

# **ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of a meeting of the Economy and Environment Policy Committee of South Norfolk District Council, held on Friday 15 October 2021 at 2pm.**

**Committee Members Present:** Councillors: A Dearnley (Chairman), D Elmer, J Knight and R Savage.

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillors: V Clifford-Jackson, L Glover and K Hurn

**Cabinet Member Present:** Councillor: M Edney

**Officers in Attendance:** The Assistant Director for Regulatory (N Howard), the Assistant Director of Community Services (S Phelan) and the Senior Environmental Health Officer – Community Protection (T Garland)

## **18 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Economy and Environment Policy Committee held on 18 June 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

## **19 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

The Senior Environmental Health Officer (Community Protection) introduced the report, which sought the Panel's views on the matters to be addressed when putting in place a dedicated Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy for the first time.

The Panel received a presentation that set out some anti-social behaviour policy considerations (attached at Appendix 1).

Members were advised that there had been a 30-45 percent rise in reports of nuisance and anti-social behaviour since the first lockdown and that an

estimated 70 percent of anti-social behaviour was associated with either substance misuse or mental health issues.

The Council had key statutory duties and responsibilities for tackling local anti-social behaviour and as a member of the Norfolk County Community Partnership it was part of a coordinated multi-agency approach that included the police, housing associations and adult and children's social services.

The Committee was shown a spreadsheet of anti-social behaviour service requests received by the Community Protection Team over the last 12 months in South Norfolk. Areas brought to members' attention for this period included:

- 114 - Abandoned Vehicles – Highways
- 61 - Accumulations
- 118 - Commercial Noise
- 39 - Flies – Problem Investigation
- 187 - Flytipping Enforcement
- 270 - Noise Domestic (other)
- 63 - Noise Domestic Dogs
- 53 - Nuisance – Rats
- 90 - Other Matter
- 86 - Smoke Domestic

In total there had been 1,322 requests to the Community Protection Team in the last year, which placed a heavy demand on the service.

The Senior Environmental Health Officer (Community Protection) advised the Committee that the Community Protection Team worked alongside the police, housing associations and local communities. He further explained that the Council and police were backed with statutory powers under the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 and the Anti-Social Behaviour Policing and Crime Act 2014.

Members were referred to the key principles, which were:

- 1) No one should have to experience anti-social behaviour or nuisance.
- 2) Incidents of anti-social behaviour or nuisance will be treated seriously and dealt with professionally.
- 3) Anti-social behaviour or nuisance will be dealt with firmly, fairly and proportionately.
- 4) We work with partners to deliver an effective, value for money service.
- 5) We provide a high-quality service to meet identified needs.
- 6) Underpinned by Equalities and Human Rights considerations.
- 7) We safely and professionally share information, and safeguard confidentiality.

Members discussed the 30-45% increase in ASB reports since the first lockdown and queried which service request type saw the largest increase.

The Senior Environmental Health Officer (Community Protection) explained that domestic noise from dogs saw the largest increase, he noted that this was likely due to an increase of residents staying at home during the day.

In response to a query on public awareness and/or encouragement to report ASB. The Senior Environmental Health Officer (Community Protection) explained that information was prominently displayed on the Council's website and that residents could call the team for an informal chat. It was noted that some residents might be concerned about reporting a neighbour.

Members discussed the role of youth clubs to reduce the amount of youth related ASB and queried whether the Council supported the clubs. The Senior Environmental Health Officer (Community Protection) explained that the Communities and Help Hub team worked with groups as part of ASB prevention activities.

One member queried whether there were adequate resources in place and the Senior Environmental Health Officer (Community Protection) explained that temporary additional resources had been put in place as part of the Covid response. It was intended that 2 Community Support Officers would be retained until March 2023 to manage initial contact and low level complaints, which would allow the Environmental Health Officers to work on complex or more serious cases.

After further discussion, it was;

## **RESOLVED**

To

- 1) Note the contents of the report.
- 2) That the future formal policy, take into consideration the views of the Committee, as outlined above.

## **20 REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT PENALTIES**

The Assistant Director for Regulatory introduced the report, which sought the Committee's views on the proposal to review and update the fixed penalty charges, which were imposed when fixed penalty notice enforcement was deemed appropriate for specific environmental and anti-social behaviour offences.

The Committee was advised that if the fixed penalties were set too high that public would be more likely to proceed to court, whereas if the penalty was too low it would not act as a deterrent to offending or re-offending. It was also

noted that early payment discounts offered a positive incentive to accept and resolve offences.

In response to a query on repairing or selling vehicles on the side of the road, the Assistant Director for Regulatory explained that this was typically an offence carried out by businesses and that the 25% early payment discount was a pragmatic approach and often resolved the issue.

Members discussed the parent penalties, where, if the offender was below the minimum age (16 or 18yrs depending on the offence), the parents would be held responsible during enforcement for any failure of parental control. The Senior Environmental Health Officer (Community Protection) informed the Committee that parent penalties were rare, with only 1 case at South Norfolk. The Assistant Director for Regulatory added that without a policy in place, it was difficult to carry out enforcement on offences by minors.

Members expressed support for the policy and proposed penalty charges, outlined in the report.

After further discussion It was;

#### **RESOLVED**

To

- 1) Note the contents of the report
- 2) That the views of the Committee, as outlined above, be taken into consideration in the formal policy.

## **21 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

It was;

#### **RESOLVED**

To exclude the public and press from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended)

## **22 REVIEW OF THE MATERIAL RECYCLING FACILITY CONTRACT**

Members considered the exempt report presented by the Assistant Director of Community Services, which summarised the negotiations on the proposals to

amend and extend the existing Joint Venture Company Material Recycling Facility contract to 2027.

Officers explained the background of the report and the reasons behind the final recommendations proposed.

A detailed discussion took place and it was,

**RESOLVED**

To amend and extend the current joint venture company contract with NEWS for three years from 2024 to 2027, accepting a shift to a variable gate fee based on actual costs from October 2021

(The meeting concluded at 3.20 pm)

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Chairman