

**MINUTES of the meeting of Environment Scrutiny Committee held at Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Friday, 18th June, 2004 at 10.00 a.m.**

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

Councillors: G.W. Davis, Mrs. A.E. Gray, K.G. Grumbley, T.W. Hunt, R. Mills and Miss F. Short

**In attendance:** Councillors: P. J. Edwards (Cabinet Member – Environment), J.G.S. Guthrie, D.B. Wilcox, R.M. Wilson (Cabinet Member – Highways and Transportation).

**1. CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN**

The Committee noted the appointment at Council on 21st May, 2004, of Councillor J.H.R. Goodwin as Chairman and Councillor W.L.S. Bowen as Vice-Chairman.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors P.J. Dauncey and J.W. Newman.

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

There were no substitutes.

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**5. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd April, 2004 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**6. GEM PERFORMANCE 2003/2004**

The Committee were invited to consider the Council's performance in respect of its environmental management/ ISO 14001 system to ensure that it continued to be suitable, adequate and effective in delivering improvement in environmental performance.

The Director of Environment reported that Good Environmental Management (GEM) helped the Council to deliver its corporate objective and environmental policy commitment across all Directorates.

The Environmental Sustainability Officer reported that during 2003/4 two surveillance visits had been made by external certifiers and only one corrective action had been raised. Internal audits had been undertaken and the small number of weaknesses

identified would be addressed over the coming year. She further reported that while there had been a number of difficulties, in general, good progress had been made on the objectives in the 2003/4 programme (detailed in Appendix 1 to the report). Appendix 2 to the report detailed the performance against each of the targets in 2003/4.

The Environmental Sustainability Officer further reported that the GEM programme for 2004/5 (Appendix 3 to the report) had been drawn up in conjunction with the GEM Group and relevant officers. The 2002/03 objectives had been consolidated and made more quantifiable and the nine objectives included: 1% energy reduction in Council operational buildings; 1% reduction in business miles per head; 5% rise in public transport/cycling and waste recycling to cover 90% of major Council Sites.

The report commented on the Council's partnership with Herefordshire Jarvis Services (HJS) and Owen Williams; communications, particularly in relation to the results of the Staff Opinion Survey 2003; concerns of relevant interested parties, notably relating to information security; GM crops and procurement.

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

- While not directly under the control of the Council, schools were being encouraged to reduce energy consumption.
- Work was still progressing on achieving a robust baseline concerning the consumption of energy in Council premises.
- Good progress had been made in meeting Objective 1 (2003/4) relating to waste reduction.
- As part of the property portfolio, officers were still investigating the possible relocation of salt barns.
- A draft revised procurement strategy was expected for consultation at the end of the month.
- Information gathering continued in relation to the evaluation of water monitoring.
- The pilot flexible working scheme in Revenues and Benefits had been delayed due to difficulties with ICT links for home working.
- It was suggested that a report on the Herefordshire Partnership Appraisal tool, which included environmental considerations, be made to a future meeting.
- Annual grant contributions were made to community transport providers who provided transport throughout the County. Monitoring of the schemes was undertaken by comparison with Performance Indicators set in service level agreements with the providers. Potential existed for closer co-ordination of the service with the hospital car service in relation to health related transport. Officers were also monitoring a pilot project currently underway in Worcester to evaluate whether such an approach could be adopted in Herefordshire.
- The Committee were pleased with the increase in the number of Eco-schools.
- The Committee noted that the Staff Travel Plan (car share scheme) had been positively received at the World Environment Day event, particularly by other large organisations who had shown an interest in joining the scheme.

The Committee congratulated the officers and noted that the Authority had been placed in the top quintile of local authority respondents in the West Midlands Environmental Index 2003, for the second year running, improving its score by nearly 10%.

**RESOLVED: That the GEM Performance 2003/4 report be noted.**

## 7. WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Committee received an update on the current performance of the Waste Collection Contract, Integrated Waste Management Contract and an outline of the implication of the Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Herefordshire.

The Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards reported that the collection and disposal contracts were interrelated and the performance of one area may be dependent on the performance in another area. Comparative data on the Council's performance compared to other authorities was appended to the report.

In relation to Integrated Waste Management he highlighted that the Council had a number of statutory targets with regard to waste management. The two most immediate targets related to BVPI 82 (a) & (b) – the percentage of household waste recycled and composted. He commented that the 2003/04 target of 14% had been achieved (19.4%). While some investment had already been made in the expansion of kerbside collection, unless further investment in the Council's recycling and composting was made, the next target for 2005/04 of 21% was unlikely to be met. He referred to a number of options to tackle this point, as outlined in the report, which he felt the Council would have to consider at some stage to enable it to achieve the targets.

Concerning the Waste Management Contract he commented on the inter-relationship between the various management elements e.g. the proposed Autoclave process at Madley; the performance of the Household Waste Sites and possible changes to kerbside collection. He reported that failure to comply with the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme targets for biodegradable municipal waste would lead to severe financial penalties.

The Director of Environment reported that following consultation on the Joint Municipal Waste Strategy for Herefordshire and Worcestershire "Managing Waste for a brighter Future" a number of minor changes had been made and a report on the strategy was due to be considered by Cabinet in July 2004.

During the course of discussion the following principal points were noted:

- The Director of Environment reported that the Envirobility Recycling Scheme at Ross-on-Wye was due to be extended to a number of surrounding villages.
- Consideration was being given to varying the kerbside collection in a trial area whereby residual waste would be collected on a fortnightly basis and recyclables collected on alternate weeks to establish whether an increase in recyclables could be obtained without increasing costs while maintaining the collection of residuals.
- While no financial penalties, other than that imposed through the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme, were expected to be imposed through not achieving the targets, it was noted that elements of waste management were contained in the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA).
- The pay back time for a 'box collection' scheme, similar to that currently at Ross-on-Wye, was difficult to predict.
- The collection cost per tonne of recycled waste was considerably more than that for collecting residual waste, particularly when collecting high volume low weight waste such as plastics.
- Use would be made of the recently launched DEFRA computer models to compare different methods of waste collection.
- It was anticipated that the next edition of Herefordshire Matters would contain

an article on waste and recycling.

- The proposed Household Waste site at Kington was awaiting the resolution of land ownership problems.

**RESOLVED: That the report on waste management be noted.**

#### **8. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2004/05**

The Committee were informed of the latest position with regard to the Environment Capital Programme for 2004/05.

The Director of Environment reported that the Capital Programme for 2004/05, attached to the report at Appendix 1, detailed the individual schemes. He highlighted that a number of bids were being considered for approval for funding under the Prudential Borrowing Code. He reported that the programme had largely been based on the 2004/05 Local Transport Plan. The total amount available for the Capital Programme was expected to be £12,643,720 plus any sum approved under the Prudential Borrowing Code.

The Committee scrutinised the budget report and noted that funding for improving access to Council owned buildings was administered from the property budget.

**RESOLVED: That the Environment Capital Programme 2004/05 report be noted.**

#### **9. ENVIRONMENT REVENUE BUDGET 2004/05 AND OUTTURN 2003/4**

The Committee were informed of the latest position with regard to the Environment Budget for 2004/05 following the formal approval of the Council's budget.

The Director of Environment reported that while the outturn figures for 2003/4 had not been finalised, an underspend of approximately £371,000 was expected to be brought forward. This had mainly arisen due to problems with staff recruitment. Brief comments on the 2003/04 outturn including commentary on overspends and underspends within various budget headings, were detailed in the report.

He further reported that Council had approved a budget of £23,369,485 for the Environment Programme Area which included allocations of £1,154,000 for Central Support Services. This total had increased by £314,250 by a transfer from the Property Programme Area following the reallocation of staff costs arising out of the improving service exercise. The total budget therefore became £23,683,485. In addition to the effects of inflation, Council had made a number of adjustments to the 2004/5 Environment Budget, namely in the areas of property related insurance; the Waste Management PFI contract and the one-off use of reserves for highway maintenance.

**RESOLVED: That the report on the Environment Revenue budget 2003/4 and 2004/5 be noted.**

#### **10. 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 Committee noted that improvements were being made to the website access for planning services and that a full scale review of the website would be undertaken by ICT Services. Good use had been made of the website during the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) consultation. The Committee discussed whether the 'By When' date in appendix 1, should be reviewed to improve the objectivity of the review particularly when it was known that the original date would not be met. The Director of Environment reported that it was important to indicate to Members when planned action targets had slipped.

**RESOLVED: That the report on the implementation of the Best Value Review Improvement Plans be noted.**

**11. MONITORING OF 2003/04 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FULL YEAR APRIL 2003 TO MARCH 2004**

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

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

The Committee debated the performance figures and noted that over time a number of target criteria had changed. The Director of Environment highlighted that this now caused difficulties, particularly in relation to BV97a & b - Condition of non-principal roads – as this target formed part of the Council's Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA). Local targets were regularly revised to ensure that they were meaningful and attainable.

**RESOLVED: That the monitoring report in relation to the 2003/2004 local and national performance indicators be noted.**

**12. HEREFORDSHIRE PLAN AMBITIONS - CONTRIBUTION MADE BY THE ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE**

The Committee were advised of the Directorate's contribution to the ambitions contained within the Herefordshire Plan, in particular those relating to "protecting and improving Herefordshire's distinctive environment" and "developing an integrated transport system for Herefordshire".

The Director of Environment reported that the Herefordshire Plan was the Community Strategy for the County. The mechanism for implementing the Plan was through 10 Ambition Groups established to deliver each of the ambitions in the Plan. While the Directorate principally contributed to the Environment Ambition Group and the Transport Ambition Group, contributions had also been made to the work of a number of other Ambition Groups. The achievements and the work undertaken had been detailed in the report.

In the course of scrutinising the report the Committee noted the following principal points:

- The number of Countryside Stewardship Schemes continued to grow. By utilising external funding (50% match funding for 3 years) the Directorate had, through the appointment of a Countryside Advisor (Archaeology), been able to provide advice and guidance to the farming community on conservation

measures that may promote elements of the historic environment in stewardship.

- The Head of Planning Services reported that while bids for Parish Plan funding had closed, a new funding scheme by the Countryside Agency or its successor was anticipated. This would not affect the level of support given by the Council to Parish Councils in assisting them to complete their Parish Plans. He also reported that while the planning views of all parishes were fed into the planning process, this was made easier when there was a relevant Parish Plan. The Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) reported that Cabinet was due to receive a report on the Parish Plans Protocol, a document that outlined the relationship between Herefordshire Council and Parishes when working on their Parish Plans and the procedures that should be followed.
- The Lead Planner Transportation briefly reported upon the level of Rural Bus Grant and the level of budget support given to both rural and urban bus transportation.

**RESOLVED: That the report on the Herefordshire Plan Ambitions – Contribution made by the Environment Directorate be noted.**

The meeting ended at 12.02 p.m.

**CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman reported that Mr John Colyer, Transportation Manager, would be retiring at the end of July 2004. The Committee thanked him for his service to the Council and wished him a long and happy retirement..