

Minutes of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 9 November 2006.

Present:

Members: Councillor Ken Browne (Chair)
“ Ray Sweet (Vice Chair)
“ John Appleton
“ George Atkinson
“ Gordon Collett
“ Jose Compton
“ Eithne Goode
“ Katherine King
“ Joan Lea
“ Bryan Levy
“ John Whitehouse

Also Present : Councillor Martin Heatley, Portfolio Holder for Environment.

Officers:

Elizabeth Firmstone, Financial Services Manager, Environment and Economy Directorate.
Graeme Fitton, Head of Transport and Highways, Environment and Economy Directorate.
Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator, Performance and Development Directorate.
Malcolm Graham, Senior Safety Engineer, Environment and Economy Directorate.
Robert Phillips, Budget and Technical, Resources Directorate.
Martin Stott, Deputy Director, Head of Waste and Environment, Environment and Economy Directorate.
Estyn Williams, Group Manager, Road Safety Unit, Environment and Economy Directorate.
Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer, Performance and Development Directorate
Philippa Young, Team Leader, Safety Engineer, Environment and Economy Directorate

Also Present: Charlotte Jay and Parish Councillor Pat Fox, representing Lapworth Parish Council, (please see public questions below).

Motion to Council – A45 Dunchurch to County Boundary (Northamptonshire) – Road Safety

The Chair proposed that this item, referred from County Council on 31st October 2006, should be taken together with item 6 below, Criteria for Casualty Reduction Schemes.

The Committee agreed this proposal.

1. General

(1) Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mick Jones.

(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Members declared personal interests as district/borough councillors as listed below:

Warwick District Council - Councillors Jose Compton and Eithne Goode.

Rugby Borough Council - Councillor Gordon Collett.

North Warwickshire Borough Council - Councillor Ray Sweet

Stratford District Council - Councillor John Appleton

(3) (a) Minutes of the Meetings held on 14 September 2006

The minutes of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14 September 2006 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

(b) Matters Arising

(i) Minute 1 (3) (b) (i) (b) Concessionary Travel to University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire (UHCW)

In reply to questions Graeme Fitton confirmed that the issue of concessionary travel not being available for Warwickshire residents changing buses in Coventry to reach the UHCW would be resolved in 2008 when concessionary bus fares would be extended to cover all regions of the country. In the meantime, however, he would raise the issue with the Local Area Agreement (LAA) Travel Sub-Group. He reminded Members that it was open to the district and borough councils to enhance the current concessionary fares scheme and that was outside the County Council's control.

(ii) Minute 3, Planning Transport and Economic Strategy Performance Report.

School Transport Costs

Graeme Fitton, in response to questions asked at the previous meeting, said he had established that the £200 school transport costs could be paid by instalments but this increased the cost to £240. There was, however, a proposal to recommend that Cabinet agree, in cases of hardship, for the fee to be reduced by £40. A further report would be brought to Committee, following the introduction of pupils' school choice, to assess what impact this would have on travel to school

Rugby Western Relief Road – Section 106 Funding

In reply to questions Graeme Fitton confirmed that the DfT had been satisfied with the Rugby Western Relief Road appraisal. The Order, however, still awaited Government Office for the North East (GoNE) approval. The GoNE had been told that, if a decision was not received by the end of this month there was likelihood of losing the £2.5m. S106 funding. Members were advised that the position was now critical in that, if approval was not received by the end of this month, it was unlikely that this funding could be spent by the end of March 2007 and the funding would be lost. The Directorate was, however, currently negotiating with the developer for an extension of time and he undertook to keep Members of this Committee and the Rugby Area Committee up to date with the situation.

Repairs to Street Lighting

Graeme Fitton reported that the BVP1 relating to the delay in repairing the electricity supply to street lighting was outside the County Council's control as it measured the time taken by Central Network to carry out repairs. Discussions with the statutory undertaker, Central Network, were ongoing in an attempt speed up repairs.

2. Public Questions Time

Charlotte Jay and Parish Councillor Pat Fox, on behalf of Lapworth Parish Council, asked the following questions -

(1) Re the B4439 – Old Warwick Road, Lapworth:

Can the derestricted speed limit of 60mph from Hockley Heath to Lapworth be reviewed to a more suitable and safe speed of 40mph and when could the review be done? This section of road not only leads in to a 30mph village but also has number of potentially dangerous areas along it such as a hidden dip, blind junctions, working wood yard in a lay-by, numerous public footpaths crossing it or starting and finishing from it, a recreational cricket field almost impossible to access, a renowned and lively public house – The Boot Inn and 77 residential properties that require access along it. It has also in the past 3 years had 5 serious accidents along it and a fatality

3.5 years ago. The mean speed data collected in May this year shows that a speed reduction to 40mph would only be falling in line with what people see as the most suitable and safe speed for this stretch of road, as it measured an average of 42mph. The Parish Council fully supports this review and need for the speed reduction and have asked for the past 5 years for a review to be carried out.

(2) Re B4439 – Old Warwick Road, Lapworth:

A village speed limit review was carried out and put in place in an area that has become known in recent years as Lapworth due in main to the train station name, but should you check on an ordnance survey map or Google Earth, you will see that this area is actually known as Kingswood (Kingswood junction for the canal meets there). Under the government definition of ‘a village’ taken from directive 01/2004, we, with the full support of the parish council, would request that a review of the village status is carried out to encompass the ‘extended’ village of Lapworth along the OWR from Grove Lane/Church Lane junction. Our own investigations show that the simple criteria relating to frontage development and distance - 20 houses or more; and a minimum length of 600 metres, with extra allowance to be made where the number of houses may be just fewer than 20 for any other key buildings such as church, shop or school, can virtually be met, with 19 houses plus a recreational cricket ground and working roadside wood yard. Please can you confirm that it will be possible for this review to be undertaken and when it will be carried out?

Councillor Jose Compton supported the Parish Council in its request for a reduction in the speed limit and said that, when speaking to residents, she had great difficulty in explaining that approval of casualty reduction schemes was dependent on the County Council criteria being met (6 injury accidents in a three year period).

In reply to Question 1. Estyn Williams:

Referred to agenda item 5 “Review of Speed Management Strategy “ and the proposal for a draft Speed Management Strategy to be considered by this Committee and Cabinet subsequently which will include C & D roads. He would write to the Parish Council in response to its question which he would copy to Members.

The Chair suggested that “community concern” should be included in the criteria for prioritising speed reduction schemes.

In reply to Question 2. Estyn Williams:

Explained that the definition of a village was laid down by the Department of Transport (for speed purposes) but the Committee could recommend to Cabinet that this be changed. He referred again to agenda item 5 and the review that was currently being undertaken and highlighted that any changes would have an impact on the County Council’s budget. He

undertook to respond to the Parish Council and to include a copy of the DoT Speed Limit Circular and a copy to Members.

3. Corporate Business Plan Target Review

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy, which detailed the targets set by Environment and Economy Directorate within the Corporate Business Plan 2006/9 regarding Environment medium term priorities.

During discussion concern was expressed that the targets set for the percentage reduction in the tonnage of household waste per head sent to landfill did not seem sufficiently challenging in 2007/08 and were, therefore, considered to be unacceptable. Some Members, who considered that the targets had been set on the professional advice of officers, did not support this concern.

In response Martin Stott said that the targets were realistic and based around the Joint Municipal Waste Strategy.

Following further discussion it was -

Resolved, 5 Members voting in favour and 3 Members voting against, that this Committee expresses disappointment that the 2007 targets of 0% for the percentage reduction in the tonnage of household waste per head sent to landfill did not seem sufficiently challenging and that Cabinet should be urged to explore a more ambitious target.

4. Environment and Economy Directorate – Half-Year Performance Report 2006-07.

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy, which presented the latest performance update with respect of the Environment and Economy Directorate objectives.

In reply to questions Graeme Fitton, Estyn Williams and Philippa Young said that –

- (1) the target reduction for users satisfied with the local provision of public transport for 06/07 was realistic and reflected the positive impact that concessionary fares publicity had had on public satisfaction with information about public transport.
- (2) The graphs on page 13 of 36 of the report illustrated more clearly targets relating to the number of children killed or seriously injured on the road.
- (3) The DfT criteria for recording serious accidents included those that resulted in an overnight stay in hospital, a broken bone or equivalent.
- (4) The methodology for reporting accidents, whilst flawed, was a national methodology. It was acknowledged that not all incidents were reported but that there was a consistent base.

- (5) Pressure was being put on the Police about the importance of reporting and recording all accidents and this was being addressed by including this in the training of new Police recruits.

It was resolved that the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- (a) note the Performance Report submitted by the Environment and Economy Directorate Service for the half-year year 2006/07.
- (b) Endorse any proposed remedial actions.

5. Review of Speed Management Strategy

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy.

This report summarised the outcomes of the Members' Seminar held following the publication of Circular 1/06 Setting Local Speed Limits. It recommended that officers now produce a draft Speed Management Strategy for consideration by this Committee and ultimately by Cabinet.

During discussion the following comments were noted:

- (1) In order to create a robust policy the draft Strategy should be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and following that, the Area Committees, before consideration by Cabinet;
- (2) The Strategy should include community issues in the criteria for prioritising speed management schemes.
- (3) The inclusion of A & B roads in the review was supported.
- (4) That the Strategy should take into account the speed restrictions of neighbouring counties.

The Committee resolved that the draft Speed Management Strategy be prepared for consideration by this Committee, on the 13 January 2007, and then forwarded to the Area Committees and ultimately to Cabinet taking into account –

- (1) DfT Circular 1/2006.
- (2) Warwickshire Local Transport Plan 2006.
- (3) The views expressed at the Speed Management Seminar.
- (4) Members' views expressed above.

6. Criteria for Casualty Reduction Schemes and Road Safety – A45 Dunchurch to County Boundary (Northamptonshire).

The Committee considered the reports of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy which -

- (1) considered the way in which casualty reduction schemes were prioritised.
- (2) outlined an investigation carried out into the number of road accidents occurring along the A45 between Dunchurch and the county boundary.

During discussion the following views were noted:

- (1) Improvements to the A45 Dunchurch to the county boundary should be supported on the grounds of road safety.
- (2) That it would be beneficial when prioritising schemes for the incident statistics to be separated so as to distinguish between serious accidents and fatalities.
- (3) That it would be unfair to promote this scheme above other schemes, which ranked higher in the list of priority schemes.
- (4) That the Rugby Area Committee should be supplied with details of options to improve this stretch of road and also to include details of other priority schemes in the Rugby area, and the local members affected.

Resolved that –

- (1) the Rugby Area Committee be invited to consider whether it would wish to allocate any of its budget for an improvement on the A45 between Dunchurch and the county boundary with Northamptonshire.
- (2) That the report outlining the criteria for casualty Reduction Schemes be noted.

7. 2007/08 to 2009/10 Spending Proposals of the Environment and Economy Directorate.

Resolved, having considered the report of the Strategic Director of Environment and Economy, that the details the 2007/8 to 2009/10 revenue and capital spending proposals of the Environment and Economy Directorate be noted.

8. 2006/07 Efficiency Savings Environment and Economy Directorate

Resolved, having considered the report of the Strategic Director of Environment and Economy Directorate, to note the progress made by the Environment and Economy Directorate in delivering the 2006/7 efficiency savings target.

9. Future Work Programme and Items Relevant to the Work of this Committee

(a) Provisional Items for Future Meetings

The Chair invited comments on the work programme and suggestions for future items, which he would discuss with the spokespersons after the meeting. He explained that a task and finish group would be set up to Review the Rural Strategy (to include Speed, in conjunction with the Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members' suggestions for future items included –

- (1) Warwickshire Waste Partnership – Review of achievements and future aims.
- (2) Street Lighting – Hours of Operation.
- (3) Hours of summertime – looking at making the most use of daylight in the wintertime.

(b) Forward Plan Item

The Committee noted the Forward Plan items relevant to the work of this Committee.

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Chair of Committee

The Committee rose at 12:40 p.m.