

MINUTES of the meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.30 am on 17 July 2014 at Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on 10 September 2014.

Elected Members:

Mr David Harmer (Chairman)
Mr Mike Bennison (Vice-Chairman)
Mrs Nikki Barton
Mrs Natalie Bramhall
* Mr Mark Brett-Warburton
* Mr Stephen Cooksey
* Mrs Pat Frost
* Mr David Goodwin
Mr Ken Gulati
* Mr Peter Hickman
* Mr George Johnson
* Mr Adrian Page
* Mr Michael Sydney
* Mr Richard Wilson
Mrs Victoria Young

Ex officio Members:

Mr David Munro, Chairman of the County Council
Mrs Sally Ann B Marks, Vice Chairman of the County Council

Substitute Members:

* John Beckett
* Richard Walsh

In attendance

* John Furey, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and the Environment

47/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Nikki Barton, Victoria Young, Natalie Bramhall and Ken Gulati.

John Beckett and Richard Walsh substituted for Nikki Barton and Victoria Young respectively.

48/14 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING:12 JUNE 2014 [Item 2]

The minutes were agreed.

49/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

There were no declarations of interest.

50/14 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

A question was received from Cllr Hazel Watson. This and the response are attached.

51/14 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]

A response was received regarding the Select Committee's recommendations in relation to the Transport Strategy for Surrey's School Place Programme. This is attached.

52/14 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 6]

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

1. It was confirmed to the Committee that the date of the next Customer Service Excellence Member Reference Group meeting had yet to be confirmed.
2. Officers informed the Committee that the change in leadership at the Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) resulted in a delay in the progress towards renegotiation of the contract. Members were informed that there would be a meeting on Monday 21 July between the Chief Executive of the SWT, the Chairman of the SWT and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning to discuss relevant matters. In light of this, Members were advised to defer discussion on this item and re-schedule as appropriate.

53/14 MANAGING SURREY'S WASTE [Item 7]

Witnesses:

Tom Beagan, Partnerships Officer
Matthew Smyth, Waste Partnership and Development Team Manager

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

1. The report was introduced by the Waste Partnership and Development Team Manager who began by explaining to the Committee how the service has re-examined the underlying values of the Surrey Waste Partnership's (SWP) joint strategy in conjunction with Districts and Boroughs. It was felt that this was the best way to achieve a simpler vision yet retain the core principles of the SWP strategy. The Chairman then clarified that the SWP was a joint venture between twelve authorities (including Surrey County Council) and that both officers and Members were represented at SWP meetings.
2. Officers explained how a new strategy would be drafted (in January 2015) after a period of consultation with key stakeholders. It was made clear to the Committee that, during this consultation period, the service

would make a detailed analysis of resident's opinions regarding the current recycling process and the existing strategy. Concerns were raised by Members that current public awareness of the consultation was low and that the service should make efforts to improve this going forward - it was therefore suggested that the consultation period be extended to October. Officers asked Members to help distribute information regarding the consultation to local residents, where possible.

3. Members emphasised the need for officers to advise Parish Councils and Residents' Associations of the consultation and also to consider how they would engage people without access to IT and businesses. Officers informed the Committee that in addition to any online consultation, the service would be sending in excess of two thousand freepost questionnaires to bolster the consultation process.
4. Officers outlined the potential opportunities presented to the Council by processing certain products more efficiently. It was suggested that to capitalise on this, the current focus and method of Surrey's waste collection could be improved to include greater focus on textiles. The Committee recognised this as an avenue for greater investigation however some Members pointed out that the issue currently facing such a proposal would be the insufficient level of infrastructure local authorities currently have to process textiles. It was pointed out that, in the district of Elmbridge, Surrey Police were experiencing a rise in the level of textile related theft. It is assumed that this rise is attributable to the increase in value opportunity that textiles now present.
5. The Chairman asked for the Committee's input on Table 1 of the revised joint strategy as it was felt by some of the Committee that the 'Core Values' that had been established needed further refining in order to allow the service's vision to be better expressed and conveyed to residents. Members identified that by simplifying the structure of the 'Core Values', residents would be better positioned to understand the strategy during the consultation process. It was also suggested that 'consultation with Members' be included in Table 2 of the draft strategy.
6. There was acknowledgement among the Committee that there was a limit to the number of waste bins that residents and authorities could manage and that by increasing the level of materials being recycled (such as textiles), there was a risk that residents would find this unmanageable.
7. Concern was raised that refuse and recycling bins were often left in careless locations by District and Borough employees following collection. The Waste Partnership and Development Team Manager assured the Committee that this was a continued area of improvement and would be monitored closely going forward.
8. It was suggested that there was particular confusion among residents regarding what plastics were appropriate for recycling and what were not. A Member of the Committee asked if co-mingling provided better value for residents and if there were any examples of this practice being adopted within the Partnership. Officers informed the Committee

that there was no consensus across Districts and Boroughs on this policy. Members recognised that, in future, residents needed more clarity on the practical implications of recycling issues like co-mingling. The view was also expressed that educating residents about more general recycling behaviours should be a priority.

9. Some Members of the Committee were concerned about the lack of unity between the waste contracts arranged for Districts and Boroughs and the effect this was having on the waste strategy and resident recycling habits as a result. The Chairman explained to the Committee that the SWP was currently attempting to align waste contracts across all partnership Districts and Boroughs in order to foster better waste co-ordination and establish a unilateral recycling policy (with regards to what materials can and cannot be recycled).

10. Officers informed the Committee of upcoming changes to waste legislation (via the Waste Regulations which come into full force in 2015) that may have an impact on the way that Partnership authorities collect waste. In response to this potentiality, the Partnership has launched a project to assess the extent to which the current systems are appropriate and the cost and environmental impacts that could result from any changes. In the event of changes to waste collection services, the Committee was advised that a new consultation would be launched.

Recommendations: None.

Actions/Further information to be provided:

Officers to extend the consultation deadline to October 2014.

Committee Next Steps:

The Select Committee will scrutinise an updated version of the Strategy in late 2014/early 2015 following the public consultation.

54/14 FREIGHT INITIATIVES UPDATE REPORT [Item 8]

Witnesses:

Peter Hitchings, Freight Officer, Transport and Policy Team

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

Following a review of the officer report:

1. The Committee congratulated officers on the work carried out by the service, particularly regarding partnership working with Surrey Police in relation to monitoring and regulating the terms set in the Vehicle Operators Licence. Some Members identified the traffic issues caused by HGV build-up in some areas of Surrey as a cause for concern however. It was explained to Members that Surrey Police was unable to deal with some traffic violations by HGVs in the capacity they would

like as a result of limited funding and resources.

2. A Member of the Committee raised the possibility of street furniture and signage being implemented on a larger scale across the County to deter problematic HGV activity. It was discussed however that account needed to be made for foreign drivers who could not easily read non-standard road signage.
3. The view was expressed that HGV involvement in accidents with low lying bridges was an ongoing problem. Members were informed that satnav companies such as Tom Tom were now in direct contact with the Council, enabling them to issue information as efficiently as possible in order to minimise further HGV and Bridge related collisions.

Recommendations: None.

Actions/Further information to be provided:

Officers to provide Members with a briefing as to the viability of a Low Emissions Zone for all or part of Surrey.

Committee Next Steps: None.

55/14 FLOODING TASK GROUP INTERIM REPORT [Item 9]

Witnesses: None

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

1. The Chairman introduced the interim report by informing the Committee of how the interview process for the Task Group had been structured around residents and Local Members to allow for the widest spectrum of opinions and personal accounts on the recent flooding.
2. The Chairman indicated to Members of the Committee that the Task Group had yet to have a formal meeting with representatives of Thames Water. Despite this, the Committee were informed that Thames Water had agreed to a meeting the following week. It was also confirmed to the Committee that Ofwat had declined to meet with the Task Group. The Chairman advised Members of the Committee that he was meeting with David Hodge to discuss this issue.
3. The Repair and Renew Grant was discussed and concern raised around the fact that businesses were not eligible to apply, as this increased the risk of consequential loss of business.
4. There was a consensus among Members of the Committee that a number of drainage systems struggled to cope with the level of water experienced during the flooding and that this was a cause for concern. Members of the Committee expressed the view - in line with the Task Group's recommendations - that the utility companies should be encouraged to keep up to date plans of their networks and protocols.

5. The Committee strongly supported the view of the Task Group in that firmer decisions needed to be made by the relevant planning authorities in relation to planning permission on flood plains. It was noted that Local Planning Committee decisions to refuse applications were often overturned on appeal as a result of Environment Agency advice as to the predicted likelihood of flooding taking place in certain areas.
6. It was felt that issues around road closures during the recent flooding were a significant problem, with residents frequently ignoring road closure notices and confusion around which roads were closed and by whom. It was suggested that in future communication of this matter be improved, and clarification sought as to who had the authority to close roads during flood events.
7. It was suggested by a Member of the Committee that representatives from Surrey Police be invited to meet with the Task Group to decide if there are any specific insights or recommendations that they may be able to offer the Committee in relation to strengthening laws related to the policing of flooding events.
8. The Chairman relayed to the Committee that, during a recent Task Group meeting, the Environment Agency representatives expressed a desire to see more specific Member recommendations regarding communication during future flooding events.

Recommendations:

- a) That a review of the communications arrangements between the County Council, Districts and Boroughs and relevant partner organisations be carried out, with a view to avoiding duplication of effort and to improve communication as perceived by residents. This should include keeping County and District & Borough Councillors informed.
- b) That the County Council determines how the Lower Thames Relief Scheme can be implemented as soon as possible.
- c) That, in order to reduce the quantity of water entering the fluvial system, priority be given to the clearance of all ditches and soakaways in the County, and, where appropriate, the reinstatement or creation of ponds.
- d) That utility companies be encouraged to keep up to date plans of their networks and other protocols.
- e) That the County Council explores alternatives to the use of sandbags in flood defences.

Actions/further information to be provided: None.

Committee next steps:

The Select Committee will consider the final report of the Flooding Task Group later in the year.

56/14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 10]

The next meeting of the Select Committee will be held on 10 September 2014.

Meeting ended at: 12.45pm

Chairman