

MINUTES of the meeting of Environment Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Friday 26 March 2010 at 9.30 am

Present: Councillor RI Matthews (Chairman)

Councillors: CM Bartrum, PJ Edwards, DW Greenow, KS Guthrie, JW Hope MBE, TW Hunt, PM Morgan, A Seldon, NL Vaughan and JD Woodward

In attendance: Councillors: MD Lloyd-Hayes, SJ Robertson and DB Wilcox (Cabinet Member-Highways and Transportation)

56. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors: WLS Bowen; MAF Hubbard and JP Watts. The Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing) also submitted his apologies.

57. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor PJ Edwards substituted for Councillor WLS Bowen; Councillor KS Guthrie substituted for Councillor PJ Watts and Councillor JD Woodward substituted for Councillor MAF Hubbard.

58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

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

No suggested areas for scrutiny were received from members of the public.

60. COUNCIL VEHICLE FLEET

The Committee considered the current position regarding the Council's vehicle fleet and considered an outline programme of work aimed at improving the management of the vehicle fleet.

The Assistant Director Environment and Culture presented the report and highlighted that a total of 204 vehicles had been identified as forming the Council's vehicle fleet; a Green Fleet Review had concluded that there were opportunities to achieve both financial and carbon savings; that currently the fleet administration was done within individual directorates and that the Director of Resources, supported by the Assistant Director of Environment and Culture, would lead a programme of work aimed at identifying the best way to improve the fleet asset management and its subsequent implementation. Five possible options to develop the strategy were put to the Committee for consideration together with a set of criteria against which the options could be assessed.

The Director of Resources reported that initial analysis of the options against the criteria would be undertaken by a task and finish project board involving the directorates concerned. It would also explore the opportunities for joint management of vehicles across public

services/partners to ensure that a cost and CO2 effective management strategy was developed. While audited on an individual directorate basis Internal Audit had been instructed to log the audit of vehicles as part of the Corporate Audit Plan.

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

- It was noted that in the chart at paragraph 4 the CO2 emissions for a range of vehicles was unknown.
- Responding to a comment that vehicle costs were out of control the Director of Resources responded that costs were controlled by individual directorates in accordance with their budgets, however, a vehicle strategy would bring improved fleet management including fleet performance management and offered the potential for efficiency savings and environmental benefits.
- Noting that a detailed audit of all vehicles would be undertaken, criticism was expressed that as lead body for the Local Area Agreement target, the Council was unaware of the exact details of its own vehicle fleet.
- Reference was made to the key issues highlighted by the EST Green Fleet Review and it was suggested that more ambitious, but attainable, targets should be sought. It was also noted that significant savings in both cost and CO2 could be made.
- The Committee briefly debated the difference between vehicle management and vehicle administration and the need for appropriate resources e.g. IT systems, to support a new strategy. It was also suggested that consideration be given to appointing an interim officer to lead on the transformation.
- The Committee supported the set of criteria to assess the options.
- While the Council had a number of 'fuel cards' it was noted that vehicle fuel was usually purchased on an individual vehicle basis. It was suggested that economies could be made in this area.

The Committee requested that as a matter of urgency the Director of Resources proceed with formulating a vehicle fleet strategy based on the criteria indicated and consider appointing, on an interim basis, an officer experienced in vehicle fleet management to lead on developing and implementing the strategy. The Committee also requested that a full report on progress in developing the strategy, including full details of the vehicles e.g. costs; number, emissions, servicing etc, be made to the June 2010 meeting.

RESOLVED: That

- 1. the Committee supports the suggested criteria (set out in paragraph 12 of the report) to assess the chosen approach to developing the Vehicle Fleet Strategy;**
- 2. a detailed report be made to the June 2010 meeting on how the management of the Council's vehicle fleet is to be addressed with full details of the vehicles involved including any involving the Council's shared partners considered for inclusion in the strategy.**
- 3. it is suggested that the Director of Resources consider appointing on an interim basis an officer experienced in vehicle fleet management to lead on developing and implementing the Strategy.**

At this point the Committee adjourned for 8 minutes and resumed at 10.45am

61. PROGRESS REPORT ON COMMUNITY PROTECTION TEAM

The Committee received an update on the work of the Community Protection Team since its last report in September 2009.

The Acting Regulatory Services Manager presented the report and highlighted the Teams enforcement work in relation to: Fly-tipping; abandoned vehicles; littering; graffiti

and dog related issues (stray dogs and dog fouling) and outlined a number of future plans for the Team's work. He also highlighted that the Team had secured four successful prosecutions.

The Chairman congratulated the Community Protection Team on the improvements to enforcement work, however, it was acknowledged that there was still room for improvement.

During debate the following principal points were noted:

- Following recent increased activity, the Team were more optimistic about achieving the National Indicator 196 target for reducing incidences of fly-tipping.
- While AMEY were responsible for clearing litter, the Team were taking a targeted approach to enforcement and public education. A Member expressed concern that the abandonment of the Parish Freighter service would increase litter and fly-tipping. It was suggested that town and parish councils should be approached to assist in providing litter bins.
- Following the contracting out of the stray dog service and some changes in work practices, more time will be devoted to dog enforcement and owner education. A Member highlighted the damage stray dogs could do, particularly at lambing time.
- The Committee noted the successful prosecutions and that there were another 15, mainly concerning fly-tipping, currently going through the legal system. While the Team worked with the Public Relations Team in publicising the successes the Committee requested that greater effort be made to bring the prosecutions to the public notice as a deterrent to others. Questioning the level of fines imposed the Committee noted that magistrates were constrained by ensuring that offenders had the means to pay the fine, having a criminal record was also part of the deterrent.
- The Committee noted and supported the intention to explore the closer working of the Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) with the Community Protection Team and were informed that the Chief Constable, West Mercia Police, had previously strongly intimated that Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) may be authorised to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for low level offences such as littering and dog fouling..
- It was noted that in partnership with AMEY and Safer Herefordshire the Council had submitted a bid to become one of 16 pilot programmes to tackle discarded chewing gum.
- Responding to questions about cars for sale parked on green verges, the Committee were informed that enforcement could be taken under graffiti legislation as the tyres would leave lasting marks on the grass.
- It was suggested that all Members be provided with brief details of the remit of the Team and their powers.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and:

- 1. the Committee suggested that greater emphasis be given to publicising the successful prosecutions as a deterrent to others;**
- 2. further consideration be given by the Director to amending the job title/ job description to reflect the closer working between Civil Enforcement Officers and the Community Protection Team;**
- 3. the Assistant Director of Environment and Culture be urged to remind the West Mercia Police of their previous commitment to authorise Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for low level offences and**
- 4. the Committee recommend that closer liaison be entered into with Town and Parish Councils in investigating whether they can further support the placement of litter bins thereby supporting the work being undertaken;**

5. the Committee supported the enforcement of criminal damage to green verges.

62. CONNECT 2 GREENWAY ROUTE OPTIONS

The Committee were provided with an update regarding the Connect 2 Greenway preferred route which had been the subject of a Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) key decision.

The Assistant Director Environment and Culture and the Acting Construction Manager reported that the Connect 2 cycle scheme sought to link Hereford City, via Rotherwas to Holme Lacy. The scheme had been in development for a number of years and following issues identified during the design stage a report had been considered by the Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) to determine the way forward to deliver the scheme. The agenda report and appended key decision report to the Cabinet Member, set out the current approved route; the issues identified; the four further options considered; the financial implications for a new preferred route, and indicated the associated risks. It was reported that whilst additional funding of £845,000 was required to pursue the Preferred Route, in continuing with the current agreed route, £461,850 additional funding would be required for a less attractive route with less guarantee over its long term accessibility. There was a difference in cost of £382,000 between delivery of the Current Route and the Preferred Route.

The Chairman commented that the Cabinet Member key decision had not been called-in in the interests of progressing the scheme. He had, however, requested an agenda item to clarify the increased costs and the time taken in progressing the scheme.

The Assistant Director of Environment and Culture reported that a scheme (the agreed route) had been submitted, had won a public vote and had been granted Big Lottery Funding. Since then more detailed work on the route had been undertaken including discussion with Welsh Water and Network Rail over the use of their bridge and railway underpass respectively. Since initial discussions additional costs had been identified and serious risks had been identified concerning the guaranteed use of the railway underpass. Following instruction from the Cabinet Member alternative options were considered for the delivery of the Connect 2 scheme. A new Preferred Route had been considered in detail and had been accepted by the Cabinet Member in his recent decision (Ref No.2101.H&T.002KEY). The financial implications of the scheme including an indication of how the scheme was to be grant funded was contained in the report to the Cabinet Member and a route appraisal table was contained at appendix B.

Questioned why the risks had not been identified at an earlier stage the Committee were informed that outline discussions with the key parties involved had been favourable, however, as the scheme had progressed to the formal design stage the heightened risks had emerged and these were indicated in the 'Risk Management' table in the appendix to the report.

A point was made that before the Council embarked on major projects the Director of Resources should ensure that proper levels of resources, both financial and officer time, were available from the outset to ensure that projects progressed efficiently and therefore didn't cost more due to slippages.

The Committee appreciated that the scheme would provide a valuable link between north and south of the city and provided a convenient route to access employment sites at Rotherwas. The point was made that the new preferred route would now provide a safer route for walkers and easier access for wheelchair users and supported the Herefordshire Community Strategy theme of Healthier Communities.

The Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) reported that the delay to the scheme had, in part, been due to a 12 month delay in receiving funding confirmation from Sustrans. In addition part of the slippage to the scheme had also been down to him as, when the increased risks and costs had come to light, he had requested officers to explore other options. He considered that had been a prudent use of resources in view of the expenditure involved, the long term risks and the need to ensure value for money.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- 1. welcomed in principal the proposals for the new Preferred Route;**
- 2. expressed its concern over the delays to the project and, arising from the necessity to consider an alternative route, that the cost of the project had increased;**
- 3. recommend that the Director of Resources ensures that proper resources are available from the outset when major projects are considered.**

The meeting ended at 12.21 pm

CHAIRMAN

