

MINUTES OF THE ARTS AND INFORMATION COMMITTEE HELD ON 3rd MARCH, 2020

Present: Councillor Mrs J Bell (Chair) and E Bell, Mrs K Brace, S Cudlip, Mrs S Forster, Ms R M Gratton, G N Hepworth, Mrs L Kennedy, T Shepherd, B Taylor, Miss L Willis.

Apologies: Councillors Mrs B E Allen, R Arthur, Mrs G Bleasdale, S P Colborn, D Cummings, Mrs V Cummings, K Shaw.

Officers: Mrs D Rickaby (Town Clerk)
P Fletcher (Deputy Town Clerk)
Miss A Rountree (Minute Taker)

Prior to commencement of the meeting the Chair advised members of this Committee and members of the public that in line with the amendment to 'the public bodies (admission to meetings) act 1960', which came into force in August, 2014, parts of this meeting may be recorded by photographic, video and audio means.

AI73/20 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded prior to the start of the meeting of the need to disclose any interests prejudicial or personal, in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Such interests must be submitted to the Town Clerk prior to the meeting.

AI74/20 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 4th FEBRUARY, 2020

The minutes of the last meeting were signed at the Full Council meeting held on 25th February, 2020 as a true record.

AI75/20 PRESENTATION – BIFFA WASTE RECYCLING PLANT

The Chair welcomed Mr Stephen Simm who was present at the meeting to give Members a short presentation on the new BIFFA plastic recycling plant at Foxcover Industrial Estate.

Mr Simm stated that the plant was commissioned last year and there are currently 74 employees which will rise to over 100. BIFFA take single use plastic bottles which are grinded into flake and pellet and then are made into more plastic bottles which is part of a circular economy. There is a big push for plastic waste and the things they do to the environment. Mr Simm stated that plastic is not bad and if it is used correctly it is a good thing in terms of how it is disposed of.

Mr Sims stated that when people think of BIFFA they relate the company to bins and skips but BIFFA is actually more than that and he invited Members to visit the plant so they can have a look around.

The meeting was then opened to a question and answer session for Members.

1. A Member noted that everyone knows that plastic is a big problem worldwide. BIFFA gets plastic bottles and shreds them and reforms them into plastic bottles, so you are recycling plastic to make plastic is this good or bad for the planet?

Mr Simm stated that plastic is seen as the bad thing in the world. Plastic is used for a lot of things but imagine if there wasn't any plastic. The carbon footprint for a glass milk bottle to a plastic milk carton is 3 times more in terms of recyclability in relation to the transportation of glass and you can only recycle glass 5 or 6 times but you can recycle plastic infinitely. In terms of this it is a good thing as glass would just be going to landfill eventually.

2. A Member questioned whether they could just ring the plant if they were interested in coming to view it?

Mr Simm stated to either contact himself or the Town Clerk to arrange a visit.

3. A Member questioned whether the plant recycles LDPE? The Member also questioned whether plastic manufacturers are happy about the recycling?

Mr Simm stated that the plant does PET which is the easiest recyclable clear plastic. The LDPE is the plastic bags which is work in progress. There is a sister plant in Redcar which does the HDPE which is the milk bottles and they won the Queens Award for innovation.

At the moment manufacturers, recyclers and retailers are all doing their own things and there needs to be a more joined up approach because people are doing what they think is the right thing and some things aren't recyclable so everyone in the whole supply chain needs to be more joined up.

4. A Member questioned about the crisp packet recycling and asked if there was a special collection place for the foil lined packets?

Mr Simm was not aware of this as BIFFA only deal with the solid plastic. Crisp packets are recycled in some areas but not others.

5. A Member questioned what sort of tonnage does the plant expect to recycle in a year? And what would the carbon footprint be on that?

Mr Simm stated that the Seaham plant has recycled around 30,000 tonnes in the first year. Mr Simm was not aware of the carbon footprint figures. Of the 30,000 tonnes, this was made up of 1.2 billion bottles, 3 million bottles per day and that is around 10% of the UK's use of plastic bottles. This equates to 10% less raw materials being manufactured. Mr Simm will come back to Members regarding the carbon footprint.

6. A Member of the public stated that there are 74 current employees and asked Mr Simm how many of these employees were local people?

Mr Simm stated that all the staff are local people, the majority from Seaham and there are a few members of staff from Sunderland and Hartlepool. There was a big drive to try and keep everyone local.

7. A member of the public asked out of interest what would be implemented especially locally to encourage people to recycle?

Mr Simm stated that it was presentations like this that allows for the word to get out there. Other countries have deposit return schemes where barcodes are used and for every barcode read it places 5p on the person's credit card. This means the receptacle is catching just plastic bottles and they go direct to the plant and they don't have to sort through them. This doesn't currently happen here, and the bottles must be sorted through and separated from other materials which isn't 100% efficient.

The plant also has an education centre and BIFFA will be contacting schools to be involved as the children at school currently are the future and there are approximately 12 schools locally. The plant is also working with Durham Business and Universities. Currently the UK are behind other countries in terms of recycling.

8. A member of the public questioned Mr Simm as to whether he thought a deposit scheme would be introduced and encouraged in the UK? The UK used to do a deposit return on glass bottles years ago.

Mr Simm stated that it is the education part that needs to be got around. Deposit schemes are available in some parts of the UK mainly in Scotland and it will only increase. Legislation means that every manufacturing company must have 30% recycling material in their products otherwise they will face huge fines. The government are supporting these deposit return schemes.

9. A Member questioned whether BIFFA would be supplying the machines or will it be the government?

Mr Simm stated that a lot of people are involved in this discussion and at the present time a lot of the deposit schemes are government funded but there are talks within BIFFA and other companies as to whether they should be providing these and it is a question of how they will manage them and collect them as this would be on a large scale.

The Member stated that she had attended a conference in Leeds which was discussing single use plastic and she had brought this back to the Town Council about other areas having deposit boxes for plastic which included European countries and how they offered discount vouchers for food shopping for returned plastic. It was also discussed at the conference areas that have large metal sculptures in the shapes of whales etc to collect plastic bottles from the beaches. The Member stated that this was something BIFFA could think about.

Mr Simm stated that they had sent some employees down to the beach to do a beach clean which is part of BIFFA's desire to get involved with the local community.

The Chair thanked Mr Simm for attending the meeting and his very enlightening presentation. Mr Simm then left the meeting.

AI76/20 **CONFERENCE APPOINTMENTS**

RECOMMENDED that the Committee note the information.

AI77/20 **CONFERENCES, COURSES AND SEMINARS**

The Chair stated that she had received an email from a Member requesting an agenda item regarding the rationale for attending conferences. The Chair stated that this had then been requested to be deferred to the next meeting but felt that it should be discussed at this meeting.

A Member stated that the right to attend conferences should not be taken away. If the conference is deemed to be relevant to Seaham and would allow betterment this gives Members, the opportunity to engage with people all over the country about new ways of doing things. It is the Council's policy to judge on the merit of the conferences and the Council have applied good practice.

A Member stated that the Town Council should be able to provide professional development for both Members and Officers. If a conference is more relevant for staff, then they should attend if they wish to do so.

Members felt that the current policy for conferences is correct and there is a rota system for attendance if Members are interested in attending.

A Member proposed that the current system is kept as is and this was seconded.

RECOMMENDED that the current system for conference attendances is to be kept in place.

AI78/20 **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNCILLORS AGM**

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information.

AI79/20 **SSAFA**

RECOMMENDED that Members note the information.

AI80/20 **MR DEREK CHARLTON – ARTWORK**

Mr Derek Charlton, twinning host has requested to put his artwork on show at the Town Hall whilst the twinning visit is taking place in April. Members agreed that Mr Charlton could display his artwork if the correct wall stickers are used or the artwork is placed on stands.

RECOMMENDED that Mr Charlton's artwork to be displayed in the Town Hall during the twinning visit in April.

AI81/20 **NALC**

A Member requested a report from the Town Clerk regarding NALC and requested that any information received from NALC is made available to Members so they can be kept updated.

RECOMMENDED that the Town Clerk provides a report on NALC to Members and any information received is made available to Members.

AI82/20 **PRESS OPPORTUNITIES**

RECOMMENDED the Council note that there were no press opportunities from this meeting.

The meeting was then closed by the Chair.

