

## Operational Services Cabinet Committee

Wednesday, 20 March 2024

7.30 pm

### Present:

Cllr Emma Morley (Chair)  
Cllr Lee Croxton (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:       Derek Ashenden  
                          David Beattie  
                          Baljit Hayre  
                          Daniel Adewale King  
                          Leslie Pearton  
                          Alan Ridgers  
                          Ektaveen Thandi

Stuart Alford       Assistant Director (Operations)  
Mark Lees         Head of Community Protection  
Mandy Francis     Licensing Manager  
Carlie Simmonds   Committee Services Manager (Minutes)

### 14. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Peter Scollard and Councillor Baljit Hayre attended as his substitute.

### 15. Minutes

The minutes of the Operational Services Cabinet Committee held on Thursday 23 November 2023 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

### 16. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interests were made.

### 17. Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) - Revocation of the Northfleet Industrial Air Quality Management Area

The Committee was informed that local authorities had a statutory duty to review, assess and manage air quality within their area and to take into account the guidance issued by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

The National Air Quality Strategy objectives were primarily based on health effects particularly in relation to air pollution; the major sources being Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and Particulate Matter (PM<sub>10</sub>).

The first stage of the Local Air Quality Management review included the establishment of the air quality monitoring network, with two air stations being installed in 1998 at the locations where the levels of pollution were suspected to be highest. Continuous monitoring analysers were installed to measure both PM10 and NO2 at Lawn Road School for the Northfleet industrial area and Painters Ash School for alongside the carriageway of the A2 Trunk Road.

The review and assessment process confirmed that major sources of pollutants were found at the Northfleet Cement Works (PM10) and the A2 Trunk Road (both NO2 and PM10) which exceeded the relevant air quality objectives therefore the Council progressed to the declaration of both areas as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA's); this was progressed/completed in 2001 with the declaration of the two AQMA's coming into force on 01 February 2002.

Following the declaration of the first two AQMA's the Council adopted the Gravesham Final Action Plan in July 2004. The Action Plan committed the Council to implementing various measures with the aim of improving air quality in the two AQMA's. As the Council was not the responsible agency for regulating or managing the pollution sources within the two AQMA's, the role of the Council was that of lobbying and working with the Environmental Agency and the Highways Agency so that they actioned appropriate measures to improve air quality. The Action Plan also included additional measures which were the responsibility of the Council e.g. using the planning process to improve air quality and to ensure new developments were not impacted on by existing levels of air pollution, the publishing of monitoring results etc.

Further statutory reviews of air quality were carried out focusing on smaller road junctions which resulted in a further five AQMA's being declared and the adoption of the dedicated Air Quality Action Plan - Urban Area AQMA's in July 2006. This took the Council's AQMA's to seven in total however, in 2018, three of the smaller road junctions AQMA's were revoked.

The Head of Community Protection advised that each year all Councils with AQMA's must submit an Annual Status Report (ASR) to Defra summarising all monitoring data and an update on the progress made on the measures in the Council's action plans. The Council's ASR for 2023 was submitted to Defra in June. Defra's final appraisal report of the ASR, dated 30 November 2023, made specific reference to the consideration of the revocation of the Northfleet Industrial AQMA as there had been a total of 15 years of no exceedances with the levels of PM10 which had continued to reduce year on year. Defra confirmed that a public consultation was not required for the revocation of an AQMA and that it would be permissible for the Council to arrange for the decommissioning of the analysers at the air station at Lawn Road following the revocation.

Following consideration of a report setting out the above matters on 23 January 2024, Management Team approved the revocation of the Northfleet Industrial AQMA Order and a Statement of Individual Officer's Decision was published to this effect. The Order was subsequently signed and sealed by Legal Services on 30 January 2024 with the decommissioning of the analysers at Lawn Road Air Station in February 2024.

The Head of Community Protection advised that a revocation of a AQMA was positive for the Council and should be celebrated.

The Committee thanked Debbie Wilders, Environmental Protection Team Leader along with the Environmental Protection Team for their continuous work following the introduction of AQMA's and for the achievement of the revocation of the Northfleet Industrial AQMA.

The Committee stated that it was important for the Council to continuously monitor the A2 particularly if/when works commence in relation to Lower Thames Crossing.

The Committee noted the report.

### **18. Annual Review of the Licensing Shared Service**

The Committee were presented with the Annual Review of the Licensing Shared Service.

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with a copy of the annual review that had been conducted in respect of the Licensing Shared Service with Medway Council and was for information only.

Since January 2019, the Council had in place a shared service with Medway Council for the delivery of the Licensing Services function. This involved the transfer of all Medway Council staff who were employed within Licensing Service at Medway to Gravesham Borough Council. As such, the current Licensing Services team had been operational in their current format for just over five years (at the time of the review).

The Licensing Manager gave a brief overview of the performance of the Licensing Shared Service together with a staffing/team structure update as there had been a number of recent changes. The Committee was informed that, throughout the team's periods of reduced capacity, staff remained committed to ensuring a high standard of service provision resulting in statutory duties and timescales being met, and monthly targeted officer interventions and enforcement in relation unpaid/overdue annual premises licence fees across both authorities continuing.

The Committee asked what efficiency and financial savings had arisen following the formation of the shared service. The Committee was informed that one of the key efficiency savings was the team's impressive and continuing suite of online licensing applications for both Medway and Gravesham. The team were continuing to work with the Digital Team to expand on/create online applications for other services that fall within the Licensing Services function. The team was also a leading example in Kent in relation to its suite of online licensing applications. The Head of Community Protection advised that he would arrange for an update on this to be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Baljit Hayre, as Chair of the Licensing Committee, requested that the 'Annual Review of the Licensing Shared Service' report be submitted to the next meeting of the Licensing Committee for information purposes only. The Head of Community Protection advised that he would arrange for this to be submitted to the next Licensing Committee.

The Committee noted the report.

### **19. Corporate Performance: Quarter Three 2023-24**

The Committee was informed that, in October 2023, the Council formally adopted its Corporate Plan for 2023-27. The plan established the authority's ambition for the Borough, complete with a suite of corporate objectives and supporting policy commitments that will shape the Council's activities over the four-year administrative period. In order to evaluate if the Council was effectively achieving against its stated policy commitments, and was ultimately delivering consistently high-quality services, a sound performance management process was implemented. Developed by Senior Council Officers and Cabinet Portfolio

Holders, the Council's Corporate Plan introduced a Performance Management Framework (PMF) that formed the basis of reporting corporate performance to Members and residents. The Committee was therefore presented with an update against the PMF, in relation to those performance measures that fall within the remit of the Operational Services Cabinet Committee for Quarter Three 2023-24 (October to December 2023).

The Assistant Director (Operations) and Head of Community Protection provided the Committee with an overview of each of the performance measures and responded to the questions/comments raised by Members.

It was highlighted that the report/measures did not include previous figures for comparison purposes and that this would have been helpful to Members. The Assistant Director (Operations) advised that it was due to it being a new suite of performance measures, therefore, some measures would not have background/historic data. The Assistant Director (Operations) advised that he would raise this outside of the meeting.

The Committee requested an updated on the following:-

- The phased introduction and enhancement of recycling provision at flats and, following the potential introduction of glass recycling, what will the impact be on the Council i.e. will the Council require new freighters, when will roadside glass collections be introduced and will the communal recycling sites/bottle banks be closed as they can look unsightly.

The Assistant Director (Operations) advised that, in October 2023, the Government announced 'Simpler Recycling' to enable people across England to be able to recycle the same materials, whether at home or work. The reforms, including weekly collections of food waste, will be introduced for all households across England by March 2026. Council's will need to collect dry recyclables including glass bottles and jars. Therefore, officers were currently working on an action plan to deliver the new recycling requirements, alongside re-balancing the collection rounds to make them as efficient as possible; this will include the introduction and enhancement of recycling provision at flats however the Council was waiting to see whether the Council would receive new burdens funding to help implement this provision. The Assistant Director (Operations) advised that the intention will be to provide Members with the proposed action plan at a future meeting of the Committee.

In terms of glass recycling, technology had evolved so the Council should be able to introduce this provision as glass can now be extracted for re-melt from dry recycling. The intention will be to introduce roadside glass collections hopefully within this calendar year however this will be detailed within the action plan. With regard to the future of communal recycling sites/bottle banks, it had not yet been decided what will happen following the introduction of glass recycling.

- The Committee also requested that further publicity be undertaken on how the public can report fly-tipping and commended the work of the Street Champions; it was felt that all Members should be encouraged to sign-up as Street Champions.

The Assistant Director (Operations) advised that he would liaise with the Council's Communication Team regarding further publicity of how the public can report fly-tipping.

- In terms of unpaid work opportunities, the Committee asked whether this was being explored.

The Assistant Director (Operations) advised that officers continued to work alongside the local Community Payback and exploratory work was also being undertaken with Kent Police to provide litter picking tasks as unpaid work opportunities for offenders issued with Conditional Cautions in place of prosecution in court.

The Assistant Director (Operations) informed the Committee that the Council was also hoping to apply for and achieve a Green Flag Award for Gravesend Cemetery.

The Committee noted the report.

### **Close of meeting**

The meeting ended at 8.19 pm.