

# minutes



Meeting ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 19<sup>th</sup> September 2005 (commencing at 10.30 am)

## Membership

Persons absent are marked with `A`

## COUNCILLORS

Hon Joan Taylor (Chair)  
Bruce Laughton (Vice-Chair)

	Kenneth Bullivant		George Kane
A	W J Clarke		Pat Lally
A	Barrie Cooper	A	J T A Napier
	V H Dobson		Ken Rigby
	Sybil Fielding		David Shaw

## ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Martin Brandon Bravo

## MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2005 having been circulated were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

## APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Councillor W J Clarke (on other County Council business)

“ Barrie Cooper

“ Stella Smedley

## DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

## CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY'S REPORT FOR JULY 2005

The Cabinet Member's report was noted.

## **SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANS**

Pam Shaw, Team Manager, Road Safety gave a presentation about School Travel Plans, their purpose, their development in Nottinghamshire since 1999, and the increased activity since April 2004, which was making use of Government funding. She explained how schools could make use of the capital grants available, and how the plans' success was monitored.

In reply to a question from Councillor Bullivant about publicity, Ms Shaw started that all schools received information about the plans. The Team focused its attention on schools with the biggest parking problems, and on schools where developing a plan was a condition of planning consent for new buildings. The Team would continue to remind schools about plans, but there was already a waiting list. She explained that the aim was to complete around 40 plans per year.

Councillor Laughton asked whether the Team should focus on schools where children were most at risk from traffic. Ms Shaw replied that accident statistics showed very few accidents outside schools. However, where they did occur, these schools were given priority. Councillor Laughton believed that the data was flawed in that it only recorded serious injuries or deaths. Ms Shaw commented that the Team had to follow nationally set targets. She concluded by saying that the Government intended all schools to have a School Travel Plan by 2010, whereas the Department expected the level to be 75%.

## **RIVER TRENT FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT**

Nick Brown, Group Manager (Sustainability), introduced the report which summarised the Environment Agency's Flood Management Proposals for the tidal and fluvial stretches of the River Trent. This was the Select Committee's opportunity to help shape the County Council's response to the proposals, which were to be presented to Cabinet on 12<sup>th</sup> October. He indicated that the County Council may well wish to express concern for the more rural communities, which tended to be lower priority for the Environment Agency.

Councillor Laughton supported the comment about rural communities. He believed that affected property holders should be informed of the proposals. He wondered about the co-ordination between the two strategies, which appeared to be addressing different levels of risk. He pointed out that the Environment Agency, under pressure, had agreed to measure the floor level of people's dwellings in the fluvial area, and they now needed to do this in the tidal area. Mr Brown referred to the information available on the Environment Agency website, but Councillor Laughton pointed out that this was only available to computer-users. Mr Brown agreed that it was important for insurance purposes for measurements to be made at floor level. Councillor Laughton believed that the Agency's measurements were not accurate enough.

Councillor Rigby understood that tributaries such as the River Erewash were not taken into account. Mr Brown replied that the Agency's view was that such rivers were not significant compared with the size of the Trent. Councillor Brandon Bravo believed that post-coding was not detailed enough, and that the implications of the Agency's grading system were hard to understand.

At the suggestion of the Chair, it was agreed to invite the Environment Agency to answer questions at the next meeting of the Select Committee. It was also agreed that the comments expressed in the Committee, along with those included in paragraph 6 of the Report, form the basis of the County Council's response.

#### **TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ACT 2004**

Jas Hundal, Deputy Director of Environment, introduced the Report which summarised the implications for the County Council of the Act. He undertook to bring reports to the Select Committee as the County Council implemented the Act, starting in late 2005/early 2006. Councillor Taylor asked for reports sooner rather than later, as she believed it was important for proposals to come to the Select Committee before commitments were made. Councillor Lally asked whether the Authority would have the capacity to enforce its new powers over utilities. Mr Hundal replied that this was under discussion, but the expectation was that this part of the Act would be self financing.

#### **REPLACEMENT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN – RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON SCHEDULE OF PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS**

Councillor Taylor indicated that she had recently received two e-mails from objectors, and would be chasing a response to them. Mr Hundal stated that a letter would be sent shortly, with the delay reflecting the complex issues raised by objectors in their meeting with the Leader.

In relation to the report, Mr Hundal said that the Committee's previous comments had been taken into account. The County Council on 20<sup>th</sup> October would decide either to adopt the Plan, or undertake further consultation.

Councillor Laughton wondered whether the Select Committee could influence the Cabinet Member's decision on any planning application, or merely look at the processes. Mr Hundal explained that Members contributed to decision making via the Planning and Licensing Committee. He indicated that the Director would reflect all comments in his report to County Council in October.

#### **UP-DATE ON NOTTINGHAMSHIRE WOODHEAT PROGRAMME**

Nick Brown introduced the report on woodheat technology and its installation in a number of Nottinghamshire schools. Councillor Bullivant observed that staff at Ranskill Primary School had told him how pleased they were with their new boiler. Councillor Brandon Bravo asked what would happen when the

subsidy on fuel ended, and Councillor Lally asked about the cost of the arms length company, ReNU. Mr Brown explained that woodheat boilers had been installed using the Public Service Agreement (PSA) budget, that, since recent gas price rises, the cost of wood pellets compared favourably with gas. He indicated that the County Council supported ReNU by being a customer and through an economic development grant.

Councillor Laughton believed that problems could arise from interference with the market, and there was a risk of ReNU becoming a monopoly. He believed the Council ought to be creating a competitive environment, and that the taxpayer should get value for money. Mr Brown stated there was potential for many suppliers to enter the market and gave the example of Dunham on Trent Primary School, which had a separate contract with a local farmer.

In reply to Councillor Rigby, Mr Brown explained that the EU was developing a standard for woodchips and pellets, which would assist the boiler manufacturers. He expected the market to develop on its own once it reached a critical mass. Councillor Taylor asked whether the County Council's new offices in Ashfield might use woodheat. Mr Brown indicated that this could be considered.

### **FORWARD PLAN AND WORK PROGRAMME**

Councillor Taylor proposed the Concessionary Fares Scheme as a topic for scrutiny. Mr Hundal explained that the Government would announce the monies available for the scheme in December, and more accurate data would become available in 2006-07. He explained the implications of the Government's proposals in the light of current practice in the county. Councillor Laughton observed that increasing patronage could mean less subsidy to buses. Councillor Fielding referred to an increasing ageing population which became dependant on public transport. At the suggestion of the Chair, it was agreed to scrutinise the Concessionary Fares Scheme as soon as more information became available. It was agreed to note the Work Programme and Forward Plan.

The meeting closed at 12.55 pm.

**CHAIR**

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