

**MINUTES of the meeting of Environment Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Brockington, Hafod Road, Hereford. on Friday, 2nd April, 2004 at 10.00 a.m.**

**Present:** Councillor J.H.R. Goodwin (Chairman)  
Councillor W.L.S. Bowen (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: P.J. Dauncey, G.W. Davis, D.J. Fleet, K.G. Grumbley, J. G. S. Guthrie, T.W. Hunt, Miss F. Short.

**In attendance:** Councillors B.F. Ashton, J.W. Edwards, P.J. Edwards, (Cabinet Member - Environment), P.E. Harling, T.M. James, R.I. Matthews R.M. Wilson (Cabinet Member – Highways and Transportation)

**57. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs A. Gray, R. Mills and J. W. Newman.

**58. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)**

Councillor J. G. S. Guthrie substituted for Councillor R. Mills, Councillor D. J. Fleet substituted for Councillor J.W. Newman.

**59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**60. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January, 2004 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**61. CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING**

Members were advised of the progress of the 2003/4 Capital Programme for Environment Areas within the overall context of the Herefordshire Council Capital Programme.

The Director of Environment and the Assistant County Treasurer reported that the Environment Capital Programme, shown at Appendix 1 to the report, totalled £10,489,933 which was £333,008 less than reported to the previous meeting. The difference was accounted for by transfers which were further detailed in the report. The Director was confident of a good budget out turn and reported that the total amount spent and committed as at 29th February was 97% of the budget or £10.080m.

In the course of scrutinising the Capital Programme the Committee noted that while the Roman Road scheme had commenced and works were progressing, a number of delays had occurred and that only £430,000 of the budgeted £800,000 was shown as spent in 2003/4. The balance of £370,000 would have to be funded from resources available in future years. The Committee discussed the various reasons for the delays e.g. environmental assessment and land acquisitions and questioned

whether, as a matter of course, allowances for potential delays were built into works programmes. It was suggested that a key path diagram be provided for Members on major developments.

In reply to a comment that a number of budget headings showed little or no spend, the Director of Environment reported that a number of similar budget allocations, but funded from different sources, had been amalgamated and spent. One scheme, which relied on another party, had been delayed.

**RESOLVED: That the Environment Capital Budget monitoring report be noted.**

## **62. ENVIRONMENT REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING**

The Committee were advised of the Budget monitoring position for the Environment Programme Area budget for the period to 29th February, 2004 and were informed of variations against budget at this stage in the year.

The Director of Environment reported that the projected outturn for the year was £21,994,000 which was a net underspend of £154,000. The budget monitoring report was attached at Appendix 1.

The Assistant County Treasurer reported that the overall budget for 2003/04 was £22,148,000, as notified to the Committee in January, 2004. The budget included £1,047,200 for Central Support charges. Based on current projections he anticipated a modest roll forward of funding into 2004/05 and the current budget variations were described in the report.

**RESOLVED: That the Environment Revenue Budget Monitoring for 2003/4 report be noted.**

## **63. BEST VALUE REVIEWS - IMPLEMENTATION OF IMPROVEMENT PLANS**

The Committee received a report on the remaining actions and the exceptions to the programmed progress in the improvement plans resulting from the reviews of Development Control, Public Conveniences, Public Rights of Way and Highway Maintenance.

Programmed actions in the various improvement plans were detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

During the course of discussion the following principal comments were made:

- Development Control – The Director of Environment reported that progress was being made in relation to the IT Strategy. However, consideration was being given to the volume of historical data that should be captured. Concerning the MVM System he was conscious that this should be a robust system. It was also reported that the Government were unable to specify when guidance relating to the Highway Design Guide would be released. Therefore in the absence of this guidance it was expected that the Council's guide would be produced in the summer of 2004.
- Public Conveniences – In response to a question from a local Member for Central Ward concerning the level of consultation undertaken during the review of Public Conveniences, the Director of Environment reported that a wide range of consultation had been undertaken. However, in view of the Edgar Street Grid proposal, he anticipated that further consultation would be undertaken in due course concerning the conveniences in Blackfriars Street,

Hereford.

- Public Rights of Way – The Director of Environment reported that a number of issues raised by the review had been included in the draft PROW Management Strategy which was currently subject to consultation. Town and Parish Councils had been invited to contribute to the draft strategy, which would also be considered by the Herefordshire Local Access Forum. However, he commented that implementation of the final strategy was reliant on adequate resources being available. It was suggested that a brief update on progress to the strategy be made to future meetings.
- Highway Maintenance – The Head of Engineering and Transportation reported that the Winter Gritting leaflet, based on a number of Beacon Council publications, had been published. The Highway and Street Services leaflet had also been published and was being circulated to Members. The Committee noted the intention that information contained in the leaflets would also be made available via the Council's website. However, Members were keen to retain access to street works data via the easier to use Council Intranet system.

**RESOLVED: That the report on the implementation of the Best Value Review Improvement Plans be noted and update reports on the progress of the PROW Management Strategy be presented to future meetings.**

#### **64. MONITORING OF 2003/2004 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - APRIL 2003 TO JANUARY 2004**

Members were updated on progress made by the Environment Directorate for the eight months April 2003 to January 2004 towards achieving all of the performance indicators / targets which appeared in the Council's Performance Plan.

The report of exceptions to the targeted performance was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The Committee debated the performance figures and noted the following principal points:

- BV82b – Waste Management. The Director of Environment acknowledged that while only one target had been reported upon under exceptions reporting, waste management was a major issue and he expected to make a fuller report to the Committee in June in accordance with the proposed revised Committee work programme to be discussed later on the agenda.
- BV199 – Local Street and Environmental Cleanliness – It was reported that this inspection target was highly dependent on when, and how often, streets were inspected. A summary of the inspection process would be provided for members of the Committee.
- Penalty Charge Notices issued – The Committee noted that during the introduction of the new scheme caution had been taken over the staffing levels. However, now that more accurate data was available staffing levels had been increased. In relation to the percentage of penalty charge notices appeal cases "lost" at appeal, the Head of Engineering and Transportation reported that he was satisfied that Herefordshire compared well against the benchmark authorities.
- The Head of Engineering and Transportation assured the Committee that, while a new contractor had been appointed for street lighting works, the contract would continue to be monitored.

- BV166a & BV166b – The Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards reported that these indicators had been revised by external auditors and now included elements of housing and taxi licencing enforcement respectively. However, he was investigating whether the original targets could be revised to take account of the changes.

**RESOLVED: That the exceptions monitoring in relation to the 2003/04 performance indicators for the period April 2003 to January 2004 be noted.**

#### **65. REVIEW OF PARKING STRATEGY**

The Committee were informed of progress on the review of the county-wide car parking strategy.

The Director of Environment reported that in accordance with this Committee's decision in January 2004 (minute 54 refers), the Parking Strategy Review Group had met and discussed a detailed Scoping Statement for the review.

The Chairman of the Review Group (Councillor J. Goodwin) informed the Committee that a variety of information had been requested from officers and that preliminary consideration had been given to the range of consultation to be employed.

The Committee briefly debated a number of issues concerning parking e.g. resident parking schemes, particularly in relation to parking for tradesmen working at residential properties, and concessionary parking which would be considered as part of the review.

**RESOLVED: That the progress report on the review of the County-wide car Parking Strategy be noted.**

#### **66. POLYTUNNEL REVIEW WORKING GROUP**

The Committee received an update report on the work of the Polytunnel Review Working Group.

The Chairman of the Polytunnel Review Working Group (Councillor T. Hunt) reported that, to date, three meetings of the Group had been held. The Group had received a good response to an invitation to the public to express their written views on the success, or otherwise, of the operation of the Voluntary Code of Practice to Control the Siting of Polytunnels in Herefordshire. The Group had heard evidence and comments from a wide range of polytunnel objectors and supporters, together with evidence from other parties. He further reported that due to the amount of information being considered, the review would probably take slightly longer than expected and he anticipated that the report of the Working Group would be presented to the Committee towards the end of May or into June 2004.

**RESOLVED: That the update report on the work of the Polytunnel Review Working Group be noted and the revised reporting date be accepted.**

#### **67. ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2004/5**

The Committee were invited to consider an amended work programme following the reduction to four scheduled meetings during the 2004/05 Council meeting cycle.

**RESOLVED: That subject to the inclusion of an update report to the meeting**

**scheduled for September, 2004 on the review of the of Public Rights of Way Management Strategy, the proposed work programme be accepted.**

The meeting ended at 11.30 a.m.

**CHAIRMAN**

