

MINUTES of the meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00am on Thursday 1 March 2012 at County Hall, Kingston upon Thames.

These Minutes are subject to confirmation by the Select Committee at its meeting on 19 April 2012.

Members:

- * Steve Renshaw (Chairman)
- * Mark Brett-Warburton (Vice-Chairman)
- * Mike Bennison
- * Stephen Cooksey
- * Will Forster
- A Chris Frost
- * Pat Frost
- * John Furey
- * David Goodwin
- * Simon Gimson
- * Frances King
- * Geoff Marlow
- * Chris Norman
- * Tom Phelps-Penry
- A Michael Sydney

Ex officio Members:

- A Mrs Lavinia Sealy (Chairman of the Council)
- * Mr David Munro (Vice-Chairman of the Council)

Substitute Members:

- * Denis Fuller
- * Nick Harrison

* = present

A = apologies

PART 1

IN PUBLIC

12/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Chris Frost and Michael Sydney. Nick Harrison and Denis Fuller substituted respectively.

13/12 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: 12 JANUARY 2012 [Item 2]

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

14/11 **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS [Item 3]**

There were no declarations of interest.

15/12 **QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]**

There were no questions or petitions.

16/12 **RESPONSE BY THE EXECUTIVE TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]**

The Committee noted responses from the Cabinet which were received in response to recommendations made by the Committee regarding:

- Update on Community Recycling Centre Performance report (item 5a)
- On-Street Parking (item 5b).

17/12 **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER [Item 6]**

Key points raised during the discussion:

- Members were informed that a letter from the Cabinet Member to central Government outlining the Committee's concerns with regards to reductions in funding for flood management would be sent out shortly.
- The Chairman stated that he would be seeking an update with regards to the recycling of electronic items.
- The Committee was informed that guidance on the routing of heavy goods vehicles had now been issued by the Council. Members however expressed the view that there were still issues with enforcement.
- The Vice Chairman informed the Committee of the progress made to date by the Community Infrastructure Levy task group, of which he was the Chairman. The Task Group had gathered evidence from local property developers and would use this to inform future discussions.
- The Committee was informed that the Utilities task group will aim to have its first meeting shortly, and that the Passenger Transport task group will aim to meet within the next two months in order to discuss the final phase of the bus review.

(at 10:12 Pat Frost entered the meeting).

Recommendations:

None.

Select Committee next steps:

The Committee will review the Forward Work Programme and Recommendations Tracker at its next meeting.

18/12 **INTERIM REPORT OF THE MAINTENANCE PRIORITISATION TASK GROUP [Item 7]**

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: Mark Borland (Group Manager, Projects and Contracts)
Amanda Richards (Asset Strategy Team Manager)
Jason Russell (Assistant Director, Highways)

Key points raised during the discussion:

- Members felt that at present there was limited Member understanding of how the system of maintenance prioritisation for Highways functions. In order to make the proposed new system a success, it was felt that it would be necessary to effectively communicate to Members and the public how the new system will function, what the role of Members will be within it, and what its benefits are.
- Consequently the Committee agreed an additional recommendation requesting that Highways draw up a communication plan subject to the adoption of the recommendations by the Cabinet.
- It was stated that following the findings of the task group, it was felt that a one size fits all approach to maintenance prioritisation would not work across Surrey, and instead a three-system approach had been proposed in the report.
- The three-system approach entailed firstly a major core maintenance programme, which would be prioritised on the basis of engineering assessments and asset management considerations, and not Member input. This would be operated over a four-year period in order to fit in with the political cycle of the Council. It was felt that this approach would provide greater certainty and transparency to Members, Officers and residents as to when schemes would be carried out, and the implications of changes to the existing schedule, whereas under the existing system this was not possible and prioritisation schedules would be reset on a yearly basis.
- The second aspect of the system was a Local Maintenance Programme which would be Member led. This would operate over a shorter life cycle and would enable Members to deliver schemes identified as a community priority.
- The third aspect of the system was a carriageway protection programme, which would allow for targeted improvements in accordance with a planned intervention cycle.

ITEM 2

- The Committee was informed that a new approach for smaller jobs had been adopted, with a move away from gangs. Officers stated that as of April 2012 May Gurney will aim for a 10-day turnaround for the confirmation of a date for works commencing.
- Members were advised that the Task Group felt that it was important to work to identify 'Invest to Save' opportunities to develop and join up the ICT and data systems which were currently used for Asset Management and Highways Maintenance, and accordingly the report included a recommendation in support of this.
- The Committee felt that ICT was of particular significance and debated the advantages and disadvantages of having a bespoke ICT system. Officers advised that there was no single 'off the shelf' ICT system available which could cover all of the varied functions required for Asset Management and Prioritisation of Highways Maintenance, and that a bespoke solution, for which high level requirements have already been determined by the service, would be required to integrate and combine all of these separate functions.
- The Select Committee subsequently added a recommendation which sought the Cabinet's approval for providing the full budgetary requirement in order to support the development of the ICT systems
- Officers were asked to clarify which specific areas Highways were responsible for and which fell within the remit of local Members so that it was clear what Community Pride Funds could be spent on. Consideration should be given to amalgamating the Community Pride Funds with other funding that was at member's discretion to reduce a separate administrative burden.
- It was suggested that the County clears the backlog of schemes so that it could be able to focus primarily on preventative work. Officers responded that having no backlog at all was not desirable as it would not be an efficient use of resources.
- The Committee was informed that in the future Members will receive more information as to the status of schemes. Core maintenance programmes will be publicised more widely and Local Committees will be given specific timescales.
- Concern was expressed that Highways Managers may experience challenges while working with Local Committees. Officers acknowledged that resourcing may be an issue, however if good ways of working and positive relationships with partners could be developed then this problem would be overcome.
- It was confirmed that Local Committees would be able to determine what 10% of Highways scheme funding will be spent on, with the remainder being decided by officers. It was also suggested that if a Local Committee were to bring back gangs they should trial them for a year.
- The proposals for greater involvement of Local Committees were welcomed, though concern was expressed that they do not meet

regularly enough to make sufficient progress. Concern was also expressed that significant amount of officer time would be occupied by viability surveys and that a return to the use of gangs would be more efficient.

- Officers informed the Committee that they are aiming for all reported works to be recorded in the online portal for 2013. It was acknowledged that work needed to be done in order to improve the process for prioritising innovations and ideas, though the new programme would have the benefit of enabling Members to identify sections of roads that need attention.
- Concern was expressed that it would be difficult to address key issues and make long term savings on the basis of a four-year plan. The view was also expressed that 10% of the budget being decided by Local Committees was not enough to significantly address the needs of Local Members and residents. Officers responded that the proposal would allow for greater flexibility in the budget than there is at present and that savings will likely be achieved, but would be reviewed.
- Officers confirmed that recent restructuring had not reduced the total number of staff in local area officer teams, as they recognised the need for adequate resources to be available for working with Select Committees.
- The Chairman thanked officers for their work on the report.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Recommendations:

- a) To adopt the proposals for a three system approach to Highways Maintenance Prioritisation, as set out at Annex B to this report.
- b) To endorse the milestones and objectives of Project Horizon, as detailed in Annex B.
- c) To support officers to develop an Invest To Save project to support the automation and optimisation of the asset prioritisation process.
- d) To provide the full budgetary requirement in order to enable the development of more efficient, joined up ICT systems for Asset Management and Maintenance Prioritisation.
- e) That a communications plan for the new system of highways maintenance prioritisation be developed and shared with the Select Committee.

Select Committee next steps:

The Select Committee will receive the final report of the Highways Maintenance Prioritisation Task Group at a future meeting.

19/12 **SERVICE IMPROVEMENT THROUGH WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP**
[Item 8]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: Ian Boast (Head of Waste and Sustainability)
Richard Parkinson (Waste Contract and Infrastructure Team
Manager)

Key points raised during the discussion:

- The view was expressed that the current arrangements were a positive example of the Borough and County working successfully in partnership, with a number of cost savings having been made. Officers responded that convergence of the South East Seven (SE7) would be important going forward, and that progress will be steady before large subjects such as infrastructure are tackled.
- Concern was expressed that the Council setting a target of 70% recycling rates in Surrey was too ambitious if recycling was not made easier for residents. Officers responded that the target was achievable as recycling rates in Surrey are currently at 55%, a figure that has doubled in recent years. This was particularly significant as the Government are considering compelling businesses to use a minimum amount of recycled material. It was also stated that there could be potential benefits in joint working with waste disposal through the SE7.

(at 11:45 Chris Norman and John Furey left the meeting).

- Officers informed the Committee that they were working with charities in order to provide further use for discarded items. An issue at present however is private companies that collect textiles and make a profit from selling them on, and only donate a small proportion of money to charity. Officers agreed that re-use was a concept that needed to be developed further however its viability would depend on a co-ordinated infrastructure across the country.
- The Committee was informed that the debate surrounding the benefits or drawbacks of co-mingling centred around the effect it had upon the value of retrieved material. Co-mingling is much easier for residents and in comparison it was felt that there is currently a reduced willingness on the part of the public to separate their recycling, and hence there was still a need to look at improving separation technologies.

Recommendations (to Cabinet):

None.

Select Committee next steps:

The Committee will receive updates as required.

20/12 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 11]**

Noted that the next meeting of the Committee will be on 19 April 2012.

[Meeting Ended: 12.00pm]

Chairman