

minutes



Meeting HIGHWAYS SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 18 December 2006 (commencing at 10.30 am)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

COUNCILLORS

The Hon Joan Taylor (Chair)
Andy Stewart (Vice-Chair)

A Jen Cole
A Bruce Laughton
A Jim Napier
Philip Owen

A Sheila Place
Ken Rigby
David Shaw

MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 27 November 2006, having been circulated were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cole and Place.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Councillor David Shaw declared a personal interest in the following item, by virtue of his membership of the Police Authority.

PRESENTATION BY THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

Steve Green, Chief Constable gave a presentation on the police perspective on highways matters. He recognised the police contribution to road safety, and referred to his involvement at a high level through the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) in the preparation of strategies and performance indicators. Nottinghamshire Police worked to the ACPO road safety strategy, and systematically checked enforcement levels in relation to speed, intoxication and seatbelts, for example.

Mr Green referred to the reorganisation of roads policing in 2002 which had included changes to staffing, a dedicated crash investigation function, civilian vehicle examiners, and maintaining a dedicated presence of officers on motorway duties. He pointed out that officers on highways duties also formed the armed response unit.

While their response to gun crimes had to take priority, he stated that a significant amount of time was available for roads policing.

The Chief Constable drew attention to the use of new technology. For example, a mobile speed detection camera was mainly used at locations where there had been killed or seriously injured accidents. However the camera could be used in response to local complaints. Breath testing was also taken seriously.

Current developments included:

- Taking uninsured vehicles off the road, and destroying them if documentation was not produced within a short period
- Operation Mermaid, intended to check the safety of goods vehicles
- Concerns about stretch limousines
- Campaigns on seatbelts, drink driving and speeding

Heidi Duff from the Police spoke about the Road Safety Partnership and the police role in gathering information. Motorcyclists, pedestrians and seatbelts were current priorities for the partnership. Mr Green gave figures to demonstrate the enforcement action being taken in relation to speeding, breath tests, seatbelt and mobile phone offences, and defective vehicles. Nottinghamshire Police's performance was assessed as good/stable under HM Inspector of Constabulary's criteria. Mr Green was satisfied with the level of performance, and saw no reason to change the current approach.

Mr Green did however identify scope for improvement in three areas:

- Calculating the police and highway authority performance indicators on the same basis
- How the ACPO roads policing strategy and the road safety partnership's strategy fitted together
- Sharing road accident data

Members then asked the Chief Constable questions. Councillor Rigby asked for his view on the value of collecting figures of non-injury accidents. Mr Green saw value in this only in respect of accident black spots. However he said that new systems would be needed to record such information. He believed that the police were aware of all the black spots. Ms Duff explained how data was shared with the County Council's Accident Investigation Team.

Councillor Stewart supported the destruction of uninsured vehicles. He referred to changes the deployment of safety cameras on the A614. Mr Green expressed his support for Community Speedwatch. Chief Inspector Andy Charlton, Nottinghamshire Police, pointed out the Road Safety Bill had yet to become law, and the responsibility for financing its provisions was unclear. Suzanne Heydon,

Accident Investigation Team, stated that the highways authorities would be responsible for funding, with discussions already taking place about how to move forward. She pointed out that the killed and seriously injured statistics would be the key factor in deciding how monies would be distributed. There was discussion about motorcyclists and moped riders, the value of training them as early as possible, and whether the compulsory basic training (CBT) was adequate.

Councillor Rigby expressed concern about speeding and its effects. He believed that Community Speedwatch was insufficient, and that enforcement was needed. Mr Green believed that both had their place. Mr Charlton observed that the police were not sufficiently funded to tackle all the tasks they would like to. However there was momentum nationally to improve driving standards. He pointed out that drivers reduced their speeds where they knew that safety cameras were likely to be in use. Mr Green emphasised that the Government's Road Safety Strategy made reducing killed and seriously injured accidents a priority over anti-social behaviour. In reply to Councillor Stewart, Mr Green said that speed enforcement was self-financing, by making use of the income from penalties.

Ms Duff stated that the police were keen for the County Council to begin decriminalised parking enforcement. Councillor Taylor expressed frustration that the police currently ignored parking infringements. Mr Green indicated that this could no longer be a priority for police officers. In reply to Councillor Taylor, he said that there was specialist training for traffic police. He pointed out that some 16,000 offenders had been prosecuted in 2006 for non-parking traffic offences.

Councillor Taylor thanked Mr Green for his contribution. She questioned the acceptability of using unmarked vehicles to detect motorway speeding, the level of activity in rural areas, and putting performance indicators before reassuring the public. She believed that more cooperation was needed to reduce deaths and other accidents on the roads.

The meeting closed at 12.40 pm.

CHAIR

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