



meeting **COUNTY COUNCIL**

date **Thursday, 18 May 2006**

agenda item number

from: **Cabinet Member for Environment and
Sustainability**

REPORT FOR PERIOD APRIL 2006

1. Building Better Communities

I am very pleased to report that Year 2 (2005/06) of the BBC initiative has been another success, once again making significant environmental improvements across the County. Over 90 highways based community schemes have been completed including additional street lighting and converting unsightly grassed areas into parking bays for residential areas. Year 2 also saw the first conservation based community schemes being delivered through the initiative. These have been very well received locally and include the creation of pocket parks, verge planting and allotment projects. Around 160 local community conservation projects have been delivered.

In addition the first BBC Flagship scheme was delivered at Clipstone where a major refurbishment of the area around the shops was carried out. This project has made a tremendous improvement to what was previously a shopping area desperately in need of investment.

The programme for 2006/07 is largely identified and Members will have received copies of letters sent to applicants advising of the outcome of their bids. Once again the number and quality of applications has been excellent.

2006/07 represents the third year of the BBC initiative and to date almost £10 million has been invested across the County. A significant proportion of this investment has been in wards identified as being amongst the most deprived in Nottinghamshire. The commitment to these areas will continue to be met and reflected in the annual BBC programmes.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind Members of our BBC event to be held on 4th July 2006 at Thoresby Hall. I look forward to welcoming many of you to the event on the day.

2. **Developments in Nottinghamshire's Rail Network**

I am delighted to be able to report that some increases in rail service have been secured. Many trains pass through Beeston and Collingham each day without stopping. After sustained lobbying by the County Council, Central Trains Ltd (CTL) have agreed to double the number of trains stopping at Beeston and an additional five trains will stop at Collingham. The new services begin in June 2006.

Members may also be interested to learn that there are three major developments affecting local rail services which may allow the possibility of further improvements over the next couple of years. They are:

- A new East Midlands franchise
- The Trent Resignalling scheme
- The Government's Transport Innovation Fund (TIF)

From November 2007 Midland Mainline and Central Trains will be replaced by a new East Midlands Franchise to cover services to London and all East Midlands inter-regional and local services. The Department for Transport will be consulting local authorities about the level of service included in the new franchise and this will be an opportunity for the County Council to request improvements for the Robin Hood Line, and faster services to other major cities.

The Trent signal box controls all signalling across a wide area around Nottingham and is now 40 years old. Network Rail will replace the box and all signals and points over the next 4 or 5 years beginning in 2007. In setting the new design decisions will be taken on track layout which will determine the future capacity of the network for many years to come. There is, therefore, a once-in-a-generation opportunity for the Authority to lobby Network Rail to undertake cost-effective enhancements which will deliver improvements to the service in Nottinghamshire.

The Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) is a new Government funding stream for transport schemes which contribute to 'national productivity' and the Regional Development Agencies identify suitable schemes. EMDA have included a number of schemes which will improve rail services as well as the dualling of the A46. Decisions are expected on the submissions in July.

I can assure Members that every effort will be made to secure improvements to the rail network and services and I will bring further reports as information becomes available.

3. **Provision of Highway Consultancy Work**

I have reported to Cabinet on the future provision of highway consultancy services. The County Council entered into a contract with Jacobs Babbie Group in July 2000 for the provision of highway engineering and the contract included highway and structural design, traffic and environmental studies and site and project management. The availability of this additional resource has been a key factor in our ability to achieve a full LTP spend and also allows work to be undertaken in areas of resource shortage. It will be necessary to enter into a new arrangement by April 2007 to meet predicted workloads.

Derbyshire and Leicestershire county councils have similar in-house engineering design services and also recognise the need to call on the services of an external provider. I have recommended that the Council enter into a partnering agreement with Leicestershire and Derbyshire county councils and a single private sector consultant. This would have advantages in terms of economies of scale, flexibility, shared good practice, development opportunities and collaborative working.

4. **Civil Engineers Award for MARR**

I am delighted to report that Nottinghamshire County Council in partnership with Jacobs Babbie and Alfred McAlpine Capital Projects has been awarded an Institute of Civil Engineers Merit award for the design and construction of the Mansfield and Ashfield Regeneration Route. The award is presented to schemes which demonstrate excellent design, a well-managed project and show original research and development. MARR opened in December 2004 and latest research shows that some 17,000 vehicles use the route daily. It has been a real success in terms of reducing journey times and making the area more accessible for business investment

5. **Rural Rides: 20th Anniversary**

I was very pleased to see that the County Council's 'Rural Rides' is celebrating its twentieth year. This is a programme of free, guided bike rides across the county aimed at the casual cyclist. They are led by volunteers with local knowledge and vary from a half hour trip to camping weekends. The programme was set up twenty years ago to encourage people to get fit and explore the county by bike. I am delighted to see that it has gone from strength to strength with the number of rides and participants increasing every year. I would like to congratulate all those involved with this successful initiative.

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Cabinet Member for Environment and Sustainability

