

Minutes

Name of meeting	POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND REGENERATION
Date and Time	THURSDAY 2 MAY 2024 COMMENCING AT 5.00 PM
Venue	COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT
Present	Cllrs N Stuart (Chairman), J Lever (Vice-Chairman), M Beston, K Love and C Quirk
Also Present	Cllrs P Fuller and P Jordan Oliver Boulter, Michelle Love, Colin Rowland and Melanie White Ian Boyd (Artecology), Stephen Cockett (Wight Community Energy) and Angela Thwaites (Vestas), David Howarth and Mike Slater (Ramblers)
Also Present (Virtual)	Natasha Dix
Apologies	Cllr I Ward

37. **Apologies and Changes in Membership (if any)**

Apologies were received from Cllr Ian Ward

38. **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 4 January 2024 be approved.

39. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Fuller declared an interest in minute item 43 as he was a member of the Local Access Forum, and of which the Ramblers Association were also members.

40. **Public Question Time - 15 Minutes Maximum**

There were no public questions.

41. Progress on outcomes and recommendations from previous meetings

The visit of the Committee to the Energy from Waste plant was still pending. The plant was still undergoing testing, but it was hoped that the Education Centre would be open by this summer.

The Draft Island Planning Strategy had been approved by Full Council on 1 May and would be going forward to the Planning Inspector. Confirmation was given that the paperwork would be prepared and submitted to the Inspector sometime before the end of June. Once submitted, the planning committee would be able to consider and give weight to some parts of the draft plan.

42. Industries of the Future

The Committee heard from representatives of three local businesses, Vestas, Artecology and IW Community Energy and their successes and challenges faced in being based on the island. A discussion took place regarding how the council could help them to encourage these industries to grow, including centres of excellence, degree courses on the island, collaboration with universities and partnerships with research organisations, discounts on the ferries for small businesses, actively seek government funding where available, promoting an optimistic vision of the future with a focus on the development of young people.

a) THAT the Committee form a Task & Finish group to consider Island Economic development. With the aim of developing new and supporting existing businesses and delivering high value employment on the Island.

b) THAT the Committee seek the support of, and evidence from, existing businesses and organisations. Including reasons why businesses set up and remain on the Island and the challenges faced on the Island.

a) THAT the Council assists in the formation of centres of excellence on the Island in conjunction with local Universities. With an initial focus on ecological engineering and design.

b) THAT the Council provides information on how it can improve the delivery of Government funded Heat Pumps on the Island using Island firms and driving the training for the required skills given the need for some 300 heat pump technicians and engineers.

43. Coastal Path Maintenance and Beach Access

The Service Director for Highways and Community Protection gave an overview of the current position and explained that the authority had a statutory duty to maintain the coastal paths, which had been affected by the extensive landslides over the winter. There were particular issues with the landslip between Ventnor and Shanklin, the Appley and Osborne steps in Shanklin and the pathway at Luccombe. Investigations would confirm what action was possible that was accessible and safe for the public.

It was confirmed that it was unlikely that Appley Steps would be reinstated due to the unstable geology of the area. It was unlikely to be reinvested in unless other funding were to come forward. The Rights of Way team would be asked to look at the current messaging and provide advice on alternative routes and what action was being undertaken.

Members asked questions around the available budget and whether any grants were available to address some of the issues.

The issue regarding the King Charles III coastal path was ongoing after several years. The Committee heard from members of the Ramblers who confirmed that the stretch of the path between East Cowes and Wootton was one of only two sections in England with no coastal route. Members were told that Natural England had not been engaging with the local authority nor the local town council and it was important that they be re-engaged within the next few months. It was understood that Natural England who were paying for the scheme, had indicated to propose the route through Norris Castle, bi-passing Barton and Osborne and back to Kings Quay, though this was not a firm proposal. The ramblers were concerned that it should not be routed along a main road, however English Heritage were concerned over the security of Osborne House, especially at night. It was understood that there were discussions ongoing between Natural England and landowners. Members were disappointed that the level of engagement from Natural England was not as expected. It was suggested that more up to date information be sought from NE. The Cabinet Member for Planning, Coastal Protection and Flooding confirmed that he would be happy to facilitate a meeting with all parties to resolve the issue.

THAT the committee note the report.

To recommend to Cabinet:

THAT the Council seek engagement with Natural England to urgently consult with the Island Community on the delivery of a Coastal Path that sticks to the coast. Initially for the area from East Cowes to Wootton but noting additional areas around Shalfleet, Newtown & Porchfield and managing the issues from recent land slippages around the Island.

44. **Retaining the A3055**

The A3055 between Freshwater Bay and Niton had been subject to erosion and was dangerously close to the cliff edge in places. A number of complexities were under discussion with the National Trust, Island Roads and Highways to look at re-routing the road to bypass the three areas under threat. The Leader confirmed that DHLUC and the DfT would be asked for funding. It was agreed that a long-term plan would be favoured over a quick fix.

Concerns were also raised that road closure signage at the Shanklin end of the A3055 should be amended to allow cars to access the Old Village whilst preventing HGVs from accessing that part of the road.

Further information was awaited from technical advisors before a decision could be made on if and when Leeson Road would reopen. The cost of re-routing via the

downs would be in the region of £40-50 million. More engagement was needed with affected businesses.

Following this item, at 1952hrs, the Committee resolved to extend the meeting to 2015hrs if needed.

THAT the committee note the report.

To recommend to Cabinet:

- a) THAT the Council as a matter of urgency produce a preferred approach to reroute the A3055 inland, from Freshwater to Niton, specifically the Military Road near Brook, and seeks government support with the assistance of the local community.
- b) THAT the Council work with Island Roads to improve the signage for Shanklin and Luccombe to ensure that visitors and local people are aware that the roads are useable to the outskirts of Leeson Road and that businesses remain open and accessible.

45. **Beach Management Framework**

It was noted that there was a code of practice for keeping tidy the principal beaches and parks of the island every day from May to September. The contract was being reviewed as part of the beach management framework. There was a budget of £119,000 per annum to fulfil the beach cleaning contract and any additional clearing required. There were around 22km of beaches around the island. Members were concerned that the reporting process for slipways and litter seemed over complicated. Confirmation was given that discussions had taken place regarding the digitisation of inspections rather than remaining paper based. It was hoped that this would be implemented from next year. Guidance would also be published online by the end of May to assist community groups who wished to organise litter picks on amenity beaches.

A query was raised as to why the data relating to designated bathing waters stopped at 2019. This would be investigated, along with linking Southern Water into the framework, and preparing a Memorandum of Understanding relating to surface water drainage systems (SuDS).

THAT the committee recognises that the framework is to be reviewed and the scope extended.

46. **LGA Peer Review Action Plan**

Confirmation was given that the action plan was progressing well and that there had been some radical changes resulting in an improvement in customer service including the weekly drop-in sessions. Due to lack of time this item would be put early on the agenda at the next meeting.

THAT the committee will review in greater detail at the next committee meeting in July 2024.

47. **Committee's Work Plan**

The workplan was not discussed due to lack of time.

48. **Members' Question Time**

There were no members written questions, and no oral questions due to lack of time.

CHAIRMAN