



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE OPERATIONS COMMITTEE HELD
AT MOSSLEY MILL ON TUESDAY 3 MAY 2022 AT 6.30 PM**

In the Chair : Councillor A Logue

Members Present: Aldermen - L Clarke, M Girvan and J Smyth
Councillors - A Bennington, R Foster, N Kelly, J Montgomery,
and R Swann

Non Committee: Councillors – P Dunlop and B Webb

Officers Present : Deputy Chief Executive of Operations - G Girvan
Deputy Director of Operations (Leisure & Parks) - M
McDowell
Deputy Director of Operations (Environmental Health,
Building Control and Property) - C Todd
Deputy Director of Operations (Waste and Fleet) – M Lavery
Head of Leisure Services – D O'Hagan
ICT System Support Officer – Colin Bell
Mayor & Member Services Officer – S Fisher

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

The Chairperson welcomed Committee Members to the May Operations Committee meeting and reminded all present of the audio recording procedures. She also expressed condolences, on behalf, the Vice-Chair, Members of the Operations Committee and herself to George Williamson's family and friends.

Although the COVID restrictions had been relaxed, to manage numbers and minimise risk, members of the public and press could continue to access those parts of the Council meetings which they are entitled to attend through the livestream on the Council's website.

1 APOLOGIES

Councillors Brady and Gilmour

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3 PRESENTATION

3.1 L/LEI/SD/018 PRESENTATION - HEALTH INTERVENTION ACTION PLAN

Members were reminded that one of the key themes of the Council's Leisure Strategy (2017-2030) was Programming and Participation. Through innovative and effective programming, the aim was to provide sustainable participation across age groups, and be receptive to tackling wider health issues by providing more opportunities for vulnerable and inactive groups. An update was provided to Members at the February meeting of Committee, in relation to funding secured for two specific programmes – Exercise for Mental Health and Teen Fitness.

Following discussion at the meeting, it was highlighted that a wider, comprehensive programme of health interventions was in place and to this end a Health Intervention Action Plan was being developed for consideration by Committee. A presentation setting out the proposed programme would be given by Deaglan O'Hagan, Head of Leisure. Following discussion of the presentation, it was proposed that a draft Plan would be brought to Committee for consideration in June.

The Head of Leisure Services responded to Members' questions regarding the specific target groups and other demographics within the Borough. He also agreed to look at further opportunities to work with those with additional needs, particularly those of a sensory nature, and with drug and alcohol abuse victims.

Proposed by Councillor Montgomery
Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

the presentation be noted and any amendments, additions or suggestions fed into the draft Plan for consideration by Committee in June.

ACTION BY: Matt McDowell, Deputy Director of Operations (Parks and Leisure)

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 WM/SC/01 MARINE LITTER CAPITAL GRANT

Members were reminded that Council recently secured £40,000 of funding from Live Here Love Here's Marine Litter Capital Grant Scheme for the purchase and installation of unique contactless water fountains, solar powered compaction litter bins and two-minute litter pick boards for both Lough Shore Parks in the Borough. Match funding of £40,000 was provided by Council.

The water fountains and solar powered bins were installed in March 2022 but both already had a positive impact in the Parks. The water fountains had already saved the equivalent of 2,000 plastic bottles in the first 4 weeks of operation and the solar bins, due to their closed apertures, had completely eradicated incidents of littering through birds removing waste from bins and

scattering around the base of the bins. The sensors in the bins had also been very effective in saving time and resources as the bins were only emptied when they were approaching being full. For example, previously the bin at the entrance to Rea's Wood in Antrim had to be checked every day on foot around 500 metres of path whereas the new bin sensor means that bin levels could be checked via an app and the bin is emptied only as and when required - usually every 2-3 days.

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful had announced a further release of funding through the Marine Litter Capital Grants Scheme up to a maximum of £40,000 of funding at 50% of project costs for 2022/2023. The application process opens on 9 May 2022.

In line with the Council's Litter Action Plan and the successful installation of the equipment listed above, a further application for four water fountains and fourteen additional solar bins for other eligible 'marine environments' in the Borough was being submitted. The terms and conditions of the funding programme remain the same with Council match funding to be provided from in year Waste budgets (2022/23). It was proposed that the water fountain be located at the Newtownabbey Way and the River Maine in Randalstown with 2 portable units for Council sponsored events at Garden Show Ireland and the Halloween Spooktacular event at V36 subject to a successful application. The solar bins would be added to those already installed at the 2 Lough Shore Parks and Hazelbank to replace existing litter bins.

Proposed by Councillor Montgomery
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed that

approval be given for match funding of £40,000 for an application to Live Here Love Here's Marine Litter Capital Grant Scheme for water fountains and solar bins.

ACTION BY: Tara McAleese, EMS and Sustainability Officer

4.2 L/GEN/005 VOL 2 PRICE REDUCTION OF 3G SOCCER PITCHES DURING PERIOD OF GRASS PITCH MAINTENANCE

Members were reminded that grass playing pitches enter a period of rest and maintenance from May to September each year in order to ensure their availability during the playing season and could withstand the rigours of the winter weather.

In May 2021, approval was given for 3G pitches to be made available at the same rate as grass pitches during the summer months - due to the delay in the season caused by restrictions relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. Officers had this year seen increased demand through leisure bookings for use of grass pitches for summer leagues and pre-season friendlies which unfortunately could not currently be accommodated due to the maintenance schedule.

To resolve the issue this summer season and going forward, it was proposed that 3G pitches could be booked at the same rate as grass pitches during the months of June, July and August. The price was for a two-hour duration which allows adequate time for a match to be played, and would be £42 for adults or £21 for juniors.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth

Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

approval is given to amend pricing for 3G pitches, to that of grass pitches as set out above.

ACTION BY: Matt McDowell, Deputy Director of Operations (Parks and Leisure)

5. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

5.1 WM/WM/40 GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY FOR PACKAGING CONSULTATION

Members were reminded that Department for the Environment, Farming, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), in conjunction with the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and the Department for Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland consulted on Extended Producer Responsibility in April 2021. The Governments had now collated and analysed the feedback to the consultation and published a response, which had been circulated. This response sets out changes in the proposed Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme as a result of the consultation process. EPR was being introduced to ensure that producers pay the full net cost recovery for the management of the collection and disposal of all packaging waste that they place on the market. This would move the cost of collecting, treating and disposing of packaging waste away from local ratepayers and Council and place it with the packaging producers in order to encourage them to reduce their use of packaging and to use packaging which is easier to recycle.

In response to the consultation on EPR, Council stated the following:

- In general supportive of the EPR scheme;
- It would be preferable for the introduction of the scheme to be in 2023 but the timescale was challenging and a prudent approach was recommended with a possible phased approach;
- Support for a mandatory, producer-led takeback obligation on sellers of filled disposable paper cups with larger businesses starting by the end of 2023 and all businesses by the end of 2025;
- Proposed a single agreed cross product label to indicate whether a product is recyclable to assist public understanding;
- A new kerbside recycling collection service proposed for plastic film from 2026/27 and while Council welcomed increased recycling, the limited processing and end markets for this material currently available meant we were unable to support this proposal at present;

- The 'necessary costs' payable to Council to include the cost of collection of packaging materials within the scope of this new legislation (except the DRS materials). These materials to be collected through wheelie boxes/blue bins, household recycling centres, black bins or street sweeping and litter picking operations. The Council supported payment linked to good practice and collected on a quarterly basis;
- Support for the proposal that packaging waste from businesses to be covered by the Regulations.

As a result of the consultation process the four Governments had agreed to the following changes in the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme initially proposed:

1. EPR would be implemented in a phased manner from 2024 rather than in 2023 as per Council response. This means from 1 April 2024 Council would receive payments for the collection and treatment of household packaging waste and packaging in street bins managed by local authorities;
2. In England and Northern Ireland there will not be payments for packaging waste that has been littered but Scotland and Wales were considering steps to obligate producers for these costs and were developing proposals;
3. Packaging waste from businesses would not initially be included in EPR but a cross-sector taskforce would be established to develop options on the best method to include this waste stream;
4. All compostable and biodegradable packaging would be required to be given the "do not recycle" label, allowing time to build evidence that it could be safely collected and composted separately;
5. The EPR scheme would be reviewed after two years of its operation when the work of the business waste taskforce (see point 3) and progress in reducing the volumes of packaging in street bins and littered on the ground would be addressed.

As previously reported, Council had been made aware by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful there were concerns that ground littered packaging waste would not be eligible for funding and Members had asked for the issue to be raised with the DAERA Minister. The notification that ground littered packaging waste was not eligible in England and Northern Ireland under EPR was received before the letter was sent to the Minister and as a result the letter was amended to request that this decision was reconsidered and any proposed measures planned for Scotland and Wales to be assessed to ascertain whether they would be applicable to Northern Ireland.

While a detailed response to the Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers which was consulted on at the same time as EPR, is expected soon, the Government paper does state that England, Wales, and Northern Ireland would implement an "all-in" DRS for single-use drinks containers containing between 50ml and 3L of liquid in line with the approach in Scotland. The materials covered would be steel and aluminium cans, and plastic bottles with England and Northern Ireland including glass bottles in the scope of EPR rather than DRS. This decision to exclude glass was as a result of concerns of

glass quality being adversely affected by the reverse vending machines required for DRS.

Proposed by Councillor Montgomery
Seconded by Councillor Bennington and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.2 WM/SC/01 BIG SPRING CLEAN 2022

Members were reminded that the Litter Action Plan, approved in November 2021, included support for the Big Spring Clean 2022 and the potential to reward volunteers with vouchers for use in local businesses. The Big Spring Clean is Northern Ireland's largest community clean-up campaign and the weekend of 6 – 8 May was designated as the 'Big Spring Clean Weekend'.

Officers had been seeking volunteers to participate in the Big Spring Clean in the Borough and approached a number of businesses seeking support. Henderson Foodservice had responded to offer the following:

- 100 reusable "Take Me Home" cups for volunteers;
- Branded water bottles made from recycled materials for any children involved in the event;
- A number of loaded loyalty cards with the value of an agreed number of drinks. These would be purchased by Council, in advance, at a subsidised rate (£1.50 per drink), and provided to volunteers as part of the initiative and could be used at any Henderson outlet displaying the Barista branding.

At the time of writing, there were over 100 volunteers enrolled to carry out a litter pick during the Big Spring Clean 2022 and it was proposed to provide a loyalty card with the value of 2 drinks for the first 250 volunteers.

Enforcement Officers had also been engaging with organisations like McDonalds, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Tim Hortons to encourage them and participate in spring cleans.

Proposed by Councillor Montgomery
Seconded by Councillor Bennington and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.3 PK/GEN/173 HAZELBANK PAVILION

Members were reminded that following approval of a short-term let of Hazelbank Pavilion by Abbey Sure Start in 2018 and subsequent extensions, current arrangements were due to end in July 2022. Officers had recently

been advised that the group would be moving to new facilities at Abbots Cross Primary School and would be vacating the Pavilion in July.

In relation to the capital project, which includes redevelopment of the Pavilion as a café, new play park, replacement toilet provision and maze and rose garden, the business case was currently being developed for consideration.

The Deputy Chief Executive of Operations confirmed that normal reports on the proposed scheme would be brought to Committee in due course.

Proposed by Councillor Montgomery
Seconded by Councillor Bennington and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.4 PK/GEN/107, PK/GEN/151, PK/BIO/019 DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS (DAERA): ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGE COMPETITION

Members were reminded that in 2021, Council secured funding through the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs' (DAERA) Environmental Challenge Competition for the construction of paths in the Valley Park project (part of the Mallusk/Hightown to Gideon's Green route) as well as for a section of the Doagh to Larne Greenway through Ballyclare. The Fund reopened briefly for applications on 2 March, closing on 30 March.

Due to the tight timescales involved an application was submitted for a project which had been identified as having significant biodiversity value - creation of a wetland area in Threemilewater Park. Officers had previously highlighted an area known locally as 'Nelly's Dam' highlighted on the map circulated, as having potential for wetland development, however, an initial site visit undertaken by an ecologist indicated that a feasibility study would be needed by a qualified hydrologist to assess whether there would be an adequate supply and retention of water to ensure the sustainability of a wetland feature.

In addition, a formal ecological appraisal would be required so that further ecological advice could be provided on the profile of the wetland, the protection of existing ecological assets and the biodiversity enhancement of the site.

As a result, the application was submitted seeking funding for these two studies, estimated to cost in the region of £25,000 in total.

Should the application be successful and the studies return favourably, Officers would update Committee with a detailed specification and associated budget for the wider wetland project and any potential for external funding.

Proposed by Councillor Montgomery
Seconded by Councillor Bennington and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.5 EH/PHWB/003 AFFORDABLE WARMTH SCHEME 2022 – 2023 BUDGET

Members were reminded that the Affordable Warmth Scheme was funded by the Department for Communities. The scheme aims to support the most vulnerable in terms of heating and energy efficiency. Under the Scheme, the number of referrals required to be submitted by Council for 2021/2022 totalled 360, or 30 per month.

Correspondence had been received from the Department for Communities, was circulated, regarding the Affordable Warmth Scheme Budget and Referrals for the current financial year, 2022-2023. The correspondence indicates that due to uncertainties surrounding funding of the Scheme, the referral rate for 2022/2023 would be 30 per month for May and June dropping to 20 per month for the remainder of the year, equating to a total of 260 referrals for the financial year.

Proposed by Councillor Montgomery
Seconded by Councillor Bennington and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.6 WM/WM/40 CONSULTATION ON REFORMS TO THE PACKAGING WASTE RECYCLING NOTE (PRN) AND PACKAGING WASTE EXPORT RECYCLING NOTE (PERN) SYSTEM AND OPERATOR APPROVAL

As stated in the report on the Government response to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), no agreement had been achieved for payments under the EPR scheme for non-household (business) packaging waste resulting in the Governments deciding to delay the implementation of EPR for this waste stream.

The delay in this new payment mechanism, meant that that existing scheme Packaging Recycling Notes (PRNs) and Packaging Export Recycling Notes (PERNs), which were going to be revoked and replaced by EPR, now need to be retained. PRNs and PERNs were introduced to allow for additional payment, based on supply and demand market fluctuations, by packaging producers to the waste collection and reprocessing sector when they recycled designated wastes like paper, card, plastics, and wood to encourage an increase in recycling rates.

The current PRN and PERN scheme had been criticised by the National Audit Office for the volatility and unpredictability of prices, a lack of transparency,

and a reliance on export markets. As a result, the Governments are consulting on a number of changes to the current scheme including:

- A mandatory requirement for all reprocessors and exporters that recycle or export packaging waste to register with a regulator;
- Additional reporting requirement for accredited exporters including the submission of evidence to demonstrate that a waste shipment had reached the stated waste treatment destination;
- Mandatory requirement for inspections of overseas waste treatment facilities;
- Increased powers to the relevant regulator, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, to allow greater monitoring and powers to sanction when required.

The PRN and PERN scheme does not directly affect Council and the consultation is technical in nature and therefore it was proposed to let arc21 respond on behalf of the member councils. The arc21 response had not been finalised and would be reported to Committee in June 2022 for completeness.

Proposed by Councillor Montgomery
Seconded by Councillor Bennington and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Councillor Bennington and agreed that

the following Committee business be taken In Confidence and the livestream and audio recording would cease.

6. ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

6.1 IN CONFIDENCE WM/arc21/4/VOL9 arc21 JOINT COMMITTEE PAPERS

The papers for the arc21 Joint Committee Meeting were circulated for:

- April 2022

Members were reminded that these documents were confidential and may be legally privileged or otherwise protected from disclosure so therefore Members should not disclose this information to any third party and the information must be kept secure.

Proposed by Councillor Bennington
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed that

the papers be noted.

NO ACTION

Councillors Foster, Kelly and Montgomery left the meeting during the next item.

6.2 IN CONFIDENCE WM/FM/01 TRANSITION TO LOW, ULTRA LOW AND ZERO EMISSION FUELS

As part of Council's commitment to address Climate Change and referenced in both the Fleet Strategy and Energy Action Plan, there was a need to move away from carbon producing fuels like diesel and petrol to reduce the production of greenhouse gases towards more sustainable means of powering vehicles.

In addition, recent global events had led to a significant increase in the cost of traditional fuels like diesel and petrol and as a result, the adverse economic impact of the transition was currently reduced.

To date, Council had implemented the following measures to reduce the emission of carbon from the operation of its fleet:

- Vehicle replacement of some smaller vehicles with electric vehicles rather than diesel/petrol (4 to date);
- Piloting the use of Ultra Low and Zero Emission Vehicles;
- Piloting the use of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) in current fleet (HVO is a renewable diesel in existing which had lower greenhouse gas emissions than diesel/petrol
- Assessing the possible conversion of existing heavy fleet items to hydrogen fuel
 - progressing the potential for a partnership approach, with other public sector bodies, to share refuelling facilities (meetings had already taken place with Translink re their Glenville Road facility;
- Driver training to encourage greater fuel efficiency during the operation of Council vehicles.

In order to further develop this transition, the following issues need to be addressed:

- Analysis of the current Council fleet's carbon impact including tonnage of carbon emitted so a baseline of carbon production could be established;
- Assessment of the vehicles that could be converted to Low, Ultra Low, and Zero Emission Fuels when the operating use is considered;
- Assessment of all Low, Ultra Low, and Zero Emission Fuel alternatives including renewable diesel, bio fuel, electric and hydrogen, with estimated annual CO2 reductions and potential annual cost savings;
- Possible timetable and cost of transition plan for the fleet;
- Review of the current fuelling infrastructure, including EV charging points, at Council facilities and the financial implications of new alternative fuel infrastructure;

- Review of current load capacities at Council sites and assessment of electric vehicle charging options, including potential upgrade costs if greater load capacity is required at key sites;
- Consideration of grey fleet recommendations that may improve the environmental performance of Council;
- Analysis of expected market transition to Low, Ultra Low, & Zero Emission Fuel over the course of the next ten years, particularly with regard to private sector developments, the expected extent of coverage of fuelling infrastructure on the strategic road network within the Borough.

In order to address these issues, specialist support would be required and some market testing had been carried out through the Carbon Savings Trust and it was estimated that the cost of support for the provision of a report and recommendations would be in the regions of £[REDACTED].

If approved, this would ensure that Council had a blue print for suitable fleet replacement going forward together with an assessment of the appropriate associated infrastructure requirements.

The Deputy Chief Executive of Operations gave an overview of the anticipated environmental and financial benefits to Council of engaging the services of specialists to make recommendations on the way forward.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Councillor Bennington and agreed that

approval be given for a report and recommendations to assist the transition of the fleet to Low, Ultra Low, and Zero Emission Fuels in order to meet Council's Climate Change commitments at an estimated cost of £[REDACTED].

ACTION BY: Lynda Gregg, Transport and Contracts Manager

The Chair advised that Any Other Business would be taken at this point.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

In response to a query, the Deputy Chief Executive of Operations gave an update on the status and impact of the current industrial action.

NO ACTION

In response to a request from a Member, the Deputy Chief Executive of Operations to request that a report on consultants being used by the Council be brought to an appropriate meeting.

ACTION BY: Sandra Cole, Deputy Chief Executive of Finance and Governance

Following a concern raised by a Member regarding an item regarding future pay negotiations on the Policy and Governance Committee agenda for the

May meeting, the Deputy Chief Executive of Operations agreed to pass these concerns to the appropriate Director.

ACTION BY: Geraldine Girvan, Deputy Chief Executive of Operations

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Bennington
Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed

that the remainder of Committee business be taken in Open Session.

The Chairperson advised that audio-recording would recommence at this point.

There being no further Committee business, the Chair, on behalf the Vice-Chair and herself, thanked Members for their patience and co-operation during their tenure. The DUP Grouping thanked them for their service. The meeting concluded at 7.24 pm.

MAYOR

Council Minutes have been redacted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation, and legal advice.