

# minutes



Meeting ENVIRONMENT STANDING SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> September 2004 (commencing at 10.30 am)

## Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

## COUNCILLORS

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

A John Bell  
Kenneth Bullivant  
W J Clarke  
Yvonne Davidson  
Stan Heptinstall MBE  
Richard Jackson

A J T A Napier  
A Mrs Nellie Smedley  
Mrs S Smedley  
P Tsimbirdis  
Keith Walker

## ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Cllr M Brandon-Bravo  
Cllr T Butler

## MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2004 having been circulated were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

## APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Councillor John Bell  
“ J T A Napier\*  
“ Mrs N Smedley\*

\* - denotes on other County Council business

## **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

None.

## **REPORT BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FOR THE PERIOD JUNE-JULY 2004**

Councillor Butler introduced his report. Councillor Brandon-Bravo commented that the amount of compostable waste must have increased dramatically with the introduction of the twin bin system and wondered if the system could cope, and what happened to the compost produced. Councillor Butler replied that they were coping with the increase in compostable waste. He added that there was a shortage of supply for compost in Nottinghamshire at the moment.

In response to a question from Councillor Walker, Mr Trigg, Assistant Director of Environment, indicated that the proposed new Household Waste and Recycling Centre at Cotham would possibly open in June 2005.

Councillor Tsimbiridis suggested that there was a need to look at having a drop-off point to alleviate the problems identified in Mansfield town centre in connection with the night clubs. Councillor Butler felt that this was an issue for the Mansfield Town Centre Forum.

Councillor Stella Smedley welcomed the proposed solution to the A614/Burnt Stump crossroads. She criticised the Highways Agency for their maintenance of the A614 when it was under their control. She pointed out that there were access problems all along the road and that the Burnt Stump crossroads was only one of the problems which needed tackling. She referred to problems at the Leicester turnoff, the Bilsthorpe turnoff and the Ollerton roundabout. She felt that the County Council had inherited major problems because of years of neglect by the Highway Agency. She hoped that the work on the Burnt Stump crossroads was just a start at rectifying these major problems. Councillor Butler agreed with Councillor Smedley's comments about the A614. He pointed out, however, that the A614 road was now in a good state of repair. He agreed that the junction with the A6097 was difficult but added that it seemed to work. He accepted that the Ollerton roundabout was saturated with traffic and that it would be a major task to make improvements. He commented that the second part of the Local Transport Plan next year could look at this issue.

## **HIGHWAYS SERVICES REVIEW: PROGRESS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION**

Mr Hundal, Deputy Director of Environment, introduced the report. He pointed out that the Department had moved from three stars (good) to four stars (excellent).

In response to a question from Councillor Tsimbiridis, Mr Hundal indicated that the Department would be making another PFI bid for street lighting. He

added that the lighting columns were deteriorating faster than they could be replaced. £2 million per annum was needed and if the PFI bid was

unsuccessful the County Council would need to consider this as part of its medium-term financial strategy either by funding the replacement through revenue or borrowing.

Councillor Brandon-Bravo referred to the closure of the A453 and the need for better signage about access to Barton in Fabis. Mr Duff Assistant Director of Environment commented that the A453 was a trunk road and was operated by the Highways Agency. He added that he would ensure that advice was passed on to the Highways Agency concerning inadequate signage.

Councillor Bullivant asked where the north based Highways Depot would be sited. Mr Hundal stated that the officers were trying hard to locate a suitable site. Mr Duff stated that it was crucial to have an office/depot centrally located to serve the north of the county. There was, however, a need to retain some satellite bases to ensure speed of response in remote locations.

In response to questions from Members, Mr Hundal explained that the Department's Management Team discussed priorities in the Action Plan and if change was required the decision of the Cabinet Member was sought. He added that reports came to this Select Committee on a regular basis. He commented that the asset management system would help to deliver services better but was taking longer to develop. He pointed out that the Building Better Communities had not been approved until February which was given a higher priority given Members' interest. Councillor Freeman commented that there was a lot happening in the Department but he felt that the Department needed to focus more on clients, residents and roadusers. Mr Hundal thought that there was a need to look at results. He pointed out that the Department had moved from good to excellent under the Audit Commission's assessment. He felt that the Select Committee needed to draw to the Department's attention any particular shortcomings. Mr Duff drew attention to the scale of the changes the Department had faced which included a complex restructuring to replace two decades of compulsory competitive tendering with "Rethinking Construction". He pointed out that despite this massive change and a general shortage of resource caused by recruitment difficulties, the Local Transport Plan and other objectives had still been delivered with an improving service.

In response to a question from Councillor Freeman, Mr Duff commented that morale had been poor among staff in the Highways Division. He added that significant time and effort had been put in to keeping staff fully briefed throughout the restructuring. He commented that apart from design staff most people had changed jobs and despite best efforts it was natural for staff to be anxious during the appointment process. The Hay Review had come on top of this and had affected Highways Division particularly badly. Councillor Freeman commented that one of the ways of overcoming poor morale was by effective communication. He added that if recruitment nationally was a problem this needed addressing.

Councillor Stella Smedley commented that it had been a significant achievement for the Department to move from three stars to four stars. She

added that she had always been impressed by the standard of work from the Department although she did not always agree with the priorities.

Councillor Heptinstall referred to major concerns in having a dialogue with the Highways Agency. He thought it was not good enough for the County Council and Borough Council to say that it was not their responsibility and have nothing to do with it. He thought that the asset management system should incorporate procedures to include Highways Agency issues. Mr Hundal stated that this could be included and also take into account the broader needs of the County Council.

### **HIGHWAYS AGENCY'S TRANSFERS: PROGRESS REPORT**

Councillor Clarke commented that Gedling staff at the moment cleared snow when necessary. Mr Duff indicated that this would be carried out by the staff who transferred. Councillor Clarke asked for a report on how the new arrangements worked in Gedling and Rushcliffe six-months after transfer. This was agreed.

### **WASTE STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT**

Mr Trigg, Assistant Director of Environment, introduced the report. He added that it was hoped to close the contract on the Waste Contract. He indicated that the twin bin system would take us through to 2009 and then there would be a need for an extra collection.

In response to a question from Councillor Heptinstall, Mr Trigg stated that the industry were looking at making building blocks from the ash from the incinerator. He explained that neither the ash or steel obtained from the incinerator were included in the credits. The government were being lobbied to include this. In response to a question from Councillor Yvonne Davidson, Mr Trigg stated that the recycling levels in the contract were our best estimate and the targets had not changed. He added that the government was reviewing the targets but it was felt our targets would still be valid. He added that our landfill needs would reduce but there would still be a need for landfill for commercial waste.

### **TRAFFIC CALMING**

Mr Gately from the Scrutiny Team introduced the report. Councillor Clarke suggested that people who had opposed traffic calming proposals should be included in the Study Group. Councillor Heptinstall commented that Nottinghamshire would not allow repeater speed limit signs but that these occurred in other part of the country. He thought that this should be looked at as part of the review and that there was a need for more flexibility. Councillor Stella Smedley hoped that the Study Group would look at successful schemes and consider whether these had made the situation worse in adjacent areas. Councillor Freeman agreed that the Study Group would consider these issues.

It was agreed to establish a Study Group consisting of two members of the Labour Group (Councillor Freeman and Councillor Tsimbiridis) one member of the Conservative Group (Councillor Jackson) and one member of the Liberal Democrat Group (Councillor Heptinstall). The Study Group would consider the proposed scope as set out in the report with a completion date of the end of April 2005.

The meeting closed at 12.05 pm.

## **CHAIR**

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