

**Minutes of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 24 January 2008.**

**Present:**

**Members:** Councillor Ken Browne (Chair)  
“ John Appleton  
“ Tom Cavanagh  
“ Gordon Collett  
“ George Atkinson  
“ Jose Compton  
“ Joan Lea  
“ Ray Sweet (Vice-Chair)  
“ Sid Tooth

**Also Present:** Councillor Martin Heatley, Portfolio Holder for Environment  
Alan Franks, Director of Environmental Services, Nuneaton and  
Bedworth Borough Council

**Officers:** Graeme Fitton, Head of Transport and Highways, Environment  
and Economy Directorate.  
Barbara Golding, Environmental Management Officer -  
Education, Environment and Economy Directorate.  
Nick Gower-Johnson, County Partnership Manager, Performance  
and Development Directorate.  
Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator, Performance  
and Development Directorate.  
Andy McDarmaid, Environmental Management and Performance  
Manager, Environment and Economy Directorate.  
Gereint Stoneman, Corporate Planning Manager, Performance  
and Development Directorate.  
Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer, Performance and Development  
Directorate.

**1. General**

**(1) Apologies for absence**

None.

**(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

None

**(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2007**

The minutes of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 8 November 2007 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

## **Matters Arising**

### (a) Minute 1 (3) (b) Street Lighting – Dimming Trials

In reply to a question Graeme Fitton said that he was currently negotiating with the providers to agree the most cost effective way of carrying out the light dimming trials.

### (b) Minute 5 - A5 Issues

Members noted that a date for a meeting with adjoining Councils would shortly be finalised.

### (c) Minute 6: Concessionary Travel

Graeme Fitton said that a further report would be brought to the Committee after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 about how the scheme was progressing.

## **2. Public Question Time**

### **Question 1. Charlotte Jay, Campaign Organiser – SLOWeR – Road Safety Campaign to Slow Lapworths Old Warwick Road.**

Where does the B4439 Old Warwick Road show today in the table of accident statistics for the County?

### **Reply: Roger Harding, Road Safety Intelligence, Environment and Economy Directorate**

The section of B4439 between A4177 and Rowington Green is ranked 84<sup>th</sup> on the priority list and the section between Rowington Green and the Hockley county boundary is ranked 89<sup>th</sup>. Fortunately only 3 or 4 routes are addressed in any one-year and so it is clear that the Old Warwick Road is not a priority in casualty reduction terms.

### **Question 2 – Charlotte Jay – Slower Road Safety Campaign**

What is the reasoning behind the proposed speed limit reduction to 50 mph rather than 40 mph?

### **Reply : Jo Edwards, Road Safety Engineer, Environment and Economy Directorate**

The reason that a 50mph limit is being recommended from the technical review, is mainly due to the existing speed-readings and the environment of the road. These readings showed a mean speed of 44mph and advice from circular 1/06,

states *"the aim should be to align the local speed limit so that the original mean speed driven on the road is at or below the new posted speed limit for that road."*

It is also considered that this stretch of road is unsuitable for additional engineering measures, (with the exception of terminal signs, repeaters and roundels for the proposed 50mph), to enable the speed of vehicles to be further reduced.

Graeme Fitton added that the Area Committee could consider funding additional speed reducing measures out of its capital programme budget if it so wished.

### **Question 3 from Leek Wootton Parish Councillor Alan Moore**

"What can the Environment O&S Committee do to raise the profile and help resolve the following problem - the Environment Agency has been contacted without success?"

The issue relates to the River Avon bridge near the Chesford Hotel and the nearby Motel -. because rubble and rubbish has been tipped on the flood plain around that area - some from the rebuilding of the Motel and the other using rubble arising from the demolition of a Leamington property this has resulted in the raising of the level of the Avon to such an extent that two of the bridge arches are no longer functional and has diverted the course of the river. The problem has been drawn to Mr. Moore's attention by a local farmer and Mr. Moore has land that abuts this area."

### **Reply from County Highways Operations, Environment and Economy Directorate.**

Materials being tipped on the flood plain are a matter for the E.A. to investigate and determine what course of action is required

Materials that are restricting the flow of water within the bridge arches will be investigated by WCC, Bridge Maintenance dept. Steve O'Connor is aware of the problem and will arrange for the site to be investigated.

Councillor Martin Heatley said he had visited the area where the rubble and material had been deposited and referred to the history of this issue. He sympathised with Mr. Moore's complaint, which he said was a very disturbing matter.

Councillor Jose Compton said that she had spoken to Mr. Moore about the problem and referred to the difficulty of holding anyone to account for depositing the rubble, which had changed the course and raised the level of the river.

The Chair acknowledged the concerns expressed and the seriousness of the problem, following which -

The Committee agreed that the County Council should arrange for a meeting to be held with Mr. Moore, officers from the district council's planning department, the Environment Agency, the County Council's bridge maintenance section and a representative of the NFU and to report the outcome back to a future meeting.

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

#### **(a) Provisional Items for future meetings**

The Committee agreed the future work programme subject to the inclusion of the A5 group.

#### **(b) Forward Plan items**

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

### **4. Mid-year Directorate Report Card 2007/08 (April – September 2007)**

The Committee considered the report of the Interim Strategic Director of Environment and Economy, which provided an analysis of the Environment and Economy Directorate's performance at the mid-year point for 2007/08. The report also included reports on performance against the key performance indicators as set out in the Directorate Report Card.

In reply to questions Andy McDarmid and Graeme Fitton said that –

1. the reason why performance indicators had shown red triangles without any remedial action alongside them related to those which met corporate indicators but not PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) benchmarking data.
2. In relation to the mystery shopping visit to Montague Road (Countryside Recreation) action had been taken and a further mystery shopping visit had reported an improved performance and this would be reflected in the end of year report.

Members' suggested that it would be helpful, where performance had changed significantly since the report had been written, if this information was forwarded to them in a briefing note prior to the meeting.

3. In connection with 1. and 2. above the officers undertook to include an explanatory note in future reports.
4. PWC performance data was a useful tool to set targets but it was considered that stretch targets were more realistic and had shown a year on year reduction in relation to KSI.
5. PWC targets needed to be set against the 33 county councils against which PWC comparison data was made. As an example, comparing PWC KSI statistics for Northumberland against Warwickshire was not a fair comparison in that Northumberland, whilst a rural county, did not have the significant road and motorway networks passing through it that Warwickshire had nor the amount of traffic.

The officers undertook to circulate to Members PWC benchmarking for Warwickshire against the other 33 county councils for the total number KSI and the targets against actual performance graph for the same indicator.

6. that the error on page 8 of 17 % reduction in municipal waste landfilled would be amended in to read 0.5%.

The Committee noted the summary and detail of the performance indicators within the Directorate Report Card at the mid-year point of 2007/08.

## **5. 2007/08 Efficiency Savings – Environment and Economy Directorate Progress Report**

Liz Firmstone presented the report of the Interim Strategic Director for Environment and Economy, which outlined the progress the Environment and Economy Directorate had made to date in delivering the required efficiency savings as part of the 2007/08 budget.

Members commended Liz Firmstone on an excellent report and the clarity of the explanation of the position in relation to the Directorate's efficiency savings.

During discussion the following comments were noted -

1. that, despite the efforts made over previous years, further efficiency savings could not be made without impacting on services and that this had been compounded by the exceptional wet summer weather and the rate of inflation in the construction industry.
2. that it would be helpful if a breakdown could be provided about how the debt charges on the £12m capital programme budget was financed.
3. that the highway maintenance contract was target based and Carillion was also required to make efficiency savings. It was noted that these savings would not, however, make up the whole of the contract gap while the construction industry was currently running at 10% inflation.
4. The reliance on one-off savings to manage reductions was questioned.

In response David Pywell acknowledged Members' concerns and -

1. acknowledged Members concerns and about his Directorate's ability to make savings over the next 3 years of £3m, which he said, was ambitious but was being addressed.
2. said the £12m debt charge would not reduce because some schemes fell off the debt but new schemes were continually being added.
3. there might be some efficiency to be made in waste management but this was long term.
4. said the Directorate had a huge budget to manage and a large proportion related to waste and highways maintenance. This was a difficult task, which would be addressed by a range of measures and doing things differently within the Directorate. Should Members wish to have a closer look at how the Directorate's budget was spent his officers would be willing to help.

In conclusion, he said that there was much work to be done and, although the budget could not be fixed between times, he hoped that a plan would be put in place before the new Director took up his post.

Councillor Martin Heatley welcomed the discussion and said the Directorate had a challenging time ahead but that he was happy to work with the officers to achieve efficiency savings through different ways of working. As a way forward he suggested a post budget meeting to discuss the Directorate's financial position further.

The Chair proposed that, once the council's budget was known, a further report be presented to the Committee on the detailed options plan being drawn up by officers, referred to in paragraph 6.3 of the report.

The Committee –

- (1) agreed the Chair's proposal for a post budget meeting.
- (2) noted the progress made by the Environment and Economy Directorate in delivering the 2007/8 efficiency savings target.

## **6. Local Area Agreement 6 Monthly Performance**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development reporting on the performance of the LAA over the first six months.

Nick Gower-Johnson and Alan Franks highlighted –

1. In relation to climate change and the environment 79% of the indicators were on target and that 60% of the stretch targets were likely to be achieved.
2. that an important part of the Committee's work was to look at performance reward grants which were only made if 60% of the agreed target was achieved.
3. that the forecast in relation to reducing waste to landfill was that 100% of reward grants would be achieved
4. the good news in relation to the development of brownfield sites and said that Warwickshire was performing well as compared to other areas and in relation to reducing Co2 emissions
5. that a county-wide theme group and the Public Service Board (PSB) would be considering the provisional list of indicators to be included in the new LAA and Members' views would be sought on the new indicators at the Committee's next meeting on 6 March 2008.

In reply to comments the officers acknowledged that –

1. monitoring results and making a difference was a challenge but local authorities should set an example and look to become beacon authorities in particular areas. Over time, it was hoped, that the impact of that good practice would have wider impact on, for example, reducing Co2 emissions.
2. that the Co2 targets only related to local authority owned buildings/activities and did not included the PCT or FE College buildings.
3. the figures on page 11 E4 would be amended in future reports.

The Chair commented on the lack of Member involvement in the LAA process and expressed concern that the targets had been set by officers. He looked forward to the Committee receiving a further report on the new indicators and the opportunity for Member involvement.

The Committee:

- a) Welcomes the comprehensive performance management information contained in this report.
- b) notes the progress made to date in relation to relevant indicators in the Climate Change & Environment and the Safer Communities blocks of the LAA and remedial actions suggested by the Block Leader in respect of those measures that are currently forecasted to miss target.
- c) looks forward to having an input into the indicators for the revised LAA

## **7. Green Transport Plan Progress**

Nicola Small presented the report of the Interim Strategic Director for Environment and Economy which outlined progress made with regards to the County Council's Green Transport Plan approved in 2004 and highlighted –

1. Warwick residents' complaints about the inconvenience caused by County Council staff parking inconsiderately on roads outside their homes.
2. that since the launch of the Green Travel Plan single occupancy vehicles commuting to Warwick had remained fairly consistent
3. that there was now a need to pursue a number of "harder" measures, for example, improve on site facilities for cyclists and walkers and to manage car parking spaces better.

The Chair acknowledged the concerns outlined in the report and urged Members to give greater support for these "harder" measures. He asked that a concrete list of proposals be brought back to the Committee for recommendation to Cabinet, including the actual cost of providing parking per employee. He hoped that this report would receive senior officers' support.

Councillor Martin Heatley concurred with the Chair's comments.

In reply to a question from the Chair Nicola Small confirmed that very good shower facilities had been provided in the new buildings at Saltisford but the cycle parking facilities were unsecured and located at the rear of the buildings and one theft had already been recorded.

The Committee –

- (1) expressed support for the implementation of 'harder' Green Transport Plan measures.
- (2) asked for a further report to help progress these measures. This report to include list of "harder" measures, and to include the costs of parking per

person, an assessment of County Council car parking sites and details of the facilities that should have been provided at the Saltisford as compared to that recommended and the reasons why they were rejected.

## **8. Financial Position of the Smallholdings Estate**

The Committee considered the report of the interim Strategic Director for Environment and Economy relating to the Smallholdings Estate.

The Smallholdings Estate returned a net cost to the County Council of £27,189 in FY2006/7 and it was expected to make a small overall contribution (profit) of around £25,000 in 2006/7. In both years, however, the estate was expected to yield a significantly higher contribution than was achieved. The report outlined actions being taken to ensure that the Smallholdings Estate would achieve significantly higher contributions to the County's overall budget in future years.

The Chair referred to the seriousness of this issue, which related to a large discrepancy in the Smallholdings' budget. The matter had, however, been discussed extensively by the Smallholdings Panel and was relatively content with the remedial actions proposed and that the Smallholdings would be contributing to the County Council's budget in future years. The Smallholdings Panel would be regularly reviewing the position.

The Committee endorsed the proposed actions, which would ensure significant annual contributions to the County Council's overall budget from the Smallholdings estate in future years.

## **9. Any Other Business**

None

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Chair

The Committee rose at 12:20 p.m.