

MINUTES of the meeting of Environment Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday 2 March 2009 at 9.30 am

Present: Councillor RI Matthews (Chairman)
Councillor KG Grumbley (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: CM Bartrum, WLS Bowen, JW Hope MBE, MAF Hubbard, TW Hunt, PM Morgan, PJ Watts and JD Woodward

In attendance: Councillors PJ Edwards, TM James, JG Jarvis (Cabinet Member Environment and Strategic Housing) and AT Oliver

37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor A Seldon, Councillor NL Vaughan and Councillor DB Wilcox (Cabinet Member – Highways and Transportation).

38. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor JD Woodward substituted for Councillor A Seldon.

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

40. MINUTES

The Committee noted that in relation to minute 33 Capital Budget Monitoring, outstanding claims for the Ross-on-Wye Flood Alleviation scheme were still being pursued with the Environment Agency who had commissioned the works. It was further noted that while there had been additional works, the scheme had been completed under original budget. In relation to minute 34 Revenue Budget Monitoring, it was noted that very limited response had been received from Herefordshire Council members on the question of flooding 'hot spots'.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held 24 November 2008, be approved and signed by the Chairman.

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

Public comment was received concerning the lack of a Climate Change Officer in the Council which was debated under agenda item 42 Carbon Management Performance.

42. CARBON MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE

The Committee were informed of the national indicators on climate change and given an outline of the major sources of carbon emission from the council and its contractors in order to inform sustained efforts to reduce emissions over the next decade and beyond.

The Sustainability Manager presented her agenda report which highlighted: the strong link between ongoing costs and carbon emissions, mainly through energy usage; that the council leads on the Herefordshire Partnership Local Area Agreement target to cut the county carbon emissions, and the risk to the council through not meeting the various targets. The report also described the new National Indicator set namely: NI186 (county carbon reduction per capita), NI185 (Percentage CO2 reduction from Local Authority operations) and NI188 (Planning to adapt to climate change). The report further informed of work to determine the impact of the Council's own vehicle fleet.

On scrutinising the report the following principal points were noted:

- Questioned whether the Council could meet the government stretched target to cut carbon emissions by 80% by 2050 the Sustainability Manager responded that whether this could be achieved was currently unknown.
- In many cases initial financial investment was needed to achieve long term savings and this needed to be costed for each scheme.
- Improvements to building insulation were being made through the new planning legislation. The Council were also offering insulation grants to those on benefits or the elderly to assist in raising property insulation standards. The Committee requested further information on the work underway, and what further work could be done, to raise energy standards of new housing through Forward Planning requirements and building legislation.
- While the Council was currently achieving its carbon reduction target it was pointed out that this was largely due to the one-off gain in including the landfill gas flare. The Committee questioned how continued reductions were to be made. The Director of Environment and Culture commented that while it was currently uneconomic to sell the landfill gas the situation would be kept under review.
- Questioning why the Council no longer used 'green electricity' and what the public perception to this may be, the Cabinet Member (Environment) commented that electricity was purchased via the councils purchasing consortia (West Mercia Supplies) who had ceased this facility. He appreciated the public perception issue and undertook to make further enquiries.
- While a report was planned for the June Committee on street lighting energy consumption the Director of Environment and Culture reported that a grant had been obtained to undertake a pilot study into replacing current lighting with LED lighting.
- Responding to whether the Councils vehicle fleet were entirely diesel powered, the Committee noted that the 2000+ vehicles indicated in the 'fleet summary' were mainly vehicles owned by staff or Councillors and used for business mileage. The remainder, principally owned by Council contractors, were a range of vehicles using a variety of engine types.
- The Committee noted that vehicles in Council ownership were owned by individual directorates rather than centrally under a Fleet Manager and therefore work on determining the impact of the Council owned fleet was continuing. The Director of Environment and Culture acknowledged that a strategic approach was needed. The Cabinet Member (Environment) undertook to raise the fleet manager/fleet management issue with fellow Cabinet Members. The Committee requested that a further report, looking at the number and type of vehicle involved and the potential cost/benefit of appointing a Fleet Manager, be scheduled in the work programme for the June Committee.
- It was suggested that baseline data on vehicle mileages should be compiled now so that a comparison can be made following any relocation to a central

Council HQ.

- While the Council had many hundreds of sites around the County, work was progressing on establishing baseline data on energy and water usage in council buildings which would thereby provide a clearer picture of CO2 and cost.
- Responding to when a replacement Climate Change Officer was to be appointed the Director of Environment and Culture reported that the vacancy was being reviewed as part of the overall review of the directorate which was due to be completed by 1st April 2009.

RESOLVED: That subject to reports on options to increase energy standards through planning requirements and building standards and further information on the Council fleet/fleet management being scheduled into the work programme for the June Committee the report be noted.

43. TRANSPORTATION MATTERS

The Committee were informed about the co-ordination of transport services including those provided by the voluntary sector.

The Interim Transportation Manager presented his report which informed of: public transport contracts; home-to-school transport; social care transport, and transport provided through the voluntary sector. The report also highlighted some of the opportunities or barriers for integration including the integration between public transport and Adult Social Care transport.

On scrutinising the report the following principal points were noted:

- The extension to 16-18 learning, due to be implemented in 2013, had the potential to have a major adverse impact on pupil transport budgets.
- The Committee noted the complexity, arising from the government policy on parental choice for schools, in arranging efficient and economic school transport.
- Adult Social Care provided transport for social care clients on the basis of individual need (taxi/voluntary car/ minibus etc) which depended on what was determined by their individual care package. It was reported that the Scrutiny Review of Day Care Opportunities may provide more information on this aspect of transport. The Committee requested a report on costs and efficiencies identified through the Scrutiny review.
- It was commented that many pupils may decide to cycle to school if routes to school were safe and cycle facilities were provided.
- It was thought that there had been a drop in the number of volunteer drivers in the voluntary sector. This had probably been due to a narrowing of the gap between allowances paid and the costs of fuel and maintenance.
- Public transport contracts were usually for 3 years and normally contained a clause to take account of inflationary factors e.g. fluctuations in fuel prices.
- The typical cost of transporting a statemented pupil to schools by taxi was £20.00 per day - not including any escort costs.
- An average of £1.53 per journey was paid to public transport contractors. It was commented that the public should be made more aware of this subsidy and more use of public transport should be encouraged. Comment was made regarding the need for subsidised bus services to include appropriate information for passengers identifying the Council's financial support for the service. It was confirmed that such notices were routinely included on supported services.
- Questioned on the possibility of co-locating transport facilities, such as rail and bus, the Interim Head of Transportation reported that the Leominster

Taxi Bus scheme had operated until funding for the scheme had run out. He reminded Members that a seminar entitled 'The future of bus services' was due to be held on 23rd March.

- The Low Floor Bus Project which was funded through the Council's Local Transportation Plan and contributions from the Countryside Agency had enabled the Council to support a step change in the quality of the rural bus fleet in the County, providing fully accessible vehicles well in advance of DDA requirements. These newer busses also had the benefit of improved fuel efficiency and hence a reduced carbon footprint.
- The Director of Environment and Culture referred to the earlier carbon management report which stated that the Council's Joint Management Team had recently resolved that:- 'All major projects and briefs to consultants should require calculation of lifetime carbon costs for options to enable better management of emissions and that major contractors be required to show a commitment to environmental management as part of the Pre-qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) process and provide the Council with data for our carbon inventory so progress with our reduction target can be checked'.
- In relation to school transport the Admissions and Transport Manager reported that the government were currently assessing the American style Yellow Bus scheme.

RESOLVED That subject to a report on efficiencies identified through the review of day care opportunities being programmed for the June 2009 meeting the report be noted

At this point the Committee adjourned for 8 minutes and resumed at 11.09am

44. A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO ASSET MANAGEMENT AND ITS POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF LONG TERM CARBON REDUCTION TARGETS

The Committee were advised of the potential contribution that a strategic approach to asset management might make to the achievement of long term carbon reduction targets.

The Head of Asset Management and Property Services presented his report. He highlighted that pressure upon asset managers had been progressively growing to critically evaluate policies and practices in respect of carbon management and his report set out how a number of government measures impacted upon how local Authorities conduct their business. He also highlighted that there were six areas where local authorities can take action to reduce carbon emissions, namely new buildings; energy; procurement; water; waste and travel and his report indicated how these translated into a number of key themes and associated challenges. Appendix A to the report set out estimated CO₂ emissions from Council buildings and Council schemes demonstrating commitment to carbon reduction targets.

On scrutinising the report the following principal comments were noted:

- While substantial savings could be made, in both CO₂ and financial terms, to achieve the savings sustained financial investment and a whole organisation commitment to ensure delivery was needed. The report indicated the CO₂ and financial saving reported by four example authorities. The Committee requested further feed back on the cost v benefits experienced by other authorities.
- Responding to questions on national guidance to contractors the Head of Asset Management and Property Services reported that a whole life appraisal approach had been adopted to include building specifications which used the

- Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) to set standards for new build and large scale adaptations.
- Responding to whether the above approach had been followed for the replacement Minster College, Leominster, the Head of Asset Management and Property Services reported that the Minster College scheme had been subject to external funding pressures. He was able to report that the sharing of various heat/power systems were being investigated for the range of public buildings around The Minster College site.
 - A view was expressed that, in terms of the Council's accommodation strategy, while 'rationalisation/relocation/co-location can reduce reliance on transport' account needed to be taken that this didn't have a major effect on the sustainability of the City centre e.g. by collocating all staff to a new site at Rotherwas.
 - A range of comments were made namely that while a range of schemes were happening, these seemed to be small, and were unlikely to make the significant improvement needed to achieve the targets. Conversely, that small improvements can soon add up. Where possible use should be made of new technology e.g. thin film photovoltaic cells, likewise natural assets should not be overlooked e.g. the use of low head hydropower. In response the Cabinet Member (Environment) referred to planning PPS22 which allowed authorities to mandate on site renewable energy production as a condition of development, an issue that would be progressed further through the Local Development Framework.

Mr A Talbot, Head of Technical Services, Halo Leisure, was invited to report on the energy/CO2 reductions achieved by Halo Leisure.

Mr Talbot reported that energy efficiency had a direct bearing on the commercial viability of sports and leisure facilities as the energy bill could account for up to a third of the operating costs, and after staff costs, was the second largest item of expenditure. Halo Leisure was committed to reducing energy to protect the environment through the reduction of carbon and, ensure that leisure facilities in Herefordshire were sustainable for the future. Halo's strategy was to reduce reliance on fossil fuels by 20% before 2010.

Mr Talbot reported that the first and most important requirement for Halo had been accurate and clean data, not only as a starting point for any strategy, but also to provide the information to review and evaluate results. An Energy Reduction Plan had then been formed which identified targets to be achieved, key projects to reduce carbon, energy use and estimate the return in energy and carbon reduction. He provided, as an example, a comparison between Ledbury Leisure Centre, which was a modern sports facility approximately 10 years, old and the Leisure pool at Ross-on-Wye, which had been built in the 1970's and contained old technology along with poor insulation properties. Due to the work carried out, the Ross pool was now one of the most efficient leisure centres in Herefordshire. A copy of the overview concerning Ross pool, which was issued at the meeting, has been placed in the Committee minute book.

The Director of Environment and Culture commended the good work undertaken by Halo and, while the Council had many more sites than Halo, through the Joint Management Team the Council were striving to achieve similar results.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and

- a) **The Committee recommend that the Cabinet Member (Environment) consider entering into joint working arrangements with HALO to address/reduce the Council's energy usage/carbon footprint; and**

- b) **the Committee recommend to the Executive that when entering into a contract the contractor be given clear guidance on the need for energy /carbon management efficiency within the contract.**

45. WASTE COLLECTION CONTRACT - UPDATE

The Committee received an oral update on the progress with the Waste Collection Contract.

The Cabinet Member (Environment) and the Interim Head of Culture and Leisure reported that while sixteen pre expressions of interest for the contract had had been despatched, thirteen had been returned. This had resulted in six invitations to tender had been sent out of which three had resulted in formal tenders. These were currently subject to the verification process and therefore, due to the Contracts Procedures Rules, further comment could not be made at this time.

Responding to whether the manufacture of wheele bins could be provided locally the Interim Head of Culture and Leisure reported that the successful tenderer would be responsible for the procurement of the bins, however, he though local procurement would be unlikely due to it being a specialist market.

The Committee noted the current position.

46. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme.

The Chairman relayed a suggestion from Councillor NL Vaughan that the Committee look at the implications of the new transport hub being proposed by ESG Ltd as part of the Edgar Street development proposal.

Following brief debate on when firm proposals were expected for this element of the ESG development and the appropriateness for the Committee to debate a potential planning application, the Chairman requested that the Democratic Services Officer contact Councillor Vaughan to ensure that a clear proposal can be considered by the Committee at its March meeting.

RESOLVED: That subject to the inclusion of those items identified earlier in the meeting the work programme be noted and reported to Strategic Monitoring Committee.

The meeting ended at 12.12 pm

CHAIRMAN