

minutes



Meeting ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 30th January 2006 (commencing at 10.30 am)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

COUNCILLORS

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

A Kenneth Bullivant
W J Clarke
Barrie Cooper
V H Dobson
Sybil Fielding

A George Kane
Pat Lally
J T A Napier
Ken Rigby
A David Shaw

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Martin Brandon-Bravo
“ Jim O’Riordan
“ Mrs Sue Saddington
“ Stella Smedley
“ Andy Stewart
“ John Stocks
“ Lynn Sykes

MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 12th December 2005 having been circulated were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY’S REPORT TO JANUARY 2006

Councillor Stella Smedley invited questions and comments on her report. Councillor Joan Taylor was pleased that the countywide concessionary fares scheme had been

agreed jointly with districts and operators from April this year. Councillor Laughton welcomed the proposed 50 mph speed limit on the A617 Kelham Road, Newark which he felt was an extremely dangerous road.

CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES REPORT TO JANUARY 2006

Councillor Stocks introduced his report. He indicated that the carbon management plan would be brought to the Select Committee before it was approved.

In response to a question from Councillor Napier, Councillor Stocks stated that the school meals service was not working with private firms on nutritional standards to help them compete against the school meals service. He added that they were working with schools to try to get the message over about healthy foods. He indicated that the service had been working to higher nutritional standards than those that had now been set. He explained that the 3 year funding was from the government. He added that in Scotland there had been a 3 year programme which was then renewed and they were hoping the same would happen in England. He indicated that with the PFI schools they were involved at the bidding stage with a view to hopefully obtaining longer contracts. Councillor Joan Taylor stated that it was intended to have a more detailed report on school meals at a future meeting.

Councillor Laughton referred to the “green” street lighting and drew attention to a planning application for a wind farm in the Newark district. He asked whether a report could be brought to the full council so that there could be a full debate. The Director of Environment indicated that the County Council would be consulted on the proposed wind farm and a report would come forward in due course. Consideration was being given as to what was the appropriate body to consider this under our committee structure. He commented that he was not aware of the planning application for a wind farm. He added that the planning application would be determined on planning grounds. Councillor Bullivant commented that a headteacher in his ward was delighted with the wood heat boiler. Councillor Stocks explained that one of the benefits of wood heat was that it was a cleaner fuel to handle and that there was a lot less ash at the end of the process.

It was agreed to have a detailed report on school meals at a future meeting.

FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Morgan Wray and David Hoskins from the Environment Agency gave a presentation to the Select Committee on the flood risk management strategy for the River Trent. They indicated that the current flood defences were built in the 1950's and were reaching the end of their design life. They provided protection to a lower standard than recommended by the Department for Rural Affairs. The aim of the strategy was to reduce flood risks and to seek to enhance the natural and built environment where possible. It was proposed to raise defences by between 0.5 metre and 1 metre.

They indicated that they had considered dredging the river but this was not feasible as it was very expensive and needed to be ongoing. There was also the disposal problems of the silt. Flood storage had been looked at but this would involve relocation of communities and was not suitable. The creation of a by-pass channel

would have to be huge and would be very expensive. A managed retreat worked well in rural areas where land was bought and allowed to flood. Changing the river profile would be a huge task to straighten the river out. He added that they were looking to mitigate the risk in villages downstream when the planned works were completed and were carrying out a separate project at reducing the flood risk.

Councillor Sue Saddington pointed out that when the Environment Agency were asked to comment on planning applications they either had no comments or said that planned properties should be built up to 600 millimetres high. This meant that there would be concrete bases which would reduce the land where the water would be displaced. She added that in villages she represented they were not able to get insurance except with one company. She asked why building in flood areas was still allowed. Morgan Wray stated that the development control part of the Environment Agency was a statutory consultee for planning applications and were responsible for flood risk assessments. He added that they normally objected to proposals if there was a flood risk and gave guidance on flow levels. Councillor Sue Saddington referred to a situation where two houses were next door to each other. One had been turned down because of flooding and the other had been allowed. She added that there was a need for consistency.

Councillor Brandon-Bravo commented that one reason for the flooding was the bed of the river upstream and it seemed absurd that dredging had been rejected altogether as an option. He thought that it must make a contribution. He added that there was plenty of waste land near Clifton and the silt could produce a flood bank. Morgan Wray indicated that they had looked at dredging but that it was unsustainable.

Councillor Andy Stewart emphasised that people wanted consistency about flood levels. He pointed out that the Trent study varied from 0-16 inches and was only a guide but was used as a definitive map when used for district council planning. There was a need to have confidence that the information was accurate. Morgan Wray stated that they used the best information at that time. They produced models and adjusted them accordingly. He added that they did take into account what local people said.

In response to questions from Councillor Lally, Morgan Wray stated that the West Bridgford scheme would start in April and that the north bank scheme was considered as a whole. He added that they would be looking for funding for the downstream villages and for local level funding. He reported that they were in negotiations with English Nature about the Attenborough Nature Reserve as the proposed defences would encroach on the nature reserve and they were looking to provide compensatory landscapes elsewhere.

Councillor O’Riordan commented that he did not want Burton Joyce and Colwick to suffer because of improvements to defences in West Bridgford and the city. Morgan Wray explained that Burton Joyce was protected by the rail line but that this could also cause problems with water trapped. They had plans to install a small pumping station for use there. The other option of having a separate flood defence along the railway line was too expensive. He explained that the flood defence committee had access to the local levy for smaller scales works and this was £3m per year.

Councillor Dobson commented that the residents of Collingham were tired of flooding. He pointed out that permission for housing was given on the flood plain. He added that the Trent at one time used to be dredged which made a difference. He felt it important that building on the flood plain was stopped. He pointed out that in the last flood the residents of Girton could not get back for 12 months.

Councillor Sue Saddington emphasised the importance of planning decisions on building in areas of potential flood. She stressed that the information from the Environment Agency was paramount for planning authorities and that it was either alright to build in a position or not. She felt that much more care was needed in the response to the planning authorities from the agency. She pointed out that insurance companies looked at maps and there was a huge responsibility on the agency about their accuracy. Kevin Hoskins pointed out that the Environment Agency could only advise district councils. They pointed out that they did sometimes object to planning applications. Their comments often said that if a council was minded to support the application then it was suggested that it be raised 600 millimetres. Councillor Joan Taylor thought there was a need for the agency to be more definite.

Councillor Laughton stated that land could be used to store flood water but that land owners did not get asked. Morgan Wray stated that drainage ditches were the responsibility of the owner. He added that they were looking at a strategy to reduce flood risk for example forestation.

In response to a question from Councillor Joan Taylor, David Hoskins stated that the design guidelines asked for a 20% increase due to the impact of global warming.

It was agreed to ask for a representative of the Development Control Section at the Environment Agency to a future meeting.

BUILDING BETTER COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE 2005-06 AND 2006-07 - UPDATE

Councillor Laughton felt that there was a need for more fairness on the allocation of funds to the different areas of the county. Looking at the figures he said that some areas had received no funding or very little. Jas Hundal Deputy Director of Environment pointed out that it was a 5 year programme and referred to the year 1 criteria. He commented that it was never intended that there would be equal funding between wards. Councillor Laughton felt that the changed criteria should be considered by council. Councillor Joan Taylor commented that the department should spend when schemes are worthwhile regardless of where they were. Councillor Stewart pointed out that it was a countywide scheme. Councillor Joan Taylor felt that the scheme was very good and would like more funds but appreciated they were limited.

HIGHWAYS PARTNERSHIPS

The latest position on highway partnerships was noted.

DECRIMINALISED PARKING ENFORCEMENT 2005 YEAR END PROGRESS REPORT

The latest developments associated with the decriminalised parking enforcement project were noted.

REGIONAL FUNDING ALLOCATIONS FOR TRANSPORT

The outcome of the process to determine regional transport funding priorities was noted. Jas Hundal Deputy Director of Environment reported that they would continue to press for the A46 to be funded outside the regional allocation.

UK CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION POLICY FRAMEWORK: A RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

The proposed response to the government's consultation over a UK climate change adaptation policy framework was approved as set out in the appendix to the report.

DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDERS

Steve Jones from the Environment Department estimated that there between 400-500 unregistered paths in the county which needed researching. He indicated that they had added 70 paths to the definitive map which involved a legal process. Councillor Brandon-Bravo stated that he was trying to find out the existing situation in West Bridgford about urban jitties. Steve Jones stated that ownership of these was unclear and that they were not all public rights of way. He indicated that it came down to a resourcing issue to complete this week. Councillor Joan Taylor felt that resolving these issues could save on legal bills in the future. Steve Jones indicated that these matters were referred to the Secretary of State and following a public inquiry an inspector made an independent decision on the evidence heard. He added that this system worked very well and was followed around the country.

POLICY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF MOTORISED VEHICLE USE ON PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

The policy framework was noted.

COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS CONFERENCE – “ON THE RIGHT TRACK” 25TH NOVEMBER 2005

The summary of the main themes of the conference was noted.

FORWARD PLAN AND WORK PROGRAMME

The forward plan and work programme were noted.

The meeting closed at 12.32 pm.

CHAIR