

NOTES of the Meeting of the SUSTAINABILITY & ENVIRONMENTWORKING GROUP held on Tuesday 9th February, 2021 at 5.02pm conducted remotely via Zoom.

PRESENT

Councillor Ms L Crawford (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs U Mann (Vice Chairman)
Councillor J Ellis
Councillors A Hutton and Mrs G Parker (ex-officio)
Councillor Mrs A Johnson (Mayor)
Councillor P Ward (Chairman of the Development Management & Licensing Committee)
Councillors A Lewis, B Smith, P Squire (Ward Members)

IN ATTENDANCE Town Clerk, General Manager, Assistant to the Town Clerk

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence, as all Members of the Working Party were in attendance.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

3. NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Notes of the Meeting of Sustainability and Environment Working Group held on Tuesday 10th November, 2020 were agreed as a correct record (Appendix 1).

4. WORKING WITH THE DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT & LICENSING COMMITTEE

The Working Group proceeded to review, with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Development Management and Licensing (DM&L) Committee, topics where the Working Group might contribute to areas which principally fell within the remit/responsibility of the DM&L Committee. More particularly:

a) Planning and the Built Environment

How/if a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) for Tavistock;

- might help support the aims of the Devon Carbon Plan;
- could encourage developers to provide more sustainable and environmentally friendly development;
- could promote sustainability and resilience.

Acknowledging that the lead Committee for a NDP process was DM&L there was opportunity for the Working Group, and its Members, to feed into prospective work streams applicable to their remit. Looking ahead it was mooted that consideration of next steps regarding a NDP by the DM&L Committee and Council was most appropriately programmed:

- in the new civic year, following completion of the THI Scheme and the capital build part of the Guildhall Project when the resource position of the Council would be clearer; also and importantly;
- by scheduling to a time when people could (subject to pandemic measures) physically meet again in some form would afford the key early processes of community engagement, team building and communication the greatest opportunity for success.

This reflected that if a decision were made to proceed at that time:

- there was a high level of reliance on active community participation/engagement alongside a small cohort of dedicated Councillors able to commit three or more years to the work involved to support the initiative;
- the cost base for a NDP would be affected by the extent to which certain skills and/or activities could/could not be sourced from the community and grant availability. Experience from other towns of similar size suggested budgeting not less than £60,000.
- Members were encouraged to view NDP's for towns of a similar size and type to Tavistock to identify the extent and limits respectively of what a NDP could include;
- More generally, a Council Policy event was scheduled for Tuesday 2nd March, 2021 when there would be opportunity to explore what might be the key one or two priority

deliverables for the Council over the remainder of the Council term.

b) Management of Surface Water & Associated Flood Risk

Concerns were raised regarding recent flooding events in Tavistock, apparently caused by the failure of measures to conduct surface water run-off and the perceived lack of proactive activity by the relevant authorities to avoid such incidences eg regular inspection and maintenance of drains, ditches and gullies.

Reference was further made to:

- the responsibility for surface water disposal which sat with a range of bodies including, in particular, Devon County Council (as Highway Authority), West Devon Borough Council, South West Water and the Environment Agency, depending on source and location. However, there appeared to be a lack of ownership and co-ordination by these when flooding arose;
- the extent to which recent events reflected either extreme weather events, and/or a lack of both programmed and reactive maintenance was unclear;
- Critical Drainage Area Plans did not appear to have been updated since drafting, despite the considerable amount of development which had taken place in Tavistock in the intervening period;
- Turning to the river itself, and in response to a question, measures were being introduced to protect the Guildhall, should the River Tavy flood. However, Butchers' Hall and other riverside properties in varying ownerships were still at risk;
- The challenges of extreme weather event modelling were noted;
- Particular concern was expressed regarding the extent to which the Highway Authority was/was not conducting an adequate programme of scheduled inspections and maintenance alongside timely arrangements for peak weather events;
- The importance of those bodies tasked with statutory duties in connection with surface water management (and who levied taxes and fees to deliver same) meeting their obligations was stressed.

RECOMMENDED THAT in order to progress matters, and recognising the wide ranging nature of the issue, the Southern Links Committee be requested to table an Agenda item inviting representatives from relevant bodies, (but in particular Devon County Council Highways, West Devon Borough Council and the Environment Agency), to attend and:

- Clearly identify the responsibilities and duties attaching to each organisation so far as flooding was concerned;
- provide clarity on the adequacy and frequency of routine maintenance arrangements for all drains, channels and watercourses or similar dealing with surface water run off (or foul water overflow or any other 'flood event');
- confirm the arrangements in place to co-ordinate work between those bodies both on routine matters and in the event of emergency flooding events.

5. SLOW WAYS INITIATIVE

Following consideration of this matter previously (Minute No 204(2) refers), the Vice Chairman of the Working Group undertook to write to Transition Tavistock and Tavistock Ramblers to advise of, and promote interest in, this national initiative.

6. RE-WILDING

The General Manager provided a verbal update on the areas of Town Council owned property where re-wilding areas had already been implemented. These included, but were not limited to;

- a bank in The Meadows near the school;
- Mrs Wedd's Arboretum near the BMX Track;
- areas along the canal;
- areas around the Skate Park, St John's Well and St John's Walk;
- the Plantation near Abbey Bridge;
- parts of both Dolvin Road and Plymouth Road Cemeteries;
- areas in the Bannawell Street wetland and park

It was however observed that:

- there was a lack of 'Blue Heart' plaques identifying those areas as re-wilding locations;
- further promotion was appropriate to highlight the activities the Town Council was already undertaking in order to raise awareness.

Noted That the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Group undertook to promote knowledge and understanding of the work being undertaken on Council property to support the Blue Heart Campaign initiative.

7. STAKEHOLDER MATTERS

The Working Group noted:

- a) Following discussion regarding the possibility of organising a follow up meeting with community groups in connection with environment and sustainability matters it was decided to postpone this until lockdown had ended and a face to face meeting could be undertaken;
- b) Information in relation to a Community Interest Company Action on Climate in Teignbridge publication was noted;
- c) Possible initiatives as the town came out of lockdown were discussed, it being noted that election 'purdah' would shortly apply in connection with the upcoming County Council elections;
- d) Information previously provided by the Chairman of the working Group in connection with the Devon Carbon Plan was noted;

The Meeting closed at 6.42pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....

CHAIRMAN