

MINUTES of the meeting of Environment Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday 19 April 2010 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 and A Seldon

In attendance: Councillors: PJ Edwards and TM James

63. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor DW Greenow. Apologies were also received from Councillor JG Jarvis (Cabinet Member – Environment & Strategic Housing) and Councillor DB Wilcox (Cabinet Member – Highways and Transportation).

64. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor G Lucas substituted for Councillor DW Greenow.

65. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

66. MINUTES

The following typographical errors were noted:
Minute 47, fourth bullet point, substitute electric for eclectic;
Minute 48 third paragraph substitute severe for sever;
Minute 56, in first line substitute PJ Watts for JP Watts.

RESOLVED: That subject to the above typographical amendments the minutes for the meetings held 22 March and 26 March 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

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

68. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE STANDARDS - UPDATE

The Committee received an update on current highway maintenance standards and the plans 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 presented the agenda report and highlighted that: an additional £4.7 Million would be invested in the highway network during the 2010/11 financial year which would enable a programme totalling £11.7million of highway maintenance to be delivered. This would counter the impact of this last winter on the condition of A, B and C

roads, with the targeted performance remaining at the levels set in September 2009. As priority for investment will be given to the classified road network, the action in relation to the condition of the unclassified road network will seek to ensure that it is returned to 2009 levels. A revised means of assessing footway condition is being introduced. This will take account of the condition of footways across the county. The previous Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) only took account of high usage footways, such as in the City and town centres. Further detail on road and footway condition was set out in the agenda report.

On considering the report the following principal points were noted:

- That where possible Amey Herefordshire were using local sub-contractors.
- In general terms the level of investment in trunk roads was one and a half times that of other roads.
- The Council were working with Amey Herefordshire to establish an inventory of maintenance/investment need and this would be assessed against the maintenance criteria set out in the Council's Asset Management Plan to ensure that works were undertaken against a reasoned maintenance programme.
- It was confirmed that £11.7m was the total maintenance budget for 2010/11 which included surfacing, lines, signs etc. The County had experienced a 30% increase in damage to its highway network due to the winter weather.
- Clarifying whether this years additional investment would raise the overall highway condition, the Committee noted that while priority was being given to the classified road network, the action in relation to the unclassified road network would seek to ensure that performance did not fall below the 2009 level of 23% of the unclassified roads being identified as requiring maintenance. It was noted that it is unlikely that even if the targeted performance was achieved, this would be recognised by road users as significant progress in addressing the overall condition of our roads. Noting that it was for Council to set the budget priorities, the Committee urged the Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) to make every effort to address the highway maintenance backlog situation (estimated at £40m) in next years budget.
- Comparing the probable number of vehicles to the likely road tax paid in the County it was questioned whether Herefordshire was receiving a reasonable share of grant towards highway maintenance.
- Members requested an update (briefing note) on progress with the highways maintenance programme.
- Various Life Cycle Plans, which contributed to the Asset Management Plan, covering the various elements of highway assets were due to be completed by June 2010.
- The Committee noted the number of footways surveyed when undertaking footway condition surveys and changes to the method of surveying.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and appreciating the pressures on the Highways Service the Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) be urged to make every effort to address the highway maintenance backlog situation in next year's budget.

69. STREET SCENE - CLEANLINESS AND FOOTWAY CONDITION

The Committee considered a report on the current street cleansing standards and the plans in place to improve the cleanliness of the county and continue to better satisfy the needs and desires of Herefordshire communities in regard to street cleanliness.

The Watchman in Chief, Amey Herefordshire, presented the agenda report and highlighted a number of initiatives being introduced including: Community Litter Picks; partnership working with Network Rail to improve the area around Barrs Court Road; A and B class road litter picking, and educational work to engender a sense of pride in the community.

During consideration of the report the following principal points were noted:

- Clarifying the targets set out at paragraph 5 it was stated that in the case of litter then at least 95% of the area surveyed need to be clean.
- Questioned regarding Health and Safety issues of clearing graffiti over 8 foot from the ground, the Committee were informed that Amey Herefordshire were implementing a 'see it- clear it' policy with its staff and further efforts would be made to instil this policy.
- It was requested that the member briefing note requested at the 26 March meeting concerning the remit and powers of the Community Protection Team be forwarded electronically to all Parish Councils for information and that information on the cost to the County of street cleanliness also be included.
- Responding to whether offenders doing Community Service undertook street cleaning work the Committee were informed that offenders were involved, however, they could only be engaged in specific projects.
- While noting there was a level of partnership working between the Council's Community Protection Team, Safer Herefordshire and West Mercia Police to reduce criminal damage and anti-social behaviour, the Committee suggested that in view of the Total Place Initiative the Council and its partners be urged to work even closer together to tackle environmental crime (litter, detritus, graffiti and fly tipping).
- Litter bins needed to be provided, with an adequate emptying programme, at key locations.
- A number of ways of informing the public concerning littering and warning about successful prosecutions was discussed. The Committee recommended that the Service seek to have a regular article in Herefordshire Matters highlighting the cost of environmental crime in the County.
- Questioned whether an analysis had been undertaken of where litter in High Town had come from with the originator then approached, the Committee were informed that this would need to be undertaken through official channels.
- When invited, schools were visited to talk about litter and the environment, however, it was acknowledged that parents also needed to be educated not to litter.

RESLOVED: that the report be noted and

- 1. the member briefing note requested at the 26 March 2010 meeting concerning the remit and powers of the Community Protection Team be forwarded electronically to all Parish Councils for information;**
- 2. in view of the Total Place initiative Council departments and partner organisations be urged to work even closer together to tackle environmental crime (litter, detritus, graffiti & fly posting)**
- 3. parish councils be informed of the financial cost to the Herefordshire tax payer of environmental crime.**
- 4. it is recommended that the Highway Service requests Public Relations to have a regular article in Herefordshire Matters**

highlighting the cost and implications of environmental crime in the County.

70. REDUCING ENERGY CONSUMPTION - STREET LIGHTING - FURTHER UPDATE

The Committee received an update on progress made by the highway service in reducing the energy consumed and carbon dioxide generated through street lighting.

The Highway Network Manager presented the agenda report and highlighted that: street lighting energy was provided from a green source at a rate of approximately 9.5p a unit from April 2010 (Green tariff premium now 0.062p); work continues on the implementation and evaluation of a range of energy reduction options, and over 10 tonnes reduction in Co2 had been achieved to date since the last report (June 09), mainly as a result of trial applications, the scope for further improvement is considerable and will be pursued, informed by the results of trials. Current progress on the energy reduction options was summarised in Appendix 1 to the report.

During consideration of the progress report the Committee noted the following principal points:

- Nationally there were a number of trial schemes to reduce street lighting energy consumption. Regionally, Herefordshire was part of the Midland Service Improvement Group (representing 19 authorities) and were in the forefront of innovative ideas.
- Responding to questions on carbon trading the Committee were informed that the Service was very aware of Carbon Targets. Currently street lighting data was not included for carbon trading but would be when it moved to half hourly data capture.
- As a result of local trials and through monitoring other authorities, particularly Powys and Buckingham, the Service were looking to move to the next stage which would probably be a mixture of schemes depending on the appropriate one for the location.
- There was sufficient flexibility in the existing budget to undertake trial lighting schemes.
- Solar power was being trialled, however, this incurred a higher capital investment and could be prone to vandalism.
- The Chairman reminded the Committee that a full report on the Council's planned carbon reduction actions would be reported to the June 2010 meeting and expected it to contain details of how reductions in street lighting energy would contribute to the Councils overall carbon reduction targets.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted and greater detail on how a reduction in street lighting energy consumption would contribute to the Council's overall Carbon Management reductions be reported as part of the Carbon Management report to June 2010 meeting.

71. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee reviewed its work programme.

The Committee considered that September 2010 was too late in the programme to consider 'planning committee arrangements' and requested that it be brought forward to the July meeting.

Due to the number of items listed for June the Committee requested that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman consider moving some of the items listed to an extra meeting in May/June.

RESOLVED: That

- 1. the Chairman and Vice-Chairman consider moving a number of items listed for 7 June for consideration at an extra meeting during May/June;**
- 2. the item 'Planning Committee Arrangement', so far as they relate to the remit of this committee, be brought forward for consideration at the 13 July 2010 meeting; and;**
- 3. the revised work programme be recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval.**

The meeting ended at 11.37 am

CHAIRMAN

