

# POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD

Virtual Meeting held on Wednesday, 25th November, 2020 at 7.00 pm.

## Voting Members

Cllr J.B. Canty (Chairman)  
Cllr P.I.C. Crerar (Vice-Chairman)  
Cllr C.J. Stewart (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Sophia Choudhary  
Cllr P.J. Cullum  
Cllr Prabesh KC  
Cllr Nadia Martin  
Cllr Sophie Porter  
Cllr M.J. Roberts  
Cllr B.A. Thomas

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr T.W. Mitchell.

## 21. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 7th October, 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

It was noted that an update relating to the Aldershot Transition Plan and current work within the town centres was appended to the work programme for reference.

## 22. ROWHILL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Tim Mills, Head of Economy, Planning and Strategic Housing, gave a presentation on the Rowhill Nature Reserve Habitat Management Plan 2020-2030.

It was noted that, over the previous year, the Management Plan had been developed and refreshed, in conjunction with the Rowhill Nature Reserve Society (RNRS) and other partners, to cover the Reserve's management over the following ten years. The ten-year Plan would be supported by an annual work plan.

A number of surveys had been undertaken during 2019/20 to establish what was present on the site which was made up of coppiced woodland, the Blackwater River, ditches, ponds and a bog, and meadow, scrub and heathland. The Surveys had also identified a number of species present on the site, including:

- Badgers
- Bats (5 species)
- Birds (24 species)
- Reptiles, a small population due to make up of the site

- Amphibians, not varied at present but will be encouraged more through habitat management
- Invertebrates – not varied at present but a rare species of spider, the Pirate Spider, had been found
- Flora/Woodland – a rich variety was present due to the varied terrain of the site

Members were informed on the vision for the Reserve, as follows:

*“The vision for Rowhill Nature Reserve is to create a sanctuary for wildlife, allowing free open access for people to experience wildlife in a well-managed setting and to fulfil its function as a SANG.”*

To support the vision there were a number of objectives, in particular:

- Maintaining and enhancing the woodland/heathland/grassland
- Managing the bog and enhancing the ditch and pond areas
- Monitoring the species present and any effects caused by the Management Plan
- Complying with health and safety requirements and other statutes
- Management of paths and signage, including disabled access
- Management of non-native species, such as Rhododendron, Cherry Laurel and Variegated Yellow Arch Angel

The Board discussed the Plan and raised a number of issues around boundaries, fly-tipping, the path network and signage. In response, it was noted that even though the Reserve lay within both Rushmoor and Waverley the site was owned and, therefore, the responsibility of Rushmoor. The site was designated a Site of Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Rushmoor benefitted from the housing that was developed and the subsequent funding which helped to maintain the site because of this. With regard to fly-tipping, it was noted that education was the best way of dealing with the issue, Rowhill visited schools and community groups and addressed fly-tipping issues and the Council supported this work on a wider scale. It was noted that incidents of other antisocial behaviour were few on the site and were dealt with individually.

The path network and signage improvements were welcomed but it was felt important to ensure disabled access was available without compromising the natural terrain of the site. The signage could be more informative and give a positive message regarding looking after the site

A discussion was also held on the data held on visitors to the Reserve, it was proposed that counters would be installed around the site to measure the number of people visiting and the RNRS collated data which was reported in their quarterly reports.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Mills and his team for the work put in to produce the Plan and asked Members to ensure that any further comments should be provided in writing to Mr. Mills within the following week for consideration before the Plan was formally approved.

## 23. SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES STRATEGY AND PLAN

The Board welcomed Andrew Colver, Head of Democracy and Community, Emma Lamb, Community and Partnerships Manager and Tony McGovern, Supporting Families/Strategy Coordinator, who were in attendance to give a presentation on the draft Supporting Communities Strategy and Plan, which aimed to address deprivation and inequalities in Rushmoor.

Rushmoor had had areas of deprivation for many years but, during this time, some areas have dropped out and others had been maintained within the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Work has taken place over the years to help address these issues but change takes time. The latest IMD data had been reported to the Board in January, 2020. At that time, specific areas for action had been identified and the Action Plan sought to address those areas.

The Board was given an overview of the background to the development of the Plan. There had been a strong partnership working approach to develop the Plan and this had led to a better understanding of the work of different local groups and access to funding that would not have been accessible to the Council alone. Key Council services had also been involved alongside Member involvement and engagement. Through the work with partners, four priority areas had been identified, two of which focused on specific deprivation factors and two were Borough wide issues. The Plan would initially focus on these four areas but would be reviewed annually as priorities might change over time.

The four priority areas were:

- Physical and Mental Health, including, smoking obesity self-harm, mental health issues within schools
- Economic Hardship including, youth unemployment, impacts of COVID
- Young People – cuts across all priorities and includes opportunities and aspirations for the younger population of the Borough
- Connecting Communities including, reducing loneliness, the digital divide and isolation

A number of projects had been identified within the four priorities, some would be Council led and some led by partners. It was important to recognise that this was a partnership plan and there was a combined desire from all involved to work together to deliver change for the community and produce a Plan that was achievable, with local projects that would work and hopefully make a difference. The Plan was adaptable and data would be considered regularly so adjustments could be made to the work to fit community needs. The Plan would be resourced through the Council's Community and Partnerships team, a range of partners and funding streams. The Council had a reserve fund of £100,000 and proposals within the Plan highlighted how some of those funds could be used. These included unemployment and skills development work for young people, work with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) on addressing health and inequalities and pump priming local projects.

The Board were asked to share their views on the draft Plan and further comments would be accepted over the following two weeks to inform the Report being prepared for the Cabinet meeting on 19th January, 2021. Additional consultation/engagement had also taken place with partners, the Portfolio Holder for Community, Strategy and Partnerships and the COVID-19 Cabinet Champion.

Members discussed the Plan and a number of comments were made to help inform the final document and the Report being prepared for the Cabinet. These included:

- Further engagement with the private sector (small medium large employers in the area), Faith groups around their work relating to food provision, befriending, young people and help for the vulnerable etc.
- Testing to be applied to projects i.e. is something already being done, can we support it, do we have capacity to do/support
- Evaluation of the success/relevance of the projects - are they doing what was intended and making a difference to the right people?
- Ensure Plan adaptable to address changes in need
- Emphasis on the Council being there to facilitate and enable and not just do
- Initiatives to address core issues around debt/access to food/housing etc. resulting in stress/self-harm/addiction etc.
- Role of Ward Members - especially in most deprived areas
- Military Families – engagement
- Ensure projects affect the most people in the shortest time and ensure value for money
- Reflect the need for English Language Training in the BAME community
- Careers advice in schools
- Mentoring for the self-employed
- Barriers in training
- Purchasing of goods and services locally to economically support local business

Mr. Colver, thanked Members for their contributions and welcomed written responses, in addition to those already submitted by the Chairman. The importance of being realistic was stressed and some comments would be considered going forward as the Plan developed and needs changed.

## 24. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee **NOTED** the current work programme.

The meeting closed at 9.28 pm.

CLLR J.B. CANTY (CHAIRMAN)

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