

**MINUTES of the meeting of Environment Scrutiny Committee held at Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Wednesday, 30th March, 2005 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, J.W. Newman and Miss F. Short

**In attendance:** Councillors P.J. Edwards (Cabinet Member), Ms. G.A. Powell and R.M. Wilson (Cabinet Member)

**51. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor P. J. Dauncey.

**52. NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

There were no substitutes.

**53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**54. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That subject to the deletion of the penultimate paragraph, "The Chairman thanked...." in minute number 50, the Minutes of the meeting held on 28th February, 2005 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

**55. CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING**

The Committee was advised of progress of the 2004/05 Capital Programme for Environment areas within the overall context of the Herefordshire Council Capital Programme.

The Director of Environment outlined the Capital Programme budgetary position and commented that as part of the budgetary process a number of minor changes to the programme had occurred.

The Assistant County Treasurer reported that the total of the Capital Programme had decreased from £12,044,105 notified to the previous meeting to £11,927,015, indicated in appendix 1 to the report. The total spent or committed to 31st January 2005 was £10.825 million or 90% of the revised forecast.

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

- The Marlbrook Cycle Way, being an extension off the Great Western Way, had attracted a £30,000 grant which in turn had resulted in an underspend in budget.

- The budget for Rural Footway Improvements provided for new footways, the schemes for which were selected according to predetermined priorities.
- Due to difficulty in identifying an appropriate site, the budget for Vehicle Activated Signs had been re-allocated.
- The budget allocation for the Hereford Crematorium scheme had now been utilised.
- The Pedestrian Crossing Improvement budget had now been utilised.
- Any underspend in the Bus Priority Measures budget would be used to improve the SCOOT system (traffic signal management system).

**RESOLVED: That the report be noted.**

#### **56. ENVIRONMENT REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING**

The Committee was advised of the position on the Environment Programme area revenue budgets for the period 31st January, 2005, including any variations against budget at this stage of the year.

The Director of Environment and the Assistant County Treasurer reported that the total Environment budget for 2004/05 was £24,015,000 as reported to the last meeting. A net underspending of £1,515,000 was anticipated during 2004/05 from Environment General (£1,055,000), Regulatory (£40,000) and Planning (£420,000). With the exception of any underspending on the Waste Management PFI contract any underspendings would be carried forward into 2005/6. In addition it was expected that approximately £100,000 of the Planning Development Grant would be carried forward into 2005/06, and may be used to offset any reduction in planning income. A detailed report on budget monitoring was attached to the report at appendix 1.

The Committee debated staff issues in relation to meeting targets, particularly in planning, and noted that a balance needed to be struck between resourcing the current high level of planning activity and the future staffing levels for the perceived normal workloads.

The Committee also debated the Government proposals for increasing the level of fees paid for both domestic and business planning applications. The Committee noted the Cabinet Member (Environment) response concerning the need for business applications, particularly the major applications, to reflect the true cost to the Council.

The Public Conveniences improvement programme was proceeding. The refurbishment of Public Conveniences at Tenbury Road, Bromyard, and East Street, Hereford had commenced. However, the realisation of capital receipts from the sale of sites identified in the review had been slower than anticipated.

A review was underway into the complex issue of Schools being designated trade waste sites and their involvement, particularly Eco-schools, in the recycling initiatives.

**RESOLVED: That the report be noted.**

#### **57. MONITORING OF 2004/2005 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - APRIL 2004 TO JANUARY 2005**

The Committee was updated on the exceptions to the targeted progress made by the Environment Directorate for the ten months April 2004 to January 2005 towards

achieving the performance indicators/targets which appeared in the Council's Corporate Plan.

The Committee noted that unfortunately the estimated outturn for BV84 (Kg of household waste per head per annum) continued to indicate a year on year increase. However, the current performance for BV82b (household waste composted) was above the target and compared very favourably with the target for 2006/07. In response to views that the Government be lobbied to do more to reduce waste e.g. a reduction in packaging materials or imposing a tax on carrier bags, the Committee noted the Government lobbying undertaken by the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Joint Waste Forum.

In relation to BV166, the Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards reported that performance by housing health inspection had improved thereby contributing to the improvement of the estimated outturn figure. However, he expressed a degree of scepticism over how the BV166 target reflected the service in practice. He acknowledged that, in general, various factors affected target performance e.g. the calculation of the number of households, the inclusion of street sweepings or an early or late growing season.

**RESOLVED: That the report be noted.**

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

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

The remaining programmed actions in the improvement plans were detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

During the course of debate the Committee noted that:

- A draft Highway Design Guide had been produced by Owen Williams, which was currently subject to consultation.
- The refurbishment of Public Conveniences at Tenbury Road, Bromyard, and East Street, Hereford had commenced. However, the realisation of capital receipts from the sale of sites identified in the review had been slower than anticipated. The Committee also debated issues relating to maintenance costs and facility closing times. The Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards acknowledged that in view of changes to late night opening hours for licensed premises, the operating hours of public conveniences, particularly in Hereford City centre may need to be revised.
- The Public Rights of Way Strategy had been approved by Cabinet on 24th March, 2005.

**RESOLVED: that the report be noted.**

#### **59. ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2005/2006**

The Committee considered a new work programme as set out in the report.

During the course of discussion the following additional subjects were suggested for inclusion in the programme:

- Highways Agency Update - Following the meeting with the Highways Agency on 28th February, 2005 the Committee wished to receive at its meeting in June 2005 an update on any outstanding issues from that meeting and an

indication of the working relationship between the Highways Agency and the Council.

- PROW Strategy - A number of issues were raised in relation to the implementation of the Public Rights of Way (PROW) Strategy which had been approved by Cabinet on 24th March, 2005. Appreciating that an update report was programmed for March 2006, the Committee requested that an interim report on the impact of the introduction of the PROW Strategy be programmed for September, 2005.
- Flooding issues in the County – in view of the various issues concerning riparian management and ownership and changes to the local drainage boards, the Committee requested that an additional meeting be programmed to discuss with the Environment Agency the various County-wide flooding issues. It was proposed that the Head of Highways and Transportation co-ordinate Councillors comments and arrange a meeting with the Environment Agency as soon as convenient.

**RESOLVED: That subject to the inclusion of the above three items the Environment Scrutiny Committee work programme be approved and recommended to the Strategic Monitoring Committee.**

The meeting ended at 11.42 a.m.

**CHAIRMAN**