

minutes



Meeting ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 12th December 2005 (commencing at 10.30 am)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

COUNCILLORS

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

Kenneth Bullivant	A	George Kane
W J Clarke		Pat Lally
Barrie Cooper		J T A Napier
V H Dobson	A	Ken Rigby
A Sybil Fielding		David Shaw

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Martin Brandon-Bravo

MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 31st October 2005 having been circulated were confirmed and signed as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Brandon-Bravo as having been in attendance.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Councillor Sybil Fielding
“ George Kane
“ Ken Rigby

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY'S REPORT TO DECEMBER 2005

Councillor Stella Smedley invited questions and comments on her report. Councillor Bullivant was pleased to note the progress on the new Retford Bus Station and the

improvements to the Elkesley junction of the A1. Councillor Laughton said he did not agree with the decision to raise the weight limit on Halloughton Road, Southwell.

MATTER ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Councillor Cooper referred to the Environment Agency's attendance at the Committee's January meeting. He invited members to attend a meeting about flood risk management being hosted by the West Bridgford Local Area Forum on 12th January at County Hall. Councillor Lally drew attention to the launch of the Agency's scoping report, which was available on the Agency's website.

TRAFFIC CALMING STUDY GROUP – RESPONSE OF THE CABINET MEMBER TO THE FINAL REPORT

The report gave the Cabinet Member's response to the recommendations of the Traffic Calming Study Group, and summarised the debate which had taken place at Cabinet. During questions, Jas Hundal, Deputy Director, agreed to provide Councillor Napier with further information on the consultation about West Carr Road, Retford.

Councillor Taylor asked whether any authority had been prosecuted for using repeater signs. Mr Hundal offered to make enquiries. He reported that the House of Lords had defeated an amendment to make repeater signs legal.

In reply to a question from Councillor Taylor, Phil Rankin, Group Manager (Services and Safety) indicated that the national review of safety cameras was expected to be completed in January. Councillor Taylor asked for a report on the outcome of the review. Mr Rankin pointed out that speed limit enforcement remained a police responsibility, and there was pressure for the police to bring the traffic wing up to a satisfactory strength. Councillor Taylor observed that the police in her division were seeking volunteers to monitor traffic speeds. She asked for a report on the effectiveness of the interactive warning signs piloted in Burton Joyce.

Councillor Laughton commented that signs in Upton had been well received and had had an impact on speeds. In reply to Councillor Lally, Mr Rankin explained that mobile speed cameras came under the Safety Camera Partnership. They were located according to accident related criteria, and had to be accompanied by warning signs. He added that the criteria for fixed camera sites were more strict. He drew members' attention to a road safety workshop to be held on 13th January. Mr Hundal invited members to raise issues at the workshop and offered to bring a report to the Select Committee on any outstanding matters.

It was agreed to note the Cabinet Members' response, and to receive further reports on the outcome of the national review of safety cameras and on the interactive warning signs in Burton Joyce.

CONDITION OF ROADS IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Mr Hundal introduced the key points of the report, and highlighted the backlog of repairs on unclassified roads, which would require sustained investment in order to

be cleared. Councillor Lally asked how maintenance was prioritised and how decisions were made. Mr Rankin replied that priorities were based on needs identified by the condition surveys. He pointed out that "C" roads and unclassified roads gave rise to the most complaints, and that the government wanted local authorities to produce a Highways Asset Management Plan covering a 10 year period. Councillor Lally asked if members were involved in drawing up priorities. Mr Rankin replied that they were not, but were kept informed through briefing notes. Mr Hundal indicated that it would be possible to inform members of proposals in their division or district.

Councillor Laughton observed that the County Council consistently spent less than the standard spending assessment (SSA) for highway maintenance. He asked whether the council spent less than it received from government for this purpose, and whether the Local Transport Plan monies were used for capital or revenue. Mr Hundal replied that the Local Transport Plan provided capital funding, and the County Council had a planned repair budget for structural work of a capital nature. In relation to SSAs (which he pointed out were no longer used), he observed that councillors were keen for decisions on spending to be made locally, and not dictated by government. The County Council's revenue spending was about average compared with other authorities.

Councillor Brandon-Bravo referred to the poor condition of "C" or unclassified roads where they linked with a trunk road and were subject to heavy use. Mr Hundal stated that such situations were monitored and taken account of when devising the programme. Councillor Laughton wondered whether there was any compensation for repairs to roads experiencing heavy use as a motorway diversion route. Mr Rankin replied there was none, but the matter would be the subject of negotiation if a diversion was long term. Councillor Lally commented that officers were doing well with the limited monies available.

It was agreed that reports on the repair programme be submitted to the 7 district Member Forums, with a further report to the Select Committee if common themes emerged.

The Committee noted the final progress report on the implementation plan arising from the Highways Services Best Value Review. Mr Hundal indicated that separate reports would be brought on the key issues identified in the report.

CONCESSIONARY FARES

Mark Hudson, Group Manager (Public Transport) introduced the report on progress towards devising a new concessionary fare scheme to be implemented from 1st April 2006. Discussions with district councils and public transport operators were continuing, and he hoped to announce the outcome by the end of December. Councillor Laughton commented that district councils were encouraged by rumours that the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) would cover a countywide free scheme. Mr Hudson indicated that the RSG figures had been announced, and he was asking district councils to look at their own settlement closely. Councillor Laughton was concerned that the local taxpayer would end up paying for the government's promise for free travel. Mr Hundal responded that the present discussions were about going

beyond the minimum scheme announced by government, and were a local decision. He observed that no district council would want to subsidise another. In reply to Councillor Lally, Mr Hudson indicated that Nottingham City Council was part of the discussions, and that the current cost of the countywide scheme was £780,000 for 2005/06. In relation to the bus companies, Mr Hudson explained that the intention was that they should be no better or worse off under any scheme, the purpose of which was intended to compensate them for lost income. The scheme would be reviewed after a year, as it was difficult to predict its precise impact.

Councillor Bullivant asked what the impact would be for any district council which did not wish to participate in the scheme. Mr Hudson indicated that the district council would operate the minimum scheme. Councillor Laughton suggested that the discussions were very last minute. Councillor Taylor believed that the current activity was worthwhile if it resulted in a free scheme. She commented that the RSG had only been announced the previous week. Mr Hundal added that the timescales had been determined by central government.

REVIEW OF CARBON MANAGEMENT

Nick Brown, Group Manager (Sustainability) introduced the report, which set out a timetable for the Select Committee's review of carbon management, with the aim of reporting to Cabinet in June 2006. He referred also to the national consultation on a climate change adaptation strategy. The closing date of 30th January meant that the response to the consultation would be presented to Cabinet first and then to the Select Committee.

The timetable for the review of carbon management was agreed.

FORWARD PLAN AND WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor Brandon-Bravo commented that in connection with phase 2 of NET the County Council would be looking at its legal position as well as funding levels.

It was agreed to include in the work programme a report on projects recently supported by emda.

The meeting closed at 11.40 am.

CHAIR

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