

Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 19 December 2005

Present:

Members of the Committee: Councillor Ken Browne (Chair)
“ George Atkinson
“ Richard Chattaway
“ Gordon Collett
“ Jose Compton
“ Eithne Goode
“ Katherine King
“ Joan Lea
“ Bryan Levy
“ Phillip Morris-Jones
“ Ray Sweet
John Whitehouse

Other members in attendance: Councillor Martin Heatley (Cabinet portfolio holder for Environment)

Councillor Alan Cockburn (Cabinet portfolio holder for Corporate Services).

Officers:

Victoria Cook, Assistant to the Labour Group, Performance and Development Directorate

Graeme Fitton, Head of Warwickshire Engineering, Environment and Economy Directorate

Andrew Savage, County Highways Network Manager, Environment and Economy Directorate

Ian Marriott, Principal Solicitor, Performance and Development

Janet Purcell, Member Services Manager, Performance and Development Directorate

1. General

(1) Apologies for absence

None

(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

The following members declared personal interests as members of the district/borough councils indicated:

Warwick District Council

Councillors Alan Cockburn, Jose Compton and Eithne Goode.

Rugby Borough Council

Councillor Gordon Collett.

North Warwickshire Borough Council

Councillors Joan Lea, Ray Sweet.

2. Exclusion of the public

Resolved

That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

3. Street light column advertising

The Committee had before them a report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy, that had been considered by Cabinet on 8 December 2005. The report set out a proposal for the award of a seven-year contract for maintenance, installation and advertising on up to 225 street light columns. Cabinet had approved the award of a contract but this decision had been referred to this Committee by the Chair of the Committee in accordance with the Council's call-in procedure.

The Committee was also provided with the draft minute of the meeting of Cabinet (tabled).

The Chair of the Committee explained that he considered that there was insufficient information provided to ascertain whether letting such a contract would be robust and whether the option selected would provide best value. He added that he was unconvinced that as many as 225 columns would be approved through the planning process, that he doubted there would be any substantial net income for the Council and questioned the proposition on safety grounds.

The Committee discussed these issues, in particular the safety aspects, but noted that there was already advertising on bus shelters (as well as on mobile trailers that currently did not require planning

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permission but were being met with opposition) which might cause a distraction but had been found to be acceptable on planning grounds.

The Chair moved the following recommendations, seconded by Councillor Eithne Goode:

“That this matter be referred to the full Council for consideration in light of the following recommendations:

- (1) That in view of the road safety issues arising through driver distraction; the amenity issues surrounding a deteriorating streetscape in Warwickshire; the opposition shown in the past by four out of five of the Area Committees; coupled with the uncertainty surrounding the revenue likely to be generated arising from the uncertainties of the planning process, that no contract be signed for advertising on street lights in Warwickshire;
- (2) That this year’s revenue shortfall be funded from the surpluses on the ‘Other Services’ budget
- (3) That it should be the policy of the Council to reject any further proposals for advertising on street lights in Warwickshire.”

The proposal was put to the vote and was AGREED the voting being 7 for and 5 against.

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Chair of Committee

The Committee rose at 3:00 p.m.

Note: The Extraordinary meeting of Council was subsequently called for Thursday 5 January 2006.