

MINUTES of the meeting of Environment Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday 28 June 2010 at 5.00 pm

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

Councillors: WU Attfield, DJ Benjamin, TW Hunt, PM Morgan, A Seldon and NL Vaughan

In attendance: Councillors PJ Edwards, JG Jarvis (Cabinet Member - Environment & Strategic Housing) and DB Wilcox (Cabinet Member – Highways and Transportation)

9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors: CM Bartrum, DW Greenow, JW Hope.

10. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no substitutes.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

12. MINUTES

The Democratic Services Officer requested that in Minute No 4. the word 'local' be inserted before the word contractors in the final line. In relation to Minute No 5 he requested that the following wording be substituted: reference to all aspects of unsurfaced county roads, including their inspection, as this matter didn't seem to be adequately covered under the.... In part (a) of the resolution the words 'the inspection of' be removed.

RESOLVED: That subject to incorporating the above amendments the minutes of the meeting held 7 June 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

A suggestion had been received from Mr Brandon Jones, Kings Caple, concerning an alleged non-compliance with the Polytunnel Policy. The Committee were informed that the issue was: known to the planning department; was currently being processed through the Council's complaints procedure and related to a specific incident.

The Committee thanked Mr Brandon Jones for his suggestion but considered it inappropriate to scrutinise this particular matter.

14. CLIMATE CHANGE AND CARBON REDUCTION

The Committee were updated on plans to reduce carbon emissions.

The Assistant Director, Environment, Planning and Waste presented the agenda report and highlighted that the Council had been selected to take part in the Carbon Trust Local Authority Management Programme. The programme was a major initiative and the Council will benefit from the services and expertise of the Carbon Trust. Further details were given in the report. He further highlighted that considerable work had gone into updating the wider Herefordshire carbon reduction delivery plan and associated action plan. The action plan now included actions from several Herefordshire Partnership Policy & Delivery groups and some partners. The Herefordshire Environment Partnership leads on the plan. While good progress had been made in relation to carbon issues, as previously reported to Committee, a step change in thinking, planning, collaboration and implementation was now needed to achieve the considerable reductions in carbon emissions from businesses, transport, housing and land use was required to meet the LAA target.

The Sustainability Manager elaborated on key aspects contained in the report and planned actions contained in Appendix B, Herefordshire Partnership Carbon Reduction Action Plan (NI186), issued at the meeting.

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

- The Committee appreciated the work undertaken by the Herefordshire Environment Partnership and in particular its Chairman Mr. R. Garner.
- It was essential that all directorates engaged in the collection of baseline data to ensure that accurate evidence was gained to show true carbon savings were achieved. While carbon reductions had already been achieved e.g. through changes to waste collection, further reductions could be achieved across the whole of the Council services.
- Members requested further detail about the action plan and it was suggested that an informal all member workshop on the subject be organised for autumn 2010.
- While the Local Area Agreement target rewards grant had been withdrawn by government, the need to continue with carbon reductions for the benefit of the County should continue as in many cases financial savings could also be obtained.
- NI 186 involved a county-wide carbon reduction and Herefordshire would benefit greatly from the specialist advice and expertise of the Carbon Trust.
- It was suggested that greater emphasis needed to be placed on educating the population to the benefits of carbon reduction and how every individual could make a difference.

RESOLVED: That

- 1. The Committee's appreciation be conveyed to the Herefordshire Environment Partnership and in particular its Chairman Mr R. Garner, for the work they had undertaken;**
- 2. all Directorates make every effort to establish accurate baseline data to ensure that true carbon savings were achieved;**
- 3. The Committee supports an all member workshop on the carbon reduction plan and how through the plan financial saving can also be made.**

15. **SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO MEETING THE ENVIRONMENTAL TARGETS**

The Committee considered an overview of progress on Herefordshire Schools Travel Plans and the contribution that reducing travel to school by car makes to reducing carbon emissions.

The Transportation Manager presented the agenda report and highlighted that encouraging more sustainable journeys on the school run was one of the key aims of the Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) and formed an important part of the strategy to reduce traffic congestion and reduce carbon emissions. 97% of Herefordshire schools now had travel plans in place and the School Travel Advisor was targeting those without plans to support their development in 2010/11 to secure 100% coverage in line with government target.

During debate the following principal points were noted:

- Following government cuts the future of grants for school travel plans was uncertain. Funding for support work was obtained from various government grants and was similarly uncertain.
- On seeking further clarification regarding the funding position e.g. a comparison pre and post funding cuts, the Director of Resources reported he anticipated that a report on how the cuts would effect the Councils funding would be made to Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny Committee later in the year when the full position was known.
- The Committee noted that the three Herefordshire Colleges (Technical; Art & Design and 6th Form) were not included in the travel plan scheme, however, they were required to put in place a plan as a condition of a planning application. The Committee requested an update on how the colleges were complying with this condition.
- Herefordshire compared favourably against the national average for schools with travel plans. The 6 schools in the county without plans will be targeted. Of the 6 schools, only one was a state school (Leominster Junior) which was due to be redeveloped. The others were independent schools with a high percentage of boarders.
- While schools promoted car share schemes it was difficult for them to 'broker' individual arrangements. Responding to questions on the private use of mini busses the Committee were informed that a number of parents had considered organising their own mini bus service but that the costs involved, child security and CRB checks had been a deterrent. On seeking clarification of the CRB issue the Committee suggested that legal opinion be sought to clear up any myth or misunderstanding.
- Questioned whether schools reviewed their travel plans, the Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) acknowledged that this needed revisiting, however, areas of good practice were highlighted through the annual awards to schools.
- Noting the number of mini busses used by schools (see agenda item No 8 – Council Vehicle Fleet) the Committee requested that officers ensure that the mini bus fleet was fully utilised.
- In view of the number of vehicles in use during the 'school run' the Committee requested that the Assistant Director, Highways, Transport and Community Services write to all chair's of school governors reminding them of the importance school travel plans have in contributing to carbon reductions in the County.

RESOLVED: That

1. **A member briefing note be produced setting out the position concerning how the three Herefordshire Colleges were complying with the planning conditions in relation to travel plans;**

2. new build school schemes incorporate lessons learned from previous schemes e.g. Riverside, on designing in the best and safest routes to school for pupils thereby encouraging walking and cycling;
3. The actual situation concerning CRB checks be checked with Legal Services to stop the proliferation of incorrect information;
4. Officers investigate whether the school mini bus fleet is fully utilised; and
5. the Assistant Director, Highways Transport and Community Services is requested to write to chair's of school governors to remind them of the importance school travel plans have in contributing to carbon reductions in the County

16. COUNCIL VEHICLE FLEET

The Committee received a report outlining the results of the Council vehicle fleet review.

The Assistant Director, Highways, Transport and Community Services presented the report and highlighted that the review confirmed that the Council's current fleet had a total of 149 vehicles. The previous estimate of 204 vehicles had included a number of vehicles owned by other organisations, mainly schools, but insured via the council. The review had also identified a number of vehicles that had been confirmed as having been disposed of. A number of vehicles had also been added to the list. Interim procedures had been put in place to ensure that the fleet asset register was kept up to date and the Corporate Risk Team informed of all acquisitions and disposals of vehicles.

The Director of Resources confirmed that the appendix to the report formed the corporate list and that an officer within the Council's Resources Directorate had taken ownership of the fleet asset register to ensure that the new procedures were followed.

The Business Change Manager reported that based on a set of criteria, considered by Committee in March 2010, options had been assessed and a preferred approach had been identified. The preferred option was for the strategic partnership with Amey to be used to deliver fleet management if a suitable service delivery agreement (SDA), schedule of rates and outcome targets can be agreed.

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

- Responding to a suggestion that a Fleet Manager be employed, including associated support and software systems, the Director of Resources responded that this was unlikely to be cost effective in view of the relatively low number of vehicles involved and therefore other avenues were being explored first e.g. through Amey.
- It was acknowledged that in the long term the wide range of makes of vehicles could be rationalised and savings made.
- Due to vehicles being operated by individual directorates there was currently no method of determining the mileage undertaken while on Council business. A system of management information would be established. The Committee requested that a further report be presented to the November meeting to include possible financial and CO2 savings.
- The Committee noted that Amey and FOCSA already had vehicle tracking systems operating in their fleets.

RESOLVED: That

1. **The Committee supports the aim to rationalise the vehicle fleet and ensure that vehicles used are the best for the job, energy efficient, low CO2 emissions and present a good example to members of the public.**
2. **A further update report be presented to the November 2010 Committee to include an indication of possible cost and CO2 savings.**

17. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING

The Committee were advised of the financial revenue outturn position for the Environment budgets for 2009/10 and the agreed budget for 2010/11 highlighting the emerging pressures.

The Director of Resources representative presented the report and highlighted that the final outturn position for Environment for 2009/10 was an overspend of £406k. The budget for Environment in 2010/11 was £24,818k and was managed within two directorates; Sustainable Communities (£22,809k) and Public Health (£2,009k). Further detail on the budgets was contained in the agenda report and its appendix.

In response to questions the Committee received further explanation on how the Pay on Foot pilot scheme at Maylord car park would work and possible implications.

Referring to report paragraph 16, the Committee noted that the Waste Disposal final reconciliation for 2009/10 had been completed and had come in under 1%, however, the Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing) warned that while the budget had experienced an underspend over the last few years this situation may not continue.

The Maylord car park rent review had been negotiated by Property Services.

Arising from national government savings the future funding of concessionary travel was unclear.

RESOLVED: That the Revenue Budget monitoring report be noted.

18. CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING

The Committee were advised of the final outturn position for the 2009/10 Environment Capital Programme within the overall context of the Council's Capital programme and the proposed Environment Capital Programme for 2010/11.

The Director of Resources representative presented the report and highlighted that the final outturn for the 2009/10 Environment capital programme was £17.4 million, and this was set out in more detail in the report and appendix 1. The current budget for 2010/11 was £18.5 million and was further described in the report and appendix 2.

The Committee noted that the Ross Flood Alleviation Scheme had been fully funded by the Environment Agency.

RESOLVED: That the Capital Budget monitoring report be noted.

19. ENVIRONMENT PERFORMANCE OUTTURN FOR 2009/10

The Committee received an update on the outturn of key national performance indicator targets for Environment Scrutiny Committee.

The Sustainable Communities Director presented the report and highlighted that the majority of targets across the services had been reached and work continued within the services to implement any actions and improvements to address any targets that are currently failing. Overall there had been improvement in the targets through the delivery of action plans, however, some indicators had still failed to reach the target. Performance was detailed in the report and appendix.

Responding to a question on the planning targets the Assistant Director, Environment, Planning and Waste reported that two of the three sub targets of this indicator were rated as blue as they were on target, with the remaining one not coming in on target and therefore rated as red. The delay in processing planning applications was attributed to initial technical problems with the CIVICA software, implemented in September, however, significant progress had now been made towards clearing this backlog.

RESOLVED: That the performance outturn report for 2009/10 be noted.

20. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME.

The Committee considered its work programme.

RESOLVED: That subject to the inclusion of any issues identified earlier in the meeting the work programme be agreed and recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval.

The meeting ended at 6.52 pm

CHAIRMAN