

MINUTES of the meeting of Environment Scrutiny Committee held at The Larruperz Centre, Grammar School Close, Station Approach, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 7AQ on Monday 23 November 2009 at 9.30 am

Present: Councillor RI Matthews (Chairman)
Councillor PJ Watts (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: CM Bartrum, WLS Bowen, JW Hope MBE, MAF Hubbard, TW Hunt, G Lucas, PM Morgan, A Seldon and NL Vaughan

In attendance: Councillors PJ Edwards, AE Gray and DB Wilcox (Cabinet Member – Highways and Transportation)

27. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor DW Greenow and Councillor J Jarvis Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing).

28. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor G Lucas substituted for Councillor DW Greenow.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

30. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held 14 September 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

31. SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY (Pages 1 - 2)

A suggestion was received by e-mail from Mrs K Johnston that the Committee review the implementation of traffic calming measures. She also raised a number of questions regarding: the policy on the enforcement of speed limits? When was the policy adopted and by whom? Has it ever been reviewed? Her suggestion and questions were circulated at the meeting.

The Head of Planning and Transportation responded that the questions were linked to agenda item 6 - Road Safety Partnership and Speed Limit Review Update. A number of the issues would be considered as part of the review of the Local Transport Plan 3. A Written response had been prepared by the Transportation Manager and this was circulated at the meeting and is attached to the minutes.

The Committee noted the written response and agreed that a number of the issues raised should be considered as part of the LTP3 review.

RESOLVED: That the various aspects of traffic calming raised by Mrs K Johnston be considered as part of the LTP3 review and the written response be communicated to Mrs Johnston.

32. SAFER ROADS PARTNERSHIP AND SPEED LIMIT REVIEW UPDATE

The Chairman referred to the following question from Mrs J Wadge, Ross-on-Wye:

Following a traffic count made at 2 crossings to Morrisons - one at Millpond Street and one further along Station Street in Ross-on-Wye, it was reported in the local paper in February 2008 that both crossings had been approved, and funding was being sought. What is the latest position regarding the provision of these pedestrian crossings? Will they be installed by Spring 2010?

Written response from: Lead Engineer (Traffic) | Local Government - Amey

Further to your enquiry re the crossings in Millpond Street and Station Street, Ross on Wye, talks are ongoing with Morrisons who are currently planning to extend their store and as part of the section 106 agreement have agreed to provide the two crossings along with a number of other improvements in the area. Unfortunately I am not aware of the time scale although I understand that it may be in the New Year.

Mrs Wadge thanked the Committee for the response.

The Committee were provided with: an overview of the West Mercia Safer Roads Partnership (SRP) and its role in helping deliver Herefordshire Council's road safety strategy; an update on proposals for a workshop on the review of the road safety strategy and an update on the progress of the review of Speed limits, and responses to specific questions raised on this subject at the meeting held 23 March 2009.

The agenda report set out the partnership members and outlined the work of the partnership, including its role in helping the Council deliver the Council's road safety strategy. To take into account the emerging national strategy, the report also identified a need to review the road safety strategy and proposed a workshop for all Council Members to contribute to the review process.

At the meeting a supplementary paper was issued based on answering a number of questions raised at the March 2009 meeting concerning: the review of speed limits in accordance with Department for Transport Circular 1/2006; issues around setting a whole estate urban speed limit and new traffic calming initiatives in Hampshire.

Mr R Reynolds, Chief Operating Officer for the West Midlands Safer Roads Partnership provided the Committee with an update on the work of the SRP in Herefordshire and progress on implementing recommendations arising from an Audit Commission review of the SRP.

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

- Two community concern sites had so far been identified for Herefordshire as part of the new community concern pilot scheme. An outline of the criteria used for identifying these sites was given.
- There is a need to create a greater culture of speed compliance and one aspect of the work of the SRP was to co-ordinate education work with other services and ensure a joined up approach between Councils and partners through the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

- To ensure a coordinated approach the SRP had established the Operations Forum which included representatives from all of the key partners.
- An overview of the financing of the SRP was given and the Committee noted that a potential budget deficit was being addressed.
- A range of approaches were being taken to address youth drink drivers, particularly during late night / early morning hours.
- The 'Take Control' training for motorcyclists is a successful, innovative, flagship scheme match funded by the Department of Transport. However, it received limited take-up by young drivers in Herefordshire.
- The Committee noted that where areas had street lighting there was no requirement to erect speed limit repeater signs. The Committee considered that the advisability of this should be taken up with the government.
- The Director of Environment and Culture reported that, apart from the often tragic effect to human life, accidents were costly to emergency services, health services and local authority. 117 sites had been identified in the County where improved signing/markings or intervention works could be undertaken to improve road safety. He reported that he was working up a bid to the Herefordshire Partnership for funding through the LPSA to undertake some of these works on the basis that savings could be made in the long term.
- While the SRP worked with, and helped co-ordinate the work of, other agencies it was emphasised that each agency had specific operational areas of responsibility.
- Data from a wide number of sources, including the police 'mosaic' system was used by the SRP to build a picture, by post code, of speed offences and accidents in the area to enable more focused enforcement or education work in an area.
- The 2008 road accident survey had been used to inform the roll out of a programme of low cost accident prevention schemes at high risk areas.
- The Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) reported that a close working relationship existed with the SRP to promote driver education. He also commented that attending the Road Peace Remembrance service at the Cathedral had been a poignant reminder of the number of accidents on the roads.
- Questioned on the Audit Commission inspection and resultant action plan Mr Reynolds informed the Committee that an action plan had been put in place to address the identified issues and the plan was reviewed every quarter.
- While there was a general downward trend in the number of deaths or serious accidents in the County it was reported that indications from the government review of the Road Safety Strategy, covering the next ten years, was that the targets would get tighter. The Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) warned that unfortunately due to the number of deaths so far, this year's target was unlikely to be exceeded.
- In relation to the speed limit review the Assistant Director of Environment and Culture reported that a lot of work had been undertaken in recent years and the review would build on that work. In essence it was about getting the right speed limits in the right areas and ensuring the public understood the reasons for the limits. Following the transfer of highways to Amey Herefordshire under the MAC agreement, Amey would be undertaking the review. Mr M Thomas, Service Director, Amey Herefordshire, reported that the review was being scoped and that the review would be delivered by December 2011. Members expressed concern at the length of time to undertake the review. The Assistant Director assured the Committee that speed limit work would be ongoing while the review was underway.
- The Chairman acknowledged the attendance of two representatives from Pixley Parish Council and requested that the Assistant Director Environment and

Culture re-examine the speed and safety issues first brought to Committee 24 November 2008 in relation to the current safer roads programme.

The Chairman thanked Mr R Reynolds and Mr T Pooler, Safer Roads Partnership, for attending and answering the Committee questions. He invited the Partnership to attend the March 2010 meeting to give a further update.

RESOLVED: that

- A) the report be noted and the Committee supports the Director of Environment & Culture's bid to Herefordshire Partnership for LPSA capital funding to undertake additional highway engineering works;**
- B) the Director of Environment & Culture consider taking up with Government the issue of speed limit repeater roundels;**
- C) The Road Safety Partnership be invited to the March 2010 meeting to further update the Committee on their work;**
- D) The Assistant Director Environment & Culture is requested to further examine the speed and safety issues previously raised by Pixley Parish Council**

33. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE STANDARDS

The Committee received a report on the current highway maintenance standards and the plans that are in place to improve the long term condition of the highway network and better satisfy the needs and desires of Herefordshire's communities in regard to roads maintenance.

The Highway Network Manager reported on the current condition and targets; the approach to improving highway conditions; the operational standards for repairs and the impact of the Statutory Undertakers' Works on the condition of the County highways.

He highlighted that national statistics indicated that rural roads were resurfaced on average every 109 years. Herefordshire had about £40m worth of known maintenance against a £8m budget. While the County had half the national average of 'statutory undertaker works' this still incurred associated follow on inspections and works. Planned maintenance works were programmed against a set of criteria.

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

- Agriculture is a major contributor to the economy of the County, however, the size and weight of agricultural vehicles had dramatically increased over recent years with resultant increased damage to roads and drainage ditches. The Highway Network Manager reported that in the majority of cases the farmer was responsible for the maintenance of the drainage ditch with the Council having powers to do so.
- Continuing the agriculture theme it was suggested that, while not in the ownership of the Council, if unofficial passing places or lay-bys were maintained this may reduce the damage to road edges and ditches. Major land owners or large rural businesses could be approached about donating these small areas to the Council for this purpose. The Head of Planning and Transportation thought this could be looked at as part of the LTP3 review.
- While road standards were important to the County the condition of footpaths were also of concern to people.
- A number of instances were mentioned where large vehicles using Satellite Navigation Systems had used inappropriate roads. The Committee were

informed that Ordinance Survey were working with Sat Nav manufacturers to improve their systems, however, this relied on users updating their systems and using the roads sensibly.

- In view of last weeks major road disruption in Hereford due to the Highways Agency works on A49 Ross Road/Holme Lacy road junction, with the intelligent traffic management system being set to the default, the Committee questioned the level of liaison between agencies. The Committee were informed that the Highways Agency had informed the Council that resurfacing works were to be undertaken but had not been informed of the consequences or the likely effects. The Committee was also advised that less disruption may have occurred if the works had been undertaken in a different way. The Highway Network Manager reported that while the Council had a duty to manage the network the Highways Agency similarly had a duty to liaise fully with the Council and inform the public of major works. The Assistant Director Environment and Culture agreed that liaison could be better, particularly where major traffic routes were effected, and officers would raise this issue with the Highways Agency at their meeting on 24 November. The Cabinet Member (Highways and Transport) commented that where possible the Council notified the public of any major disruption via the local press and radio. In this instance he thought the Highways Agency could have made better use of their own public relations unit and ensured that the public and this authority had been fully informed of their intentions.
- Responding to questions on the volume of known highway maintenance and the available budget the Committee were informed that £40m had been an estimate of the total works to bring the network up to a near perfect state, which is not a realistic position. The Council had to ensure that the network was fit for purpose in line with its character and usage. The sites requiring maintenance were assessed against the criteria in the Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP) and programmed accordingly. The backlog of works had occurred due to the historical levels of budget and increases in both vehicle weight and vehicle numbers. The Director of Environment and Culture emphasised that Council, when setting the budget, decided the budget priority to highway maintenance.
- While the overall standards of reinstatement by the statutory undertakers was good, to enhance the Councils management of statutory undertakers' works Amey Herefordshire, under the service delivery partnership MAC arrangements, will be increasing the monitoring of the utilities to ensure an improvement in the standards of reinstatement works.
- Responding to comment on the need to ensure that maintenance was carried out where the need was greatest, Mr Thomas, Amey Herefordshire, reported that Amey now had 'end to end' responsibility for highway maintenance. It was therefore in Amey's interest to ensure that a strategic approach was taken to highway maintenance by ensuring that it was properly assessed and programmed and that sub-contracts were let in a way that ensured value for money. The Director of Environment and Culture reported that if Amey achieved targets under the MAC agreement then they may be awarded a contract extension.

The Chairman thanked the Amey Herefordshire representatives for attending and answering the Committees questions and suggested that an update on Highway maintenance standards be considered for a future agenda.

RESOLVED: that

- a) the report be noted and the possibility of increasing, the number of and surface condition of, unofficial lay-bys on rural lanes be considered as part of the LTP3 review.**
- b) the Committee urges the highways department of the Council to ensure that scheduled maintenance works causing disruption to the network,**

including those by the Highways Agency, should be communicated to the local community well in advance of works commencing to ensure people are able to avoid the disruption. Any interference with the intelligent traffic system within Hereford should not occur unless full communication has already been undertaken;

- c) The Committee urges officers to take this up with the Highways Agency as a matter of urgency;**
- d) The Chairman and Vice-Chairman consider whether a further update report on highway maintenance standards be made to a meeting in April 2010.**

34. COUNCIL VEHICLE FLEET

The Committee were informed of the make up of the Council's vehicle fleet and opportunities being considered to improve the management and environmental performance of the fleet.

The Assistant Director of Environment and Culture clarified that the Council's vehicle fleet at July 2009 had been 248 and not 284 as shown in the key points summary. This had been the best available data at the time. While the table on page 22 of the agenda - 'total mileage and CO2 for vehicles' indicated that school travel and refuse disposal generated the highest levels of CO2 this was due to the stop start nature of their use. As part of the changes to waste collection, 34 new, more environmentally friendly, collection vehicles were now being operated by Focsa. The Council was working, through the school travel contracts, to improve buss fleet efficiencies.

Mr K Lloyd, Amey Herefordshire, informed the Committee about the number and types of vehicles in the Amey fleet and how the vehicles were managed. He highlighted that: the vehicles cover nearly 2m miles per year; were on average only 2 years old therefore ensuring that they were technologically efficient; vehicle tracking systems had been installed in all vehicles thereby enabling data to be collected to optimise work planning and assess driver behaviour, and speed limiters had been fitted to lorries. He also highlighted that driver awareness training was given to ensure correct driving behaviour and a new small fleet of electric Smart cars was being procured for use by staff on local journeys – one of which would be on loan for the Council to trial.

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

- A number of vehicles, principally highway maintenance vehicles, had since transferred to Amey under the service delivery partnership MAC arrangements.
- While the Council had set Amey a CO2 reduction target under the MAC arrangement of 1.25% per annum, Amey had set itself a higher reduction target of 10% a year.
- The Director of Environment and Culture reported that he was due to present a report to Joint Management Team on fleet management which would include CO2 issues.
- In view of questions raised at previous meetings concerning the Council's fleet, a number of members expressed their deep concern that a more rigorous vehicle management system wasn't in place and suggested that a central database of Council vehicles should be established as soon as possible to ensure that all relevant information on this valuable resource (e.g. type, age, annual mileage, mpg, emissions rating) was properly recorded, made available and managed.
- Based on the information in the report and appendix the Committee thought the Key Issues highlighted by the Energy Savings Trust Green Fleet Review contained many good points and, subject to clarification of a number of points and the possible setting of more stringent targets, supported the options for improvement as a basis for moving forward.

- A point was made that 3 or 4 year old vehicles should not be scrapped just because they are deemed old as they had a carbon footprint from when they were manufactured. The need to replace a vehicle because of its CO2 emissions needed to be balanced with its cost effectiveness and reliability to do the job.

RESOLVED: That

- a) The report be noted and the Committee strongly recommend that a central database of Council vehicles be established as soon as possible to ensure that information about this valuable resource is properly recorded and managed;**
- b) the Committee gave its qualified support to the Key issues highlighted by the EST Green Fleet Review report October 2009 (appended to the agenda report) as the basis for improving the Council's vehicle fleet; and**
- c) The Chairman and Vice-Chairman consider whether a further full report be made possibly to an extra meeting of the committee in January 2010.**

35. EXECUTIVE RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN FOLLOWING THE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ON-STREET PARKING

The Committee considered Cabinet's response to the recommendations made to it in the Scrutiny Review of On-Street Parking.

The Committee's On-Street Parking Review Group undertook a review of on-street parking and completed a report into its findings. The report, which made a number of detailed recommendations on policy and operational matters relating to car parking, was considered by Cabinet on 29 October 2009. Cabinet's response, together with an action plan, was included in the agenda for consideration.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Review, Cllr MAF Hubbard, thanked Cabinet for their measured response to the findings, many of which would be actioned or incorporated into the Local Transport Plan 3 review. However, three recommendations had not been accepted and he reiterated a number of points from the review concerning Rec. 4a – Visitor Permit Scheme; Rec. 4c – parking by tradesmen while working at a property, and Rec. 4k – Use of Commercial Loading bays.

The Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) commented that while the current system was not perfect Rec. 4a had not been accepted as the current system did provide residents with a degree of parking flexibility. He also highlighted that a reasonable proportion of properties within parking scheme areas did have driveways. As with Rec. 4c petitions from local residents indicated there may not be wide support for the recommendation. Rec.4c he acknowledged that parking by tradesman was controlled on an adhoc basis and this would be tightened by establishing formal procedures. Referring to Rec. 4k he acknowledged the difficulty for small businesses and reported that a pilot scheme was being trialled in Ross.

It was commented that the review had focused on the City and a Member questioned whether the review group should be reformed to look at the wider issues of on-street parking in the County as originally intended. The Head of Planning and Transportation reported that many of the issues covered in the review were common to the county and therefore would be considered when the LTP3 was reviewed.

RESOLVED: That

- a) Cabinet's response to the findings of the Scrutiny Review of On-Street Parking were noted; and**

- b) A further report on progress against the actions be made after nine months with consideration then being given to the need for any further report being made.**

36. CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING

The Committee were advised of progress of the 2009/10 Environment Capital Programme within the overall context of the Council's Capital Programme.

The Director of Resources representative presented the report and highlighted that the total of the Capital programme had reduced to £16,717,000 from the figure of £16,755,000 previously reported to Committee. This net reduction of £38,000 and the main variances were described in the report. Appendix 1 to the report set out in summary the capital budgets for 2009/10 with funding arrangements in overall terms.

Responding to questions concerning the delays to the Park and Ride scheme the Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) reported that having assessed various potential sites the Racecourse had emerged as the favoured site. Acknowledging that any scheme would not be self financing, a business case was being formulated to ensure that all costs were anticipated.

RESOLVED: That

- a) the report be noted and while appreciating the need to ensure value for money the Committee expressed its concern regarding the delay in implementing the Park and Ride scheme and;**
- b) a report on progress of the Park and Ride scheme be presented to the March 2010 meeting.**

37. REVENUE BUDGET REPORT

The Committee were advised of the financial position for the Environment revenue budgets for the period to 30 September 2009. The agenda report listed the variations against budget at this stage in the year and the projected outturn for the year.

The Director of Resources representative reported that the total environment revenue budget for 2009/10 had reduced to £25,904k from the amount reported to the previous meeting, which had been £26,204k. This was a net decrease of £300k and related to the Management Agent Contract (£243k) the Waste Reserve (£500k) and one-off transfers (£43k). Further detail on the budgets was contained in the agenda report and its appendix.

The Committee noted that the anticipated underspend in the environment budget would be used to offset the Council's anticipated overspend.

Questioned on the budget position for planning the Head of Planning and Transportation reported that, as set out in the report, the number of planning applications between April to September had increased by 16% over the same period in 2008. Despite this an overspend of £300k was forecast. While the new Civica system had been introduced the need for IDOX document scanning continued and this was forecast to be a budget pressure of £70k. He still hoped to resolve the document scanning issue by mid 2010 if not earlier.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

**38. ENVIRONMENT & CULTURE AND REGENERATION DIRECTORATES:
PERFORMANCE FOR THE SIX MONTH PERIOD TO SEPTEMBER 2009**

The Committee received an update on the progress towards the achievement of targets for 2009-10 relevant to the Environment Scrutiny Committee and contained within the Environment & Culture and Regeneration Directorates' Plans.

The Improvement Manager presented the report and commented that this was the first report to Committee using the integrated corporate performance report format, an explanation of the rating was contained in Appendix A. Appendix B gave details of the indicators. A summary of the Customer Contact Satisfaction Survey June 2008 to March 2009 was contained at Appendix C.

Questioned on the 'Respondents satisfaction cross referenced with whether they had the outcome they wanted' on agenda page 91, it was thought that, overall, customers had been satisfied with how they had been dealt with on initial contact, however, their satisfaction levels had probably fallen on being informed of the outcome of their enquiry e.g. that their planning application had been refused.

Questioned further on Appendix C and whether comparisons could be made against other local authorities, the Improvement Manager reported that not all authorities undertook the surveys and those that did undertook them at different times with variations in the questions asked.

Concern was expressed by a member regarding the current delays in telephone answering times for the Streetscene service.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted

39. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme.

Arising out of the external healthcheck of the scrutiny function Strategic Monitoring Committee requested that this Committee give priority to the scrutiny of transport issues which had been identified from the Herefordshire Quality of Life Survey 2008. It had also requested that all the scrutiny Committees re-examine their work programmes to ensure that matters listed for future consideration remain appropriate.

The Committee noted that two of the four issues identified (road safety and road and pavement repairs) had been addressed on this agenda. The Chairman suggested that he and the Vice-Chairman meet with the Head of Planning and Transportation and the Transportation Manager to consider: what work had already been done on Public Transport and Traffic Congestion, the most appropriate method of scrutinising the issues of concern and where they should be placed in the work programme.

RESOLVED: That

a) subject to the inclusion of items identified earlier in the meeting namely:

- 1. Road Safety Partnership – Update**
- 2. Highway Maintenance Standards - Update**
- 3. Council Vehicle Fleet - Update**
- 4. Update on Action Plan following the Scrutiny Review of On-Street Parking**

5. Progress with the Park and Ride Scheme;

the work programme be approved;

- b) The Chairman and Vice Chairman discuss with the Head of Planning and Transportation how the issues of public transport and traffic congestion, identified by Strategic Monitoring Committee can best be addressed; and**
- c) The Committee work programme be reported to Strategic Monitoring Committee.**

The meeting ended at 1.55 pm

CHAIRMAN

Agenda Item 5 - Response to questions submitted by Mrs K Johnston

Has there been a scrutiny review of the implementation of traffic calming measures?

There has not been a scrutiny review of the implementation of traffic calming measures.

A review of the Council's traffic calming policy/procedures seem a suitable task and finish project for scrutiny. I comment that traffic calming is a quality of life issue as well as a road safety issue.

A review of the Council's traffic calming policy/procedures will be undertaken in the review of the Local Transport Plan and in particular the Road Safety Strategy which forms part of the LTP. A workshop is being organised for members (aiming for March 2010) to help with that review. It will consider a wider range of road safety measures than just traffic calming. I agree that many road safety measures also provide quality of life benefits as well as road safety improvements.

On speed limits my questions are: What is the policy on the enforcement of speed limits? When was the policy adopted and by whom? Has it ever been reviewed?

Speed limits are enforced by West Mercia Constabulary and the West Mercia Safer Roads Partnership. The Safer Roads Partnership will be attending the meeting today to explain its policies and recent review. It might be useful for the Environment Scrutiny Committee to invite a representative of the West Mercia Constabulary to present its policies on the speed enforcement in the County to a future meeting.

I think it should be the subject of a review as clearly there is widespread concern about the speed of traffic in local villages and the lack of effective control of this. Scrutiny could usefully examine the range of measures which can be used (Leicestershire uses a wide range, for example) and make recommendations as to the approach in Herefordshire. Indeed, I am not clear that there is a formally adopted policy or procedure and this is something I would appreciate clarification about. Is the approach to traffic calming an ad hoc one?

There is a procedure for considering the need to revise speed limits and also for considering the introduction of traffic calming. Both of these procedures will be reviewed as part of the Road Safety Strategy review. In recent years the number of traffic calming schemes being implemented has reduced as those under consideration have not met the criteria set out in the procedure. Both of these processes are managed and resultant schemes implemented by Amey. The Traffic Calming assessment is carried out every 3 years and the most recent assessment (2008/9) has only identified one scheme – Westfaling Street junction with Ryeland Street in Hereford.

Steve Burgess

19 November 2009

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