

Minutes of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20 September 2007.

Present:

Members: Councillor Ken Browne (Chair)
“ John Appleton
“ George Atkinson
“ Gordon Collett
“ Jose Compton
“ Jill Dill-Russell
“ Eithne Goode
“ Katherine King
“ Bryan Levy
“ Sid Tooth
“ John Wells

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

Officers:

Nancy Beer, Performance Support Officer, Environment and Economy Directorate.
Emma Curtis, Political Group Assistant, Performance and Development Directorate.
Graeme Fitton, Head of Transport and Highways, Environment and Economy Directorate
Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator, Performance and Development Directorate.
Andy McDarmid, Environmental Management and Performance, Environment and Economy Directorate.
Peter Samwell, County Highways Project Manager, Environment and Economy Directorate.
Martin Stott, Head of Environment and Waste, Environment and Economy Directorate.
Ron Tennant, Performance Management Officer, Warwickshire Observatory, Environment and Economy Directorate.
Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer, Performance and Development Directorate

1. General

(1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ray Sweet and John Whitehouse.

(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

The Chair reported that he had sought advice about whether he should declare an interest in item 10, Warwickshire County Council Highways Maintenance Contract with Carillion, but had been advised that he need not do so, as he had done previously, because this was a progress report.

(3) Minutes of the Meetings of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21 and 28 June 2007.

The minutes of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 21 and 28 June 2007 were agreed and signed as a correct record subject to an apology for absence being recorded in respect of Councillor John Whitehouse for the meeting of 21 June 2007.

Matters Arising – Minutes of 28 June 2007

(a) Minute 1 (3) (b) – Public Access to the Coventry and Warwickshire University Hospital (CWUH).

In reply to a question from Councillor John Appleton Graeme Fitton reported that he had met with the Health Authority but the outcome was inconclusive. Further meetings were scheduled and he would provide a briefing note to the Committee's November meeting.

(b) Minute 5 Review of Parking Policies

The Chair reported that Cabinet had agreed that the County Council would fund the cost of providing residential disabled parking bays.

2. Public Question Time

None

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

(a) Provisional Items for Future Meetings

The Committee noted the future work programme subject to the addition of a briefing note to the 8 November 2007 meeting on the progress of consultation with the Health Authority on transport to the CWUH.

(b) Forward Plan Items

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

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

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy, which presented the full year performance outturn with respect to the objectives of the Environment and Economy Directorate's objectives.

The Chair invited Members to consider the next agenda item, Comparative Performance, in conjunction with the current report, where the County Council had performed well or otherwise against the indicators used by the PricewaterhouseCooper (PWC) benchmarking club. Andy McDarmaid advised that, in some circumstances, the statistics did not relate to "like for like" authorities but welcomed Members' comments on both reports.

The Chair commented on the good performance achieved by the Directorate but highlighted that one-fifth of the indicators had not been achieved, in particular, response to email and letters. Andy McDarmaid explained the complexity of accurately recording responses to emails and letters in that, on many occasions, these were dealt quickly with by way of an initial telephone call to clarify aspects of the enquiry, which would then be followed up later on by a letter. Work was in progress about how to present this information so that it reflected the Directorate's good performance. He undertook to circulate to Members the internal report that was being prepared to present this information to more accurately reflect the Directorate's response times.

In reply to questions –

(1) Andy McDarmaid commented that –

- (a) The indicator for E18 "condition of surface footways" related only to footways in urban/town centres. In Warwickshire the equivalent of approximately 60km of the 26000km of footways in the county.
- (b) The Indicator CHI "residents satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live" was taken from the "Quality of Life Survey". He undertook to circulate a briefing note to explain the reasons for this dissatisfaction.
- (c) 3 Directorates (Environment & Economy, Community Protection and Resources) had achieved ISO14001 certification relating to implementation of environment management systems and that by 2008 all Directorates would be certified. The County Council would then be the first County Council to achieve ISO14001 certification across all of its Directorates.

Graeme Fitton commented that, with regard to CPA C1, BVPI 178 "Footpaths and rights of way easy to use by the public", this was not a good measure of performance as, historically, Warwickshire had long lengths of footpaths, as compared with other authorities. He undertook to report to a future meeting on

this explanation and to include details of partnership agreements with Parish Councils.

During discussion the following comments were noted–

- (1) That the work of Barbara Golding in connection with the EcoSchools Award should be commended and the Committee's thanks be conveyed to her.
- (2) Councillor Gordon Collett commented on the good work being carried out by officers on reducing carbon emissions.
- (3) Objective 17.3 "Produce a Tree Strategy" was welcomed.
- (4) That, in respect of Objective 18.1, a report was scheduled for the next Smallholdings Panel on the position of the Smallholdings Estate. A Member suggested that that a report was also required on the condition of the Rural Estate properties.
- (5) That 25.2 should be split into two sections, Development of a Rural Strategy and Development of a Strategy for the Smallholdings Estate.

Following which the Committee –

- (i) Notes the performance report submitted by Environment and Economy Directorate for the full year 2006/07.
- (ii) Endorses any proposed remedial actions.
- (i) Requests additional information on the following –
 - (a) CH1 "percentage of residents satisfied with their neighbourhood life...." – A briefing note to be circulated on the source of this indicator (the Quality of Life Survey) (Andy McDarmid)
 - (b) CPA C1, BVPI 178 Footpaths and Rights of Way – A briefing note to be circulated regarding this measure addressing the comparison contained in the PWC report and to include details of partnership agreements with Parish Councils. (Graeme Fitton).
- (iii) Asked that future performance reports separate out the two items – Development of a Rural Strategy and Development of a Strategy for the Smallholdings Estate.

5. Comparative Performance

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development relating to Warwickshire County Council being a Member of

a performance-benchmarking club. This report introduced the indicators used by that club that were relevant to the work of the Committee.

The Chair said, whilst accepting that in some areas direct comparisons with other authorities could not be made, the outcomes shown in the report should be accepted, but highlighted his concern and asked for further information on the following indicators –

- (1) 82ai - % recycling.
- (2) 84 a/b - Waste Collected per head/Change in waste collected per head.
- (3) 99ai/99aii -Total Number KSI/ Change in KSI on previous year.
- (4) 187 - % category 1,1a and 2 footways needing structural maintenance.

Andy McDarmaid commented that the revenue and capital spend per head was not included in the indicators. The Chair suggested that, if this information had a bearing on the indicators, that evidence to support this should be included in the further information requested.

The Committee –

- (1) notes the comparative performance of the County Council against the indicators used by the PricewaterhouseCooper benchmarking club.
- (2) asks for further information on the areas of performance indicated above to be reported to the next meeting.

6. Street Lighting Hours of Operation

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy outlining the consultation carried out to gauge views about the hours of operation of streetlights and provided feedback on the consultation and options for the future.

The Chair, seconded by Councillor Gordon Collett, proposed that Cabinet be recommended to adopt the report's recommendations. A Member asked that the officers obtain before, and after, trial costs following which -

The Committee agreed that Cabinet be recommended to–

- (1) not support a policy of switching off streetlights.
- (2) Support a small trial of streetlight dimming in the Warwick Area is and, subject to the outcome of the trial, further consultation is carried out at a future date.

7. Any Other Business

There were no items of urgent business.

8. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

Resolved to exclude members of the public from the meeting for the items below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

9. Exempt Minutes of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21st June 2007

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 21st June 2007 were agreed and signed as a correct record subject to apologies for absence being recorded in respect of Councillor John Whitehouse.

10. Warwickshire Highway Maintenance Contract with Carillion – Report on Progress

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy, which provided an update on progress during the past 12 months and on actions to achieve further improvements in the seven-year highways maintenance contract with Carillion, which began in May 2008.

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Chair of Committee

The Committee rose at 12:00 noon.