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

A request to speak at the meeting had been received from a member of the public who did not attend.

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11. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: That the next meeting be held on 7th September 2023.

**Councillor Ian Wilkes
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 8.04 pm