

INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT SELECT COMMITTEE
14 July 2021
Public & Local Member Questions

Agenda item 5	Public Question Time
5.1	<p>Question from Sophia Hale-Sutton</p> <p>Your TAMP plan states that Tarmac is responsible for cutting verges for NCC (where this has not been delegated to a town council).</p> <p>Question: How can I find out who cuts the verges in my parish and, for example, whether Tarmac has subcontracted this work?</p> <p>Supplementary question: How can my parish council go about bringing verge cutting in our parish in house (as is done in some urban districts in Norfolk)?</p> <p>Response from the Chair, Cllr Barry Stone</p> <p>We have delegated agreements with a number of District, Town and Parish Councils across the county. These can be seen on our website, here: https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roads/road-maintenance/trees-hedges-and-grass-verges/grass-cutting under the question “who is responsible for grass cutting?”. These agreements are only considered for the urban cuts.</p> <p>Tarmac is responsible for grass cutting across the county and use their network of sub-contractors in order to complete this work within the required timescales. Their subcontractors are mostly local farmers or dedicated horticultural service providers.</p> <p>In terms of bringing urban grass cutting in-house for a parish, contact should be made with your local highway engineer who will assess the request and the associated cost of undertaking this work. If the parish are happy to proceed (based on the payment they will receive) an agreement will be required to delegate this function to them. The payment is based on what it costs NCC to cut the same verge.</p>

Agenda item 6	Local Member Issues / Questions
6.1	<p>Question from Cllr Jim Moriarty</p> <p>Minerals and Waste Local Plan – Shouldham/March area concerns</p> <p>If the intention was for SIL 02 is being removed (as have other areas in their entirety) from the plan as part of the previous consultation exercise following comments from the MoD about such work being inappropriate so close to RAF Marham, why is a large percentage of it possibly still going forward (approx 35%), albeit under the banner of AOSE ?</p> <p>Response from the Chair, Cllr Barry Stone</p> <p>This question relates to the contents of the Preferred Options version of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan which was published for consultation in September 2019. The Regulation 19 publication version of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan is currently being completed in order for the legal representations period to take place before submission to the Secretary of State for examination next year.</p> <p>Area of Search E and proposed site SIL 02 should be considered as entirely separate entities. An Area of Search is based on the British Geological Survey inferred mineral resources and within which area it is considered that a planning application could be submitted for a specific site for mineral extraction in the future, particularly if there is a potential shortfall in the supply of silica sand. As an Area of Search details such as working methods and restoration remain to be addressed.</p> <p>SIL 02 is a specific site that has been proposed by a mineral company which they propose to work wet. Whilst no restoration plans have been provided, it is highly likely that if the site is worked wet it would be restored to open water. The Ministry of Defence (Defence Infrastructure Organisation) objected to site SIL 02 due to the likely restoration to large areas of open water which could attract waterfowl. The MOD did not object to AOS E but raised safeguarding concerns and said they would require further information on any future proposals to determine whether a site located within AOS E could be managed with design principles and a Bird Management Plan.</p> <p>Based on the responses it was concluded that while it would not be appropriate to allocate SIL02, future proposals for extraction using alternative working practices could not be ruled out, so the land in question was retained in the Area of Search. Policies would require any future planning application to contain a bird hazard assessment and a bird hazard management plan on which the MOD (DIO) would be consulted.</p>
6.2	<p>Question from Cllr Jamie Osborne</p> <p>The Sustainability Appraisal framework for the current Local Transport Plan (LTP3) has an objective ENV1 “to reduce CO2 emissions from transport”. Transport emissions in Norfolk have increased each year since 2013. The agenda papers at</p>

	<p>page 222 describe the duty under the Transport Act 2000, section 109. for the Council to keep its LTP under review and alter or replace it if considered appropriate to do so. How has the persistent breach of the objective of carbon reductions in the LTP3 been reported within the Council, and why was it not considered appropriate to review the LTP3 earlier to address rising carbon emissions?</p> <p>Response from the Chair, Cllr Barry Stone</p> <p>Carbon emissions is one of several objectives in the Sustainability Appraisal for the current Local Transport Plan, LTP3. The plan itself also contains a number of targets. These are monitored annually and help to inform future delivery.</p> <p>Many factors need to be taken into account in considering whether to review the LTP including government and local policy objectives. Taking all of these factors into account led to Members agreeing to review the plan in 2019. This followed a roll-forward of the LTP Implementation Plan, agreed by Members in March 2015, which took account of relevant factors at that time.</p> <p>A full review of the Local Transport Plan is a significant task and takes into account a wide range of factors and views. This helps us to develop the best possible strategy moving forward, taking account of relevant priorities. The review of the Strategy enables us to give detailed thought to what more we can do to address carbon emissions in the county, including to deliver the carbon net zero commitment set out in the Environmental Policy agreed by Members.</p> <p>We have not been complacent whilst LTP4 has been developed and further work to support carbon reduction has continued during this period. This includes further investment in active travel and development of an electric vehicle strategy, which the Select Committee will be reviewing later this year.</p> <p>Moving forward, the LTP4 report on the Select Committee agenda asks that Members of the Committee agree on how they would want ongoing reporting of Local Transport Plan delivery in order to ensure that appropriate arrangements continue to be in place.</p>
6.3	<p>Question from Cllr Maxine Webb</p> <p>A petition, signed to date by over 700 residents from across Norfolk, is calling for Norfolk County Council to stop the use of glyphosate herbicides and pesticides on our streets, council owned farms and other facilities. Given the growing health and environmental concerns over the use of weed killers containing glyphosates and the importance of pollinators - as evidenced in Norfolk's Pollinator Action Plan, including 'Top tip 6 – Ditch the pesticides'- will the committee include a review of the Council's use of pesticides and especially glyphosate herbicides, on the future work programme of the Environment Member Oversight Group?</p> <p>Response from the Chair, Cllr Barry Stone</p> <p>Norfolk County Council takes a careful approach to the use of herbicides and pesticides across its estate, including highways, County Farms and other locations</p>

	<p>and one which is always led by national legislation and directives, including the Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012.</p> <p>As laid out in the Pollinator Action Plan, the Council's approach to its Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs) is to avoid the use of pesticides.</p> <p>Officers are currently working on a new policy with regard to the Council's use of herbicides and pesticides and this will be shared with the Environment Member Oversight Group in due course ahead of any committee review as part of the Council's overarching approach to its policy framework.</p>
6.4	<p>Question from Cllr Richard Price</p> <p>There have been several instances of RNR's being cut in my Division, which has caused great concern. Poor communication because of the chain of subcontracting. The Committee needs to emphasise that all subcontractors show greater diligence.</p> <p>Will the Committee adopt the Plantlife advice that the cut be delayed until the end of August or early September? The Parishes and Public also need to know who else is authorised to cut verges, Members, Parishes and the Public have a right to know.</p> <p>Will the Committee specify the criteria to include variety, number, rarity of plants to qualify to be a RNR and include information on how communities can apply?</p> <p>Response from the Chair, Cllr Barry Stone</p> <p>Question 1:</p> <p>A fine balance between road safety and the environment must be met with regards to the grass cutting operations across the county. Each year the growing season is subtly different. The prolonged wet and mild weather this year has seen significant growth and we are also receiving requests to undertake an earlier cut to ensure safety. The second rural cut has historically commenced in mid-July. We are currently exploring whether this second rural cut can be deferred to later in August. In light of the high level of growth and reported visibility issues across the network, this may not be possible for the current season. The feasibility of delaying the cut will be explored further for future cutting seasons.</p> <p>Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs) are cut later in the year to allow the rare species to both flower and seed for the next season. RNRs are currently only marked on-site by means of wooden posts, which are easy to miss in long grass and subsequently knock over. It is proposed, to ensure RNRs are not mistakenly cut going forward, that GPS points are shared with those undertaking the cutting. An example of this may be marking the existing cutting maps with their locations.</p> <p>Norfolk County Council are responsible for cutting the roadside verges as the Highway Authority. The County Council employs contractors to undertake this work but also has delegated agreements in place with Parish, Town and District Councils. These can be seen on our website, here: https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roads/road-maintenance/trees-hedges-and-grass-verges/grass-cutting</p>

	<p>under the question “who is responsible for grass cutting?”. These agreements are only in place for the urban cuts.</p> <p>Question 2:</p> <p>The method and criteria for designating RNR are very similar to how County Wildlife Sites are determined. They differ, in the main, because they are too small to meet the minimum site for County Wildlife Sites. More detailed information can be provided to interested communities on request.</p>
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