

minutes



Meeting ENVIRONMENT STANDING SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 18th October 2004 (commencing at 10.30 am)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

COUNCILLORS

A Andy Freeman (Chair)
A V H Dobson (Vice-Chair)

A	John Bell	J T A Napier (In the Chair)
	Kenneth Bullivant	A Mrs Nellie Smedley
	W J Clarke	A Mrs S Smedley
A	Yvonne Davidson	A P Tsimbiridis
	Stan Heptinstall MBE	Keith Walker
A	Richard Jackson	

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor T Butler

MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 6th September, 2004 having been circulated were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Councillor John Bell*
“ Y Davidson*
“ V H Dobson
“ Andy Freeman
“ Richard Jackson
“ Mrs N Smedley
“ Mrs S Smedley

“ P Tsimbiridis

* - denotes on other County Council business

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

REPORT BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FOR THE PERIOD JULY - SEPTEMBER 2004

Councillor Butler introduced his report. Councillor Clarke raised two matters in his division. Councillor Butler undertook to look into the matter of street lighting near Parkdale Primary School, while the Director indicated that a school crossing patrol was to be provided on Vale Road, Colwick.

REPORT FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES: JULY – SEPTEMBER 2004

Peter Webster, Director of Environment, introduced the report. He pointed out that during the second quarter, performance in Direct Services had improved. He offered to provide more detail in a future report to the Committee. It was suggested that Councillor Stocks be invited, as well as the Assistant Director (Property Services). Councillor Heptinstall thanked the officers who had prepared the Beacon Council bid for sustainable energy.

PERFORMANCE OF CENTRAL NETWORKS IN RELATION TO STREET LIGHTING

Alex Hogg and Steve Conway from Central Networks gave a brief presentation on their company's approach to street lighting and answered Members questions. They explained that the former Midlands Electricity area had its own team to repair street lighting faults, whereas the former East Midlands Electricity area employed outside contractors. They explained that the in-house model was to be extended to the whole region. There was also an intention to move the target from 20 days to 15 days, with a 2 hour target for emergency call outs. The service was now undergoing a period of consolidation, and they assured Members of their wish to improve communication and provide better information in response to customer demands.

Councillor Bullivant commented that even though the County Council's workforce was quick at repairing faults which were the County Council's responsibility, the County Council was blamed for delays which were within the remit of Central Networks. Councillor Clarke suggested a monitoring report to each meeting of the Committee over the winter period. Mr Hundal wondered whether Central Networks would consider a partnership with the County Council's Direct Services. He observed that one fifth of targets were not being met, and asked what incentives there were for performance to improve. Mr Hogg replied that there were no financial penalties for unmetered supplies, although the regulator, Ofgem, was looking at the possibility of these. He emphasised that the company gave high priority to repairing faults. He asserted that the company demonstrated value for money through its prices, which had recently been benchmarked and shown to be competitive.

He was prepared to talk about the partnership issue. In reply to a question from Councillor Heptinstall, Mr Conway stated that the period for new connections was 15 days, although this depended on the location and circumstances. Councillor Heptinstall pointed out that complexities such as this made it difficult to measure success, and stated that more detailed information on performance was needed. He queried whether, in emergency call-outs “attended” meant the same as “fixed”. Mr Conway explained that “attend” might mean attend and make safe but sometimes considerations meant that it was not possible to make the fault safe on the spot. He stated that the company needed to put mechanisms in place to achieve the service level agreement targets. Councillor Napier thanked Mr Hogg and Mr Conway for their presentation.

It was agreed to provide a quarterly report on street lighting to the Committee.

TAKING SUSTAINABILITY FORWARD - UPDATE

Nick Brown, Group Manager (Environmental Strategy) introduced the report on progress on the action plan for “Taking Sustainability Forward”, and drew attention to the priorities for the next 6 months. Councillor Heptinstall was pleased to see progress on a number of points. Councillor Napier commented that it seemed that a lot of bureaucracy was needed to implement the Government’s wishes. Mr Webster pointed out that often there was an intention to make progress locally, without there being any clear lead nationally. Mr Brown referred to the need for a balance between local action and the national or European framework, which might limit local action. He stated that there might be scope for lobbying. Councillor Bullivant observed that while the County Council carried out energy saving on its own new buildings, there was no similar requirements for house building. Members suggested that this be raised as an issue with MPs, following one of their regular briefing meetings with the Chief Executive.

It was agreed to pursue the suggestion, subject to consultation with the Chair of the Select Committee.

DECRIMINALISED PARKING ENFORCEMENT - UPDATE

Jas Hundal, Deputy Director of Environment, introduced the report, and drew attention to the seminar with District Councils the following week. He indicated that it was not yet clear which Districts wanted to be involved with decriminalised parking enforcement.

Members observed that District Councils were likely to want to guard their income from off-street parking. Councillor Napier wondered why public consultation was at such a late stage in the process. He felt that the public’s views might add weight to discussions. Mr Webster understood that this related to the formally established timescales, but would look into the matter. Councillor Heptinstall suggested there should be consultation on both the concept and the detail of the decriminalised enforcement.

TRAFFIC CALMING STUDY GROUP

Martin Gately, Scrutiny Officer reported on the first meeting of the Traffic Calming Study Group, which had received a great deal of information from Suzanne Heydon, Team Manager, Accident Investigation. The group now planned to meet with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, to seek information from the Chief Constable of County Durham and the Highways Agency, and to look at the particular needs of motorcyclists.

The meeting closed at 11.40 am.

CHAIR

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