

MINUTES of the meeting of Environment Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday, 25th September, 2006 at 10.00 a.m.

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

Councillors: K.G. Grumbley, J.G.S. Guthrie, J.W. Hope MBE,
J.W. Newman, R. Preece, Mrs. S.J. Robertson and J.B. Williams

In attendance: Councillors A.C.R. Chappell, J.W. Edwards, P.J. Edwards (Cabinet Member - Environment), J. Stone, D.B. Wilcox (Cabinet Member - Highways & Transportation) and R.M. Wilson

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors: PJ Dauncey, TW Hunt, Ms GA Powell and Miss F Short.

14. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor J.W. Hope MBE substituted for Councillor T.W. Hunt and Councillor Mrs S.J. Robertson substituted for Councillor Ms G.A. Powell.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

16. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That subject to the deletion of "alleged" from the 2nd bullet point of minute No. 9 - Biofuels Briefing - the minutes of the meeting held 5th June, 2006 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

17. SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY

No suggestions were received from members of the public.

18. REVIEW OF THE TRAVELLERS POLICY

The Committee were invited to nominate a small team to review the Draft Travellers' Policy before it was passed to the Cabinet Member (Environment) for approval.

The Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards reported that the Herefordshire Traveller's Policy had been agreed by Cabinet on 28th November 2002 and was now subject to review. An officer team had undertaken a preliminary review and produced a draft policy. It was now considered appropriate for a small team of Members from this Committee to undertake a further review of the draft policy before it was passed to the Cabinet Member for approval.

He highlighted that a number of issues would have to be taken in to account when undertaking the review and these were identified in the report. He also suggested that the Review Team determine and make representations to the Cabinet Member on the acceptability of the draft policy; identify any areas that required amendment, addition or deletion and identify any further areas of work that needed to be undertaken.

RESOLVED: That

- a) **A review of the Herefordshire Traveller Policy be undertaken along the lines indicated in the report; and**
- b) **The Review Team be comprised of:**
 - **Councillor W. L. S. Bowen (Chair of Review).**
 - **Councillor J. B. Williams.**
 - **Councillor Miss F. Short.**
 - **Councillor T. Hunt.**

19. PROPOSED REVIEW OF HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING IN HEREFORDSHIRE

The Committee considered a scoping statement for a proposed review of Household Waste Recycling in Herefordshire.

The Strategic Monitoring Committee had identified a number of issues for possible scrutiny, one of which was Household Waste Recycling in Herefordshire. Based on the issues identified by the Strategic Monitoring Committee a suggested scoping statement was attached to the agenda report at appendix 1.

The Committee considered the scoping statement and questioned the short timescale for the review and whether the review could make assumptions regarding the Estech planning application at Madley. The Director of Environment responded that in his view the Committee should still aim to complete this review by December 2006. In relation to Estech no assumptions should be made concerning the planning application.

The Committee noted that a seminar on Waste Management would be held for all Council Members immediately following the Committee meeting.

RESOLVED: That

- c) **The Scoping Statement for the review of Household Waste Recycling in Herefordshire as appended to the report be approved;**
- d) **The review Group be comprised of:**
 - **Councillor K.G. Grumbley (Chairman)**
 - **Councillor J.W. Newman**
 - **Councillor J.G.S. Guthrie**
 - **Councillor P.J. Dauncey**

20. CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING

The Committee was informed of the latest position with regard to the Environment Capital Programme for 2006/07.

The Director of Environment and the Director of Resources' representative reported that the total of the Capital Programme had been increased to £13,216,000 from the £12,554,000 notified to the previous meeting. A brief overview of the forecast was set out in the report together with, at Appendix 1, the capital budgets for the programme areas. A correction was made to paragraph 7 of the report confirming that the total spent or committed to 31st July was £6.193 million or 46.8%.

While scrutinising the Capital Programme monitoring report the Committee noted the following points in response to questions raised:

- Questioned on the Hereford Intelligence Transport System expenditure the Committee was informed that Owen Williams Ltd. were undertaking a study in accordance with the Local Transport Plan (LTP) objectives.
- Rural Footway Improvements – expenditure on the Bodenham footway project had been delayed due to ongoing land purchase problems.
- Rural Rail Improvements – currently a study was being undertaken as a precursor to improving pedestrian and disabled access at Hereford, Leominster and Ledbury stations (stations with pedestrian bridges). Improvement work would initially focus on the Worcester bound platform at Ledbury. Additional grant funding was being sought from the Department for Transport. In relation to rail transport the Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) noted the Committee's comments concerning the longer term use of the rail spur currently used by Tarmac at Morton-on-Lugg and concern about overcrowding and cleanliness of trains serving the Hereford 6th Form/College students from Ludlow and Leominster.
- Safer Routes to Schools – the Director of Environment reported that schools had been prioritised and a detailed approach was needed for each scheme. However, Safe Route schemes were now being rolled out at a number of schools.
- Hereford Crematorium – while delays had been experienced the plans to improve Hereford the Crematorium were progressing.

RESOLVED: That the Capital Budget monitoring report be noted.

21. ENVIRONMENT REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING

The Committee was advised of the budget monitoring position for the Environment Programme area revenue budget for the period to 31st July, 2006.

The Director of Environment and the Director of Resources' representative reported that the total Environment Budget for 2006/07 had increased to £26,576,350. This was mainly due to revisions to the Central Support Budgets, which were further detailed in the report and appendix 1. In overall terms the budgets were expected to come in on budget, although Planning Fee income (due to a temporary reduction in planning applications) and Car Park income was being closely monitored. The total of £389,000 shown in Appendix 1 - "Highways and Transport Over (Under) spend" column, was corrected to £165,000.

During the course of scrutinising the monitoring report the Committee noted the following points in response to questions raised:

- That any variation to the Planning Fee and Car Park income streams would be managed corporately in line with the Council's Medium Term Financial Management Strategy.
- The funding application for £33,000 lodged with the Food Safety Act Fighting Fund in respect of the clean up operation at Cabury's factory had been successful.
- While the revenue side of the road maintenance budget had been reduced by

£400,000 to meet various revenue pressures the Director of Environment reported that appropriate changes had been made to the Capital side of the budget to ensure the maximum benefit to the highway network.

RESLVED: That the Environment Revenue budget monitoring report be noted.

22. MONITORING OF 2006/07 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - APRIL TO JULY 2006

The Committee received an update on the exceptions to the targeted progress made by the Environment Directorate for the four months April to July 2006 towards achieving:

- The targets that appear in the Council's Corporate and Annual Operating Plans and which are reported monthly to the respective Cabinet Members and, by exception, bi-monthly to Cabinet
- The targets that appear in the Directorate Plan which are reported monthly to the respective Cabinet Members and, by exception, bi-monthly to Cabinet.

The Director of Environment was pleased to report that for the four-month period to July 2006 none of the indicators for which the Environment Directorate and the Cabinet Members for Environment and Highways and Transportation had responsibility had been identified in the Integrated Performance Report to be of concern e.g. receiving a red 'traffic light'. For Members information the list of indicators contained in the Integrated Performance Report was set out at appendix 1 to the report. He informed the Committee that performance against all other indicators was within 10% of target. In addition performance, where ascertainable, against those indicators where data was not available either monthly or quarterly also appeared to be on target.

The Committee noted that the target for the "number of bus passenger journeys per year..." was 3,817,000 not 3,817 as printed and further noted that journeys related to journeys started in the County. While statistics were collected from bus operators at the end of the year the Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) reported that early indications for the first quarter were that, following changes to the pensioner travel scheme, journey numbers had increased.

Questioned on the use of 'cleaner fuels' the Director of Environment reported that bus operators had been investing in vehicles to meet the national legislation on disabled accessibility and he thought it may be some time until bus fleets would be renewed and therefore able to take advantage of up-coming 'cleaner fuel' technology.

RESOLVED: That the performance indicators – April to July 2006 monitoring report be noted.

23. HYDROPOWER BRIEFING

Members were informed about the potential for developing hydropower within the County and how any proposals may relate to the Unitary Development Plan, the Economic Development Strategy, the Council's commitment to reduce carbon dioxide emissions through its Carbon Management Action Plan, and the recently adopted Herefordshire Partnership Climate Change Strategy.

The Sustainability Manager reported the background to hydropower, including references to plans and strategies regarding renewable energy sources; the Regional Energy Strategy for the West Midlands stretch regional targets; the power outputs of micro and mini hydro plants; the possibility for local development; the

regulatory considerations and grants and funding available to develop such hydro systems. She also indicated that more research was needed in order to determine whether the potential for such schemes would be of sufficient benefit to Herefordshire.

The Committee debated the low water flow rates particularly in feeder streams, following changes in farming practice and the effect of climate change and expressed an interest in the outcome of the future study being undertaken by the British Hydropower Association and the pilot work being undertaken by South Somerset District Council. The Committee also questioned whether water utility companies should be encouraged to take a positive interest in such schemes.

The Committee noted that while the Council itself was unlikely to undertake a hydropower scheme it could, through the Cabinet Member (Environment), facilitate further research and meetings between interested parties.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the Cabinet Member (Environment) be supported in facilitating further research and meetings between interested parties to further the possible development of hydropower schemes in the County.

24. SAFETY ON THE A49 & A465 TRUNK ROADS

The Director of Environment updated the Committee on safety issues on the A49 and A465 trunk roads following meetings with the Highways Agency on the issue.

The Director of Environment circulated at the meeting a report entitled "Highways Agency Liaison Update" and he highlighted key issues recently discussed with the Highways Agency in relation to: the A49 Ashton bends and the anticipated timetable for improvement; the introduction of a speed limit at Wellington Marsh; traffic congestion due to works associated with the A49/A465 roundabout (ASDA); and participation with the Highways Agency and other Local Authorities in the further development of a Road Safety Strategy. He undertook to provide appropriate updates following further meetings with the Highways Agency on the management and improvement of trunk roads in the County.

The Committee noted that safety improvements were being progressed on the A49 trunk road by the Highways Agency. However, comment was made in relation to the safe access to Queenswood Country Park by visitors using service buses and the possible incorporation of speed limit warning signs prior to the Wellington Marsh speed limit area.

RESOLVED That the report be noted and Committee Members be further updated on safety issues on trunk roads as appropriate.

25. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme for the remainder of 2006/07.

The Democratic Services Officer reported upon the Committee work programme, a copy of which was set out at appendix 1 to the report which also included a number of issues for consideration as the programme was further developed.

The Committee noted that while the Polytunnel Review Group were awaiting the outcome of a High Court decision the Herefordshire Code of Practice to Control the siting of Polytunnels continued to provide information prior to possible planning application or enforcement.

RESOLVED That the Committee work programme as set out at Appendix 1 be approved and reported to Strategic Monitoring Committee.

The meeting ended at 11.23 a.m.

CHAIRMAN