

MINUTES of the meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00am on Thursday 12 January 2012 at County Hall, Kingston upon Thames.

These Minutes are subject to confirmation by the Select Committee at its meeting on 1 March 2012.

Members:

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

Ex officio Members:

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

Substitute Members:

- Bill Barker
- Denis Fuller
- Margaret Hicks
- Richard Walsh

A = apologies

PART 1

IN PUBLIC

01/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Michael Sydney, Frances King, Mike Bennison and Chris Norman. Bill Barker, Denis Fuller, Margaret Hicks and Richard Walsh substituted.

02/12 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS: 10 NOVEMBER AND 19 DECEMBER 2011 [Item 2]**

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

03/11 **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS [Item 3]**

There were no declarations of interest.

04/12 **QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]**

There were no questions or petitions.

05/12 **RESPONSE BY THE EXECUTIVE TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]**

5a) Response of the Cabinet to the Call-In of the Update Report of the On Street Parking Task Group

Key points raised during the discussion:

- A response from the Cabinet was received on the recommendations made at the special meeting held on the 19th December 2011.
- Concern was expressed that a final decision regarding enforcement arrangements may not be taken until March, by which time the policy will have been implemented in a number of Boroughs and Districts.

5b) Response of the Cabinet to recommendations regarding Surrey Highways Design Services Review.

- A response from the Cabinet was also received on the subject of the Committee's recommendations regarding the Highways Design Services Review.
- It was suggested that there needed to be a degree of flexibility in the proposals to account for factors beyond the Council's control, such as bad weather.
- The Chairman advised that that the Maintenance Prioritisation Task Group will be considering the role of the Highways Design Service, and how it can integrate into longer term Highways Maintenance Planning.
- Concern was expressed that the cost of Highways schemes was too high at present. It was stated that these costs are projected to decrease following the appointment of a new contractor.

06/12 **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER [Item 6]**

Key points raised during the discussion:

- The Chairman advised that the HGV guidance note to be compiled by officers was expected to be provided in January 2012.
- It was stated that public expectations needed to be managed following the provision of an HGV guidance note, as the Council was limited in what it could do to tackle HGV related problems.
- It was confirmed that the Utilities task group was planning to look at issues relating to subcontractors. The task group was expecting to begin its work in February or March, as a result of officer availability and staffing issues.

Recommendations:

None.

Select Committee next steps:

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

07/12 **PERFORMANCE OF NEWLY APPOINTED HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE CONTRACTORS [Item 7]**

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: Mark Borland (Group Manager, Projects and Contracts)
Jason Russell (Assistant Director, Highways)
Ian Kay (Operations Manager, May Gurney)
Mark Wilson (Strategic Director South East, May Gurney)

Key points raised during the discussion:

- Officers informed the Committee that key areas of concern for May Gurney at present were IT system implementation and surface dressing, as the latter was not controlled centrally from Merrow which caused programming issues. It was confirmed however that issues with IT had now largely been resolved as a result of improvements made by a new management team. It was also confirmed that two new IT modules would be tested shortly. It was suggested that Members be given a presentation on the subject of IT compatibility between May Gurney and Surrey County Council.
- The view was expressed that the structure of May Gurney's relationship with Surrey County Council was not clear. Problems from this included difficulties with officers responding to reported defects caused by severe weather. Officers acknowledged that there were issues at present and that a restructure may be partially responsible.
- The Chairman expressed concern at the fact that complaints are received at the SCC Contact Centre and it is not clear how these are passed on to

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May Gurney. Officers confirmed that the risk of dealing with accident and emergency calls has been transferred to May Gurney in order to give them further incentive to respond. At present there is a 24-7 call centre in operation which receives 500 calls per week on average, 96% of which had been handled within the boundaries set out in the contract. The Chairman stated that there was still a need to address Member confidence in the response received from Member hotline reporting.

- Officers were congratulated for the considerable improvements made to major schemes. However the view was expressed that for smaller schemes the situation had not improved. Specific issues included repairs to traffic islands, broken signs not being replaced, and manhole cover theft. Officers accepted that improvements needed to be made on minor issues, but that improvements are taking place with the introduction of an online reporting tool being one such example. It was suggested that a distinction needed to be made between what is a genuine performance issue and what is a consequence of other factors such as lack of funding. The Chairman suggested that in order to resolve issues of expectation, Surrey Highways provide Local Committees with a broad overview of constraints and which schemes can and cannot be completed.
- It was suggested that a perceived lack of faith among local communities with the new highways contract was a result of smaller issues not being addressed, and that there was confusion around changing reference numbers. Officers acknowledged that as a consequence of focusing on major schemes, funding for smaller issues had decreased.
- Officers confirmed that there would be a single surface dressing scheme to incorporate unfinished and new schemes for 2012. Officers accepted that there have been issues with aftercare, though a number of steps have been taken to make improvements. It was stated that historically the separate arm of May Gurney that dealt with surface dressing had been successful, though problems this year had been caused by poor communication and notification. Members were informed that in year 2012/13 a dedicated surface treatments manager would be in place, along with a clear management structure.
- The view was expressed that results against performance targets for the contract to date were below expectation, however officers acknowledged that this was likely to improve by the end of quarter four of the current year. It was suggested that a further report on this subject be submitted to the Committee at a future meeting.
- Officers confirmed to the Committee that they were pleased with the current relationship between May Gurney and Surrey County Council. A key benefit of the new contract was co-location between the two organisations, and improvements reflected in December's performance results reflected this.
- The view was expressed that circumstances of the current contract were very different to the previous one and that a comparison between the two was not appropriate. Additional issues faced by officers included IT problems, culture issues and a recent restructure. It was suggested that next year will provide a better indication of performance levels.

- Concern was expressed at problems that had been experienced with regards to resurfacing and road markings. Officers responded that the original tender to address these issues was based on the information provided at the time, though resources had been increased to address the high number of defects subsequently identified. It was confirmed that May Gurney would not be using the company responsible for road marking issues in the future, and that officers would be asking Cabinet to approve the carry forward of funding for works that had yet to be completed.
- Officers confirmed that there would be no work taking place in July 2012, with a reduced programme in August to accommodate the Olympic Games.
- It was stated that feedback to Members from residents regarding the new contract had been mixed, with complaints received as a result of issues not being addressed, and comments that people are impressed with the quality of work taking place.
- The Chairman congratulated officers for the openness of the report and their responses to Member questions. It was requested that an update report be submitted to the Committee to report on the Contractor's end of year performance.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Recommendations:

None.

Select Committee next steps:

The Committee will review an update report in six month's time.

08/12 **LEAD LOCAL FLOOD AUTHORITY [Item 8]**

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: Deborah Fox (Strategy and Commissioning Team Leader)
Mark Howarth (Drainage Asset Team Leader)
Lee McQuade (Economy Officer)
Jason Russell (Assistant Director, Highways)

Key points raised during the discussion:

- Officers acknowledged the fact that issues were being experienced with the asset register for ditches. The Chairman suggested that Cabinet be asked to approve additional funding for the system given that the County is now the leading authority on this matter.

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- Concern was expressed at the fact that residents were being quoted high house insurance premiums for being located on floodplains. The Chairman suggested that the Council's liability on this matter should be clarified.
- The view was expressed that Network Rail had not been forthcoming in their duty to contribute to flood risk management and that this was partially a consequence of a lack of ownership for responsibility. It was suggested that an officer be allocated to each case from start to finish in order to promote individual ownership and help alleviate this problem.
- It was suggested that the Committee write a letter to the relevant minister concerning the effect a reduction in Government funding would have upon floodworks in Boroughs and Districts in Surrey. Of particular concern was Runnymede, which is being faced with a reduction in funding from £485,000 to £15,000. Officers informed the Committee that central Government has advised the Council that local organisations and beneficiaries should be expected to contribute to funding, though this was not a reliable source of income. The Chairman agreed to ask the Cabinet Member to write a letter to central Government expressing the Committee's concerns on this matter.

Resolved:

- That the Cabinet Member for Transport & the Environment be asked to write a letter to central Government expressing the concerns of the Committee regarding reductions in funding for flood management.

Recommendations (to Cabinet):

None.

Select Committee next steps:

The Committee will receive updates as required.

09/12 **UPDATE ON COMMUNITY RECYCLING CENTRE PERFORMANCE [Item 9]**

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: Richard Parkinson (Waste Contract and Infrastructure Team Manager)

Key points raised during the discussion:

- Officers confirmed that construction of the Eco Park will not have an effect on Charlton Lane as the former will be dealing with District and Borough waste, while the latter will be dealing with Community Recycling Centre (CRC) waste.
- Members were advised that despite the implementation of a local publicity campaign for the two pilot sites, the increase in usage had not been

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significant. On average, 7% of visits to the sites took place during the extended opening hours. The additional cost for extended opening at the sites during the period was £52,112. This represented a 51% increase in staffing costs at the sites during the 6-month period.

- Concern was expressed at the 51% increase in overall costs for extended opening hours at CRC sites. Officers responded that this was a consequence of a reliance on agency staff and overtime.
- Some Members expressed disappointment at the fact that the extended opening hours of CRCs did not appear to be popular. It was requested that a breakdown of the visits for each individual CRC site be provided to the Committee.
- Members felt that due to the relatively low utilisation of the extended hours and their associated cost, it was clearly not viable to continue the trial in 2012 and consequently recommended that it should cease.
- The Committee was informed that the collection of electronic goods was the responsibility of Boroughs and Districts, though improvements to collection were being pursued through the Surrey Waste Partnership. Officers are also looking at the option of local 'banks' that residents could use to dispose of these items. It was agreed that the Committee would receive a further update on the recycling of electronic items shortly.
- Members were advised that another pilot programme had been conducted at both Charlton Lane and Slyfield CRC sites. The purpose of the trial was to assess whether the additional cost of providing some extra staffing could be offset by the increase in material recycling value and consequent reduction in landfill disposal costs. The two sites were chosen because they were two high throughput and lower performing sites which it was felt might benefit from extra resource, in order to increase recycling rates.
- Members observed that the Additional Staffing Pilot had been considerably more successful than the Extended Opening Hours Pilot and consequently believed that the trial should continue for a further 6 months. During September 2011, the net cost of the scheme had been £662 at Charlton Lane and £1,872 at Slyfield. While this still represented a cost, Members were advised that with Landfill Tax set to increase at £8 per tonne per year, the additional staffing could ultimately lead to greater recycling rates and lower costs in the longer term and the Committee agreed to review the scheme at their meeting on July 19th 2012.
- Members were advised that while a satisfactory recycling solution for wood recovery, carpet recovery and bulky waste had not yet been found, several trials and investigations were underway and Members were supportive of this stance.

Actions/further information to be provided:

- Officers to provide Members with a breakdown of visit figures for each individual Community Recycling Centre.

- Officers to provide Members with an update regarding the recycling of electronic items.

Recommendations (to Cabinet):

- a) That the Extended Opening Hours Pilot should cease.
- b) That the Additional staff to increase recycling pilot should continue for a further 6 months and seek to achieve maximum recycling at minimum cost. This will be reviewed by the Select Committee at its meeting of the 19th July 2012.
- c) That the Mattress Recycling Trial should continue until 31 January 2012 and base decision on cost of recycling versus cost of disposal.
- d) That officers continue to explore options for wood recovery and recycling based on cost, and desire to recycle over options for recovery.
- e) That officers to continue to explore options for carpet recovery and recycling based on cost, and desire to recycle over options for recovery
- f) That the trial involving bulky residual waste to solid recovered fuel continue and an assessment of future costs be provided by SITA Surrey.
- g) That recycling and recovery rates at Community Recycling Centres continue to increase in accordance with the Action Plan and performance be monitored.

Select Committee next steps:

The Committee will receive further reports as required.

10/12 **COUNTRYSIDE ESTATE: SURREY WILDLIFE TRUST'S REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME AND GOVERNANCE REVIEW [Item 10]**

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: Lisa Creaye-Griffin (Countryside Group Manager)
Rod Edbrooke (Countryside Contracts Manager)

Key points raised during the discussion:

- Officers confirmed that the Countryside Partnership Committee is now meeting quarterly.
- The Committee questioned the governance arrangements for the contract and requested that details of the governance review be provided in a report to the March meeting of the Committee.

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- It was suggested that sinking fund details be analysed as a separate item under the schedule of expenditure, income and costs. Concern was also expressed at the fact that a number of projected expenditure and revenue figures had been projected as fixed over a period of 5 years. It was requested that a full breakdown of all costs be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.
- The Chairman requested that Helyn Clack as Chair of the Countryside Partnership Committee, and the Chief Executive of Surrey Wildlife Trust attend the next Environment and Transport Committee meeting as witnesses.

Resolved:

- That a report be provided to the March meeting of the Committee providing a full, detailed breakdown of expenditure, income and costs, and also information regarding the outcome of the governance review.
- That the Chairman of the Countryside Partnership Committee and Chief Executive of Surrey Wildlife Trust be invited to attend the next Environment and Transport Committee meetings as witnesses.

Recommendations:

None.

Select Committee next steps:

The Committee will receive a further report at its meeting in March 2012.

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

The next meeting of the Committee will be on 1 March 2012.

[Meeting Ended: 12.55pm]

Chairman