

MINUTES of the meeting of Environment Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday 20 April 2009 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor KG Grumbley (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: CM Bartrum, WLS Bowen, MAF Hubbard, TW Hunt, PM Morgan, A Seldon, RH Smith, NL Vaughan and PJ Watts

In attendance: Councillors: PA Andrews (invited for minute item 66), PGH Cutter, GFM Dawe, PJ Edwards, DW Greenow, TM James, JG Jarvis (Cabinet Member - Environment and Strategic Housing), MD Lloyd-Hayes, DB Wilcox (Cabinet Member - Highways and Transportation) and JD Woodward (invited for minute item 66).

61. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

COUNCILLOR KG GRUMBLEY, VICE-CHAIRMAN, IN THE CHAIR.

Apologies were received from Councillor JW Hope; Councillor RI Matthews (Chairman)

62. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor R H Smith substituted for Councillor JW Hope.

63. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

64. MINUTES

Minute No 52, 3rd bullet point substitute addressed for addressing and in the final paragraph substitute 'resources' for 'recourses'. Minute 53, 2nd bullet point substitute 'flooding' for 'folding'. Minute 60 resolution part 2 delete 'if any',.

RESOLVED: that subject to the minor amendments detailed above the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

Planning Obligations

Mr P McKay, Leominster, suggested that the Committee further scrutinise the obtaining of planning obligations, especially how village organisations could identify their projects for which planning obligations ought to be obtained. He further suggested that problems occurred when such funding was obtained for children's play areas, open spaces and sport were grouped into one category. The suggestion had originally been received by e-mail and a copy of the e-mail of 16 April had been circulated at the meeting.

The Chairman thanked Mr McKay for the suggestion. Invited by the Chairman to respond the Head of Planning and Transportation reported that a number of the points raised had already been addressed i.e. a Section 106 officer had been appointed, and a number of other points were contained in the later agenda item concerning the Scrutiny Review of the Planning Service.

Colwall Railway Bridge

A suggestion was made by Mr John Stock, Colwall, on behalf of four residents of Colwall concerning the Colwall Railway Bridge. He suggested that the criteria used to make the decision that the highway across the new Colwall railway bridge should be single way with traffic lights, 'to ensure appropriate highway layout taking into account design constraints and safety' should be scrutinised and provided a number of lines of questioning and background to the issue. The suggestion had originally been received from Ms S Bond and a copy of her e-mail dated 8 April 2009 was circulated at the meeting.

The Chairman thanked Mr Stock and Ms Bond for the suggestion. The Committee briefly debated the course of events around the decision and heard from the Head of Highways and the Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) about the state of the bridge; the consultation undertaken with the parish council and local residents and information bulletins issued; the considerations undertaken over whether to allow single or two way traffic and the advice received from traffic safety consultants.

The Committee agreed that should safety issues at the bridge become apparent following a reasonable period of working then the Committee may consider reviewing the bridge safety policy.

RESOLVED: that

- a) **The Committee noted the suggestion by Mr P McKay regarding planning obligations, however, the Committee considered that the issues raised could be best dealt with by a written response from the Head of Planning and Transportation; and**
- b) **The Committee noted the suggestion by Mr J Stock on behalf of a group from Colwall concerning the Colwall Railway Bridge; and**
 - i. **in view of the Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) having taken account of reports from two consultants on safety prior to making the decision on the highway layout for the B4218 Colwall Bridge, the Committee decided not to undertake further scrutiny of the issues raised but requested that the Head of Highways respond to Mr Stock; and**
 - ii. **should issues concerning traffic/pedestrian safety at the railway bridge arise after a period of operation then the Committee may wish to consider reviewing the situation.**

66. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE PLANNING SERVICE

The Committee considered the findings of the Planning Service Scrutiny Review Group following the review.

The Committee on 9th June 2008 considered a report highlighting that while the Planning Service had enjoyed wide ranging success in recent years the challenge for the future was to respond to the national Planning Reform agenda. At its meeting the Committee decided to set up a scrutiny review group and agreed the terms of reference for the review which included how best the planning function could deliver

the growth required to 2026 and how the Local Development function could best be integrated with the Growth Point agenda. The Review Groups report setting out its approach to its task, its findings, and recommendations was included in the agenda.

The Chairman of the Review Group, Councillor PA Andrews, presented the findings of the Review Group and thanked the Review Group for their work, the people who had presented verbal or written evidence, the town and parish councils for responding to the questionnaire and officers of the Council who had supported the review.

On considering the report the following principal points were noted:

- The Committee appreciated the clarity and comprehensive approach to the report.
- Responding to Recommendation 4.A - levels of consultation - the Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing) commented that a great deal of consultation had already been undertaken. There were major differences between the former Unitary Development Plan and the Local Development Framework (LDF) and therefore a new approach was needed. Initial work on the LDF included the identification of areas of land that had the potential to be developed. More detailed work on specific sites was likely to commence in approximately 2 years time.
- The Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing) commented that the change from a 'policing' role to that of 'enabling' (para 6.1) had already started with a number of job title changes to underline the new emphasis.
- Responding to comments concerning the budget for the planning service the Director of Regeneration reported that the down turn in the economy, and resultant reduced levels of fee income needed to be managed. It was for Council as a whole to direct any budget changes. The Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing) commented that a number of staff had already been temporarily redeployed or seconded to other areas.
- That Agents be included in Recommendation 8.b .
- Responding to comments about the response to letters (para 10.7 & Rec 10.1) the Head of Planning and Transportation confirmed that general letters were responded to. Unfortunately specific queries contained in letters of objection were not responded to, usually due to the high numbers involved.
- The Committee noted that the Audit Commission report 'Planning Services Review' – March 2009, also made reference to the Council's planning committee structure. A number of views were expressed by Members of the Committee concerning the advantages or disadvantages of the current structure. The Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing) reported that he had set up a Working Group to examine the Audit Commission report and anticipated that the committee structure would be debated at Council.

The Chairman thanked the Review Group for their work in undertaking the review.

RESOLVED: That:

- a) **The report of the Planning Service Review Group be approved and referred to the Executive for consideration;**
- b) **The Executives response to the findings and recommendations, including an action plan, be reported to the first available meeting of the Committee after the Executive has approved its response; and**
- c) **It be noted in the committee work programme that a further report on progress in response to the Review be made after six months with consideration then being given to the need for any further reports to be made.**

67. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ON-STREET PARKING

The Committee considered the findings arising from the Scrutiny Review of On-Street Parking.

The Committee on 25th February 2008 considered a report concerning on-street parking controls in the County with a suggestion that the committee consider undertaking a review to determine whether any improvements could be made. The Committee agreed to form a review group and appointed its membership. The terms of reference for the review were subsequently drawn up. The Review Groups report setting out its approach to its task, its findings, and recommendations was included in the agenda.

The Chairman of the Review Group, Councillor MAF Hubbard, presented the finding of the Review Group and took the Committee through the report section by section highlighting, or providing further commentary on, a number of findings and recommendations.

On considering the report the following principal points were noted:

- The Chairman of the Committee suggested that the report contained matters of interest to Hereford City Council e.g. Rec 4.a, 4.f, 4.g and 9.a and therefore they should be invited to comment prior to it being passed to the Executive. Comment should also be sought from the Director of Resources in relation to recommendation 5.c (ring-fencing of income).
- Questioned whether a Park & Ride scheme would be effective without dedicated bus lanes the Head of Highways responded that all issues would need to be considered in the business case design for a scheme. While dedicated lanes would help they were not a priority.
- It was agreed that the various discrepancies in the Residents Parking Scheme, identified in the report, needed to be addressed.
- Referring to Rec 6.b disappointment was expressed that the initial good work in implementing School Travel Plans had not been continued now that the grants had been received by schools.

The Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) summed up by thanking the Review Group for their work in undertaking the review and commented that the report contained a lot for him to think about. He shared the concerns about the misuse of permits under the Residents Parking Scheme. He reported that the traffic consultant for the ESG had been commissioned by the Council to undertake a traffic needs analysis to identify future parking requirements. The Suggestions concerning new parking technology would need examining.

RESOLVED: That

- a) **The report of the Scrutiny Review of On-Street Parking be approved;**
- b) **The report be forwarded to the Hereford City Council for comment, particularly in relation to recommendations 4.a, 4.f, 4g and 9a, and to the Director of Resources for comment, particularly in relation to recommendation 5.c**
- c) **Following receipt of the responses from b) above the report of the Scrutiny review of On-Street Parking, together with the responses be submitted to the Executive for consideration.**
- d) **The Executive's response to the Review, including an action plan, be reported to the first available meeting of the Committee after the**

Executive has approved its response;

- e) A further report on progress in response to the Review be made to the Committee after six months with consideration then being given to the need for any further reports to be made.**

68. STREET CLEANING

The Committee considered the performance and priorities in relation to street cleaning issues.

As a result of monitoring general performance reports the Strategic Monitoring Committee expressed some concerns over the performance of the street cleaning service and suggested that this Committee receive a report on the approach currently taken to deliver the service and how performance is monitored.

The Streetscene Manager presented the report which indicated the method of target setting and performance management; the current street cleaning practice, and the measures being taken to improve service delivery. He highlighted that working with Amey, the Council sought to adopt best practice set out in central government's Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse. He further highlighted that the Service Delivery Review of the Council's Strategic Service Delivery Partnership intended to include a new performance management regime to drive improved outcomes in relation to the services provided.

The Streetscene Manager reported that the 2008/9 street and environmental cleanliness targets for flyposting, graffiti and litter would be met. It was predicted that unfortunately the target (12%) for detritus (natural litter e.g. leaves weeds) was likely to be missed by 1 percentage point – namely 13%.

Mr M Thomas, Service Director, Amey Wye Valley, reported that they were working with the Council to improve the service to local community and added that educating the public not to litter was an important issue.

During the course of debating the report the following principal points were noted:

- The Chairman requested that once the new Service Delivery contract had settled down he hoped the Committee would be invited to see first hand the back office work of the Streetscene Team.
- The current schedule of street cleaning continued e.g. villages were cleaned every 6 months, however, there was flexibility within the schedule to ensure that streets that didn't need a scheduled clean were left out in favour of those that needed additional attention.
- City Councillors questioned the implied low instance of graffiti and litter stating that local residents were having to undertake graffiti cleaning themselves and that a number of litter bins in the centre of the City needed emptying on a far more regular basis than currently happened. In response the Director of Environment and Culture reported that the Council took prompt action to clean graffiti from its own property, however, the Council had no power to clean graffiti from private property, other than to serve an enforcement notice which didn't seem fair on the property owner.
- A Community Protection Team, working with partner agencies, had been formed with the powers to tackle anti-social behaviour related issues such as flytipping, littering and dog mess. The Committee requested that all Councillors be advised of the relevant contact details.
- It was suggested that relevant parish councils be informed when litter picking

teams were working in their area, particularly in relation to litter picking on the A49 (South).

- While the County had a good take up of Eco-schools, comment was made that schools needed to educate more widely to ensure that parents were also environmentally aware.
- It was suggested that while undertaking mechanical street sweeping, greater care was needed to ensure that litter and detritus was cleared from around fixed street furniture.
- A Councillor claimed that the Streetscene budget only allowed for 5 replacement litter bins per year which, if true, was insufficient, particularly when the public were encouraged to use them. Comment was also made that local parish councils could, if required; fund any replacement through local management.

RESOLVED: That

- a) **the performance outlined in the report on Street Cleaning be noted and consideration be given to a performance monitoring update report following the changes to the Service Delivery Partnership with Amey; and**
- b) **The Streetscene Manager remind all Members of the Council of the contact details for the Community Protection Team and for reporting Streetscene issues.**

69. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme.

RESOLVED: That subject to incorporating work arising from earlier agenda items the work programme be noted and reported to the Strategic Monitoring Committee.

The meeting ended at 4.26 pm

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CHAIRMAN