

minutes



Meeting HIGHWAYS SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 12 February 2007 (commencing at 10.30 am)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

COUNCILLORS

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

	Jen Cole	A	Sheila Place
	Bruce Laughton		Ken Rigby
A	Jim Napier	A	David Shaw
	Philip Owen		

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Martin Brandon-Bravo OBE

MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 15 January 2007, having been circulated were confirmed and signed by the Chair, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Brandon-Bravo having been in attendance.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Napier, Place and Shaw.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

The following personal interests were declared in the presentations by the RAC and Norwich Union: Councillors Laughton and Stewart as shareholders in Norwich Union; Councillor Owen as a shareholder in Norwich Union and customer of the RAC; and Councillor Taylor as a member of the RAC.

HIGHWAYS AND ROAD SAFETY – PRESENTATION BY THE RAC

Gill Kerr from the Royal Automobile Club (RAC) gave a presentation on the motorist's perspective on road safety. She drew on the findings of the RAC's annual survey of 1000 motorists about their views on congestion, new technology, environmental issues and road safety. The findings showed a degree of schizophrenia, with motorists taking a harsher view of others' driving behaviour than they did of their own. Other conclusions were that road safety continued to be a

source of concern, that there was broad support for a clampdown on offenders, and that education was a key factor in changing behaviour.

Ms Kerr responded to members' questions and comments. She saw the County Council's role as being to explain and to educate. Councillor Rigby suggested that RAC breakdown patrols might be used as a source of information on best practice. Mr Kerr agreed, adding that also they were a first hand source of motorists' views. In relation to uninsured drivers, she observed that the Road Safety Act 2006 strengthened the police's hand, and that the insurance industry was very active in this field. Councillor Cole questioned whether the survey responses had been skewed by television and roadside advertising campaigns about road safety. Ms Kerr replied that the most successful campaigns were ones which gave road safety a personal dimension. She felt that green L-plates for newly qualified drivers would be more useful if they some legal value.

Councillor Laughton commented that more could be done to eliminate congestion. He pointed out that warning signs should be accurate, otherwise drivers tended to ignore them. Ms Kerr stated that the RAC Foundation was researching drivers' confusion with road signs. In reply to Councillor Brandon-Bravo, Ms Kerr expressed support for driver improvement and speed awareness courses, though not for repeat offenders. She explained how the RAC could use mobile phone technology to help locate a broken down vehicle.

PAY AS YOU DRIVE – PRESENTATION BY NORWICH UNION INSURANCE

Chris Elliott, Norwich Union Insurance gave a presentation on the company's Pay As You Drive (PAYD) motor insurance. He explained how the product used GPS (global positioning system) technology to charge drivers a monthly premium on the basis of the previous month's journeys. The product had been piloted in 2003-04, and trialled with young drivers in 2005. They were charged according to the time of day they drove, with the peak rate being during the night, which was when young drivers were most likely to have an accident. Three PAYD products, for young drivers, 24 – 65 year olds, and fleet drivers were launched in 2006.

Mr Elliott gave examples of the sort of detailed data which the system could produce and which might be useful to highway authorities, both in terms of road safety and reducing congestion.

Councillor Taylor asked about the age limit at 65. Mr Elliott replied that drivers over 65 had the lowest premiums already, and were unlikely to benefit from PAYD. Councillor Laughton asked about the security of data, whether premiums for some drivers would increase, and observed that the GPS equipment in cars could be used for other functions such as road pricing. Mr Elliott stated that security was vital and that premiums were priced on the basis of risk. He referred to the consequences for road safety of road pricing, as the later would cause people to change their usual driving patterns.

Councillor Taylor thanked both Ms Kerr and Mr Elliott for their contributions.

SPEED MANAGEMENT

Gary Wood, Team Manager, Traffic Services introduced the report which summarised the County Council's various speed management initiatives. Councillor Stewart welcomed the work, but believed that sometimes effectiveness was compromised by, for example, poorly located signs. Suzanne Heydon, Team Manager, Accident Investigation Unit, responded that signs were located according to individual circumstances.

Councillor Laughton was disappointed that 20 mph limits outside schools were not always possible. Mr Wood replied that the council was concerned about the effectiveness and cost of 20 mph schemes. Pam Shaw, Team Manager, Road Safety, pointed that they could only be piloted where traffic speeds were already low, that they were mainly advisory rather than enforceable, and that accident rates near schools were generally low. Councillor Laughton suggested that it would be helpful for all members to have the list of villages in phase 2 of the review of village speed limits.

Councillor Rigby asked about alternative sources of funding for interactive speed reduction signs. Mr Wood stated that a report was being prepared for the Cabinet Member. Councillor Taylor believed that the report should wait until the Select Committee had reached its conclusions. In Councillor Owen's view, action was often too little, too late. He felt that it was often unclear why a particular speed limit had been chosen, perceived parking rather than speeding to be the main problem around schools, and doubted the benefits of school travel plans. In contrast, Councillor Laughton referred to some successful school travel plans. Ms Shaw pointed that school travel plans had no enforcement powers. They were based on agreements between parents and residents on what was right for their area. She referred to the uncertainty about continued government financial support for school travel plans after 2008.

Councillor Taylor, queried the effectiveness of village gateways and extra lanes at traffic lights, and referred to the value of members' local knowledge. Councillor Stewart saw the benefit of the third lane at traffic lights in allowing more traffic through. Mr Wood explained that this was their purpose, and that poor driver behaviour at traffic lights was a matter for enforcement by the police. In relation to speed limits, he indicated that the review of A and B roads used the government's model, balancing economics and safety. Ms Heydon explained the reasons for the various speed limits along the A610 Eastwood and Kimberley Bypass.

SCRUTINY PLANNING

Martin Gately, Scrutiny Officer, indicated that this had been the last evidence gathering meeting, and on 5 March, the Select Committee would begin preparation of its final report. Councillor Taylor referred to a ministerial visit on 5 March, and in view of this, it was agreed that (subject to appropriate approval) the meeting on 5 March be held at 2.00 pm rather than 10.30 am.

The meeting closed at 12.45 pm.

CHAIR

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