

MINUTES of the meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00am on Thursday 19 April 2012 at County Hall.

These Minutes are subject to confirmation by the Select Committee at its meeting on 31 May 2012.

Members:

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

Substitute Members:

- * Denise Saliagopoulos

Ex officio Members:

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

In attendance:

- * John Furey (Cabinet Member for Transport and the Environment)
- * Tim Hall (Cabinet Member for Children and Learning)

A = apologies

* = present

PART 1
IN PUBLIC

21/12 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]**

Denise Saliagopoulos was appointed as a substitute for the vacant Committee position.

22/12 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: 1 MARCH 2012 [Item 2]**

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

23/12 **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS [Item 3]**

There were no declarations of interests.

24/12 **QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]**

There were no questions or petitions.

25/12 **RESPONSE BY THE EXECUTIVE TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]**

- A response was considered from the Cabinet with regards to the interim report of the Highways Maintenance Prioritisation Task Group.
- Also considered was a letter from the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment to the Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon MP, which the Committee had recommended be sent in relation to future funding for flood risk management.
- The Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment updated the Committee on the progress of implementing on street parking charges. Members were advised that all Surrey District and Borough Councils had now signed up to extensions to the existing on street parking enforcement contracts, and that negotiations were continuing to agree new arrangements, but as part of these negotiations any arrangements must not accrue any deficits. Any surplus revenues arising, over and above clearly identifiable costs, were likely to be split with 60% allocated to the respective Local Committee, 20% to the District/Borough authority, and 20% to Surrey County Council.

(David Goodwin entered the meeting at 10.06am).

Resolved:

That the Committee note the response from the Cabinet with regards to the interim report of the Highways Maintenance Prioritisation Task Group, and the letter sent by the Cabinet Member to the Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries on the subject of flooding.

26/12 **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKING [Item 6]**

Key points raised during the discussion:

- The Chairman confirmed that information detailing the level of visits to Community Recycling Centres on a site-by-site basis would be provided to the Committee shortly after the meeting.
- It was agreed that given the formalisation of drought conditions, an item on water management be added to the forward work programme for June.
- The Committee was informed that the Utilities task group would commence shortly.
- Members were informed that the Passenger Transport task group would be meeting soon in order to consider the final phase of the bus review.
- It was agreed that an interim feedback report on the subject of Winter Maintenance be submitted to the Committee at its September meeting.

Actions/further information to be provided:

As above.

Recommendations:

None.

Select Committee next steps:

Noted the Select Committee would review its forward work programme and recommendations tracker at its next meeting on 31 May 2012.

27/12 **SURREY'S REPORTED ROAD CASUALTIES AND PEDAL CYCLING SAFETY [Item 7]**

Declarations of interest:

None.

Witnesses:

Ian Boast (Assistant Director, Environment)
Clive Davies (Chief Inspector, Surrey Police)
Duncan Knox (Road Safety Team Manager)

John Furey (Cabinet Member for Transport and the Environment)

Key points raised during the discussion:

- Officers informed the Committee that although there had been a reduction in overall cycling casualties in Surrey, the number of serious cycling

injuries had increased slightly. An action plan was being drawn up in conjunction with Surrey Police in order to address the problem, which would be monitored by both the DriveSMART board and Surrey County Council. It was also noted that it was difficult to compare with national statistics, as there was no standard and different forces recorded incidents differently.

- It was suggested that officers consult more closely with Boroughs and Districts prior to the development of cycling schemes, as there had been instances in the past where Local Committees had not supported projects due to their relatively high expense per capita benefit, compared with other demands for funding.
- Concern was expressed that the recording of cycling participation rates was not robust enough. Officers responded that figures were consistent in the recording of casualties, but not on the total levels of cycling. It was stated that officers were currently looking at ways to improve the recording of data.

(Denise Saliagopolous entered the meeting at 10.23am)

(Pat Frost left the meeting at 10.24am)

- The view was expressed that improving cycling safety should be part of Surrey's Olympic legacy. Key to this would be the further education of adults, more engagement with cycling groups and taking the proposals of the Times' current Safe Cycling Campaign into account. Officers acknowledged that building on Surrey's Olympic legacy was important and that consultation with cycling groups regarding safety measures in local areas already formed part of their action plan. It was stated however that the proposals of the Times' Safe Cycling Campaign were largely based on problems in urban locations, whereas Surrey has large rural areas, meaning that many of the suggestions may be inappropriate for the County.
- The Chairman asked officers for their views on the difficulties associated with the enforcement of cycling safety, in particular requests from some communities to have 20mph zones outside schools. The Committee was informed that the number of child casualties outside schools was minimal, as present safety measures and slow moving traffic meant that serious accidents were uncommon. Concern was expressed however that key performance indicators (KPIs) did not at present record cyclist only collisions, and that police accident books did not record information relating to the personal safety measures taken by cyclists, such as whether high visibility clothing or a helmet was being worn, whether the cycle had functioning lights, whether a bell / horn was fitted to the cycle, or whether they were wearing headphones. It was recommended that the recording of this information be encouraged.
- The view was expressed that better benchmarking was required for determining whether cycle safety in Surrey had improved. Specifically, this could include different categories of cyclist such as commuters and recreational cyclists. Officers acknowledged this view and responded that

their action plan would include steps to improving Surrey's knowledge in this regard.

- Concern was expressed at the additional pressure placed on Surrey's roads by the cycle clubs that use the Olympic route. Officers confirmed that engagement with cycling groups was taking place through a Joint Action Group and consultation with the National Trust, which owns land that is popular with cycle clubs.
- Aggressive cycling and clubs 'bunching' on roads was highlighted as a particular problem in Surrey, notably at weekends. Officers acknowledged that this was a known issue, but that these groups were unlikely to attend educational courses.
- The view was expressed that issues relating to cycle safety were not new and should already have been successfully tackled. It was suggested that a task group consider this issue in greater depth. In response the Chairman advised that an update report could be considered in July to cover progress made in advance of the Olympics, rather than convening a task group.

Actions/further information to be provided:

Officers to submit a bulletin item, detailing changes to benchmarking figures for cycle safety.

Resolved:

That an update report be submitted to the Select Committee at its meeting in July 2012.

Recommendations:

None.

Select Committee next steps:

The Select Committee will consider a further report at its meeting in July 2012.

28/12 **HIGHWAY TREE MAINTENANCE [Item 8]**

Declarations of interest:

None.

Witnesses:

Lucy Monie (Operations Group Manager)
Jason Russell (Assistant Director, Highways)

John Furey (Cabinet Member for Transport and the Environment)

Key points raised during the discussion:

- The Committee was informed that Surrey Highways was looking to continue to improve tree maintenance programmes in conjunction with the introduction of the recent contract. It would also consider the potential transfer of responsibility for tree maintenance activities to other Boroughs and Districts in the future.
- Officers informed the Committee that approximately £650,000 per year was spent on tree maintenance, with £500,000 spent on tree surveys and risks identified by residents, £100,000 spent on pollarding and the remainder spent on clearing obstructions on bus routes, street lights and other street furniture.
- Officers confirmed that some stumps had not been removed under previous contracts as a result of budget issues, but that they would be removed in the near future and that the cost of these works would not come out of Local Committees' budgets. The Committee was also informed that there is an officer data set, which maps the location of tree defects recorded while carrying out the specialist tree survey.
- Members were informed that it was difficult to quantify the average cost of tree-related insurance claims for which the Council was liable, because variations to the level of damage could be significant. It was stated however that 260 claims had been made in the last six years, though not all of these had been paid against.
- The question was asked as to whether there was a register of trees owned by Surrey Highways and those owned by other organisations. It was also suggested that informing Members of action being taken in their local areas needed to be improved. Officers responded that work was currently underway to map ownership and boundaries, and that steps would be taken to improve consultation with Members.
- It was suggested that the Council consider giving Town and Parish Councils responsibility for hedge and tree maintenance, where appropriate.
- Concern was expressed that contractors were incentivised to remove trees on the basis of weight, and that this could potentially lead to heavier tree defects being removed while lighter trees defects might be overlooked. Officers confirmed that although contractors were given a lump sum based on tonnage to incentivise productivity and transfer operational risk, they were provided with a programme of work that must be followed.
- While officers were commended for the excellent pollarding work that had taken place in certain areas of Surrey, this was seen as an ongoing financial liability and Members felt that this was a role better undertaken at a local level, rather than centrally managed by SCC.

Actions/further information to be provided:

Officers to submit a bulletin item, detailing tree-related insurance claims in Surrey.

Recommendations:

- a) That the devolvement of tree maintenance to Districts and Boroughs, and where appropriate, Town and Parish Councils, be encouraged and explored further.
- b) That proactive pollarding of trees be encouraged, whereby their ongoing maintenance could be devolved (as in recommendation a)).
- c) That an accurate tree survey on Surrey's highways be completed prior to negotiations regarding the devolvement of tree maintenance to Districts and Boroughs.

Select Committee next steps:

None.

(Denise Saliagopoulos left the meeting at 11.15am)

29/12 **REVIEW OF THE AGREEMENT WITH SURREY WILDLIFE TRUST TO MANAGE THE COUNTY COUNCIL'S COUNTRYSIDE ESTATE: GOVERNANCE REVIEW [Item 9]**

Declarations of interest:

None.

Witnesses:

Lisa Creaye-Griffin (Head of Countryside Service)

Nigel Davenport (CEO, Surrey Wildlife Trust)

Mark Pearson (Director of Countryside Management)

Alan Pinner (Director of Finance, SWT)

Ron Pritchard (Chairman of Trustees)

John Furey (Cabinet Member for Transport and the Environment)

Tim Hall (Cabinet Member for Children and Learning and Chairman of the SWT Partnership Committee)

Key points raised during the discussion:

- The Committee was informed that the Partnership Committee now had a more structured reporting process and that its governance was currently under review. Although an audit report had advised that the number of Members on the Board should be reduced, the view was expressed that this would not be beneficial.

- The Chairman of the Partnership Committee advised that the size of the Committee had not been reduced to date, in the light of an Audit recommendation that its size should be reviewed. This was because it was felt that due to the varied geography of Surrey, it was useful to have a broad representation of Members on the Committee, and that reducing Members might negatively impact on the effectiveness and knowledge base of the Committee.
- Members discussed the membership of the Committee and identified that it currently included three Surrey County Council Portfolio Holders and questioned whether this was appropriate for a non-executive body. Concern was therefore expressed that given this membership, there had been little demonstrative improvement, either in the presentation of the finances, or in the response to the audit, despite the period of time since these concerns were first raised and that this was the third time in nine months that it had been felt necessary to bring this matter before the Select Committee.
- It was suggested that The Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) should be listed as an outside body.
- The Committee was informed that when the agreement was first set up, SWT was paid £1.2m by Surrey County Council (SCC) to manage its Countryside Estate, and this cost would reduce by £300,000 over a period of five years. Therefore SCC was now paying SWT £953,000 per year (a figure that takes inflation into account). This agreement had expired and there is a need to consider a new one.
- Officers informed the Committee that they had inherited a regime of management that was reactive, and were working towards establishing a system whereby all schemes were planned and costed well in advance. Other issues included the fact that the original agreement did not budget for one-off costs or enhancements. Officers stated that there was now an asset management plan, maintenance plan and sinking fund in place to address these problems.
- Members were informed that high cost projects were included in the asset management plan and that more detailed budgets would include costings for enhancement projects.
- The Committee expressed concern over the financial information, which had been provided in relation to SWT's Asset Management Plan and long term finances, particularly as a detailed list of major works to assets had not been provided. The Committee felt that without having a detailed asset register of works, it was difficult to appraise the viability of SWT's finances and long term plans.
- Concern was expressed at the operating losses of the Norbury Sawmill, with annual sales reducing from £83,000 in 2010/11 to £8,000 in 2011/12. However a recent grant and a volunteer manager have meant that the mill may stay open for another six months. The Committee was informed that the £300,000 liability for the mill was held on the books of SWT as a result of rules stipulating that charities cannot operate at a loss.

- It was suggested that a list of all assets, associated costs and risks be compiled on a site-by-site basis. Officers responded that a review on income and expenditure will be complete by the end of June 2012 and this would be an appropriate time to compile the list.
- It was suggested that forests should be classified as assets. Officers responded that they were included in figures for countryside management income.
- The Cabinet Member for Transport and the Environment expressed the view that the current budget for SWT was not sustainable and required review from SCC. It was suggested that a Joint Task Group be formed with members from the Surrey Hills and SWT Board to investigate the issue with the aim of agreeing a sustainable programme for the next 20 years.
- The Chairman suggested that Membership for this review be agreed subsequently and include Members of the Select Committee, and Members from the SWT Partnership Committee and Surrey Hills Board.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Recommendations:

That a Task Group be formed to review the governance arrangements of the Surrey Wildlife Trust and agree a sustainable programme for the next 20 years.

Select Committee next steps:

The Select Committee will consider a report on governance arrangements for the Surrey Wildlife Trust following the conclusions of the Task Group.

30/12 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING [ITEM 10]**

Noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be on 31 May 2012.

Chairman

[Meeting ended: 12.11pm]