

MINUTES of the meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 8 November 2012 at Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Monday, 10 December 2012.

Elected Members:

- * Mr Steve Renshaw (Chairman)
- * Mr Mark Brett-Warburton (Vice-Chairman)
- * Mr Victor Agarwal
- * Mr Mike Bennison
- * Mr Stephen Cooksey
- * Mr Chris Frost
- * Mrs Pat Frost
- * Simon Gimson
- * Mr David Goodwin
- A Mrs Frances King
- * Mr Geoff Marlow
- * Mr Chris Norman
- * Mr Tom Phelps-Penry
- A Mr Michael Sydney
- * Mr Alan Young

Ex officio Members:

Mrs Lavinia Sealy, Chairman of the County Council
Mr David Munro, Vice Chairman of the County Council

In attendance

John Furey, Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment

61/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies for absence were received from Frances King and Michael Sydney.

62/12 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 19 SEPTEMBER 2012 [Item 2]

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

63/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

There were no declarations of interests.

64/12 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

There were no questions or petitions to report.

65/12 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. There were two responses to report, the response to the Committee's recommendations for the Winter Service Development for 2012/13, and the response to the Committee's recommendations for the Operation of Civil Parking Enforcement in Surrey.
2. It was queried by Committee whether any efforts were to be made to reclaim money previously accrued by on-street parking enforcement. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the County Council would not be seeking to do this.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

66/12 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 6]

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Forward Work Programme had been updated to include two new items for March, an item on Surrey Flood Strategy and an item on the SKANSKA Street Lighting Contract.
2. The Committee noted that a representative from May Gurney would be attending in January 2012 as part of the 6 Month Update on the Highways Maintenance Five Year Programme.
3. The Committee noted the progress of the Utilities Task Group, which was beginning to prepare recommendations for consideration. SCC's proposed Permit Scheme would also be considered by the Utilities Task Group.
4. The Committee were informed that the Highways Maintenance Prioritisation Task Group would meet in December 2012 before concluding their work and presenting it to Select Committee.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

67/12 HIGHWAYS TRANSFORMATION BRIEFING [Item 7]

Witnesses: Jason Russell (Assistant Director, Highways)
Mark Borland (Projects and Contracts Group Manager, Highways)
Jonathan White (May Gurney)

John Furey (Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport)

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. Jason Russell introduced the report, which provided an update on the Surrey Highways Transformation Project.
2. The key proposals for the Project would be presented to Cabinet in February 2013 with implementation in April 2013. The proposals were to be presented to Cabinet in three papers, covering the May Gurney contract, the proposed permit scheme and a third paper addressing the future of the Materials Laboratory at Merrow.
3. The Officer stated that the May Gurney paper would propose changes to inspection regimes and review the priority network. The Committee raised concerns about the potential impact of these changes. It was noted however that the main safety concerns on the network had been addressed and this was reflected by the fact that the number of insurance claims had decreased.
4. The Officer outlined the intended development of a five year Maintenance Programme. This would make Surrey the first local authority to put such a programme into effect. It would grant greater clarity on investment and potentially create a minimum saving of 15% in the overall cost of highway Maintenance. The recommendation to Cabinet by officers would be that the capital created as result of this saving should be reinvested in highway repair. Officers stated that the development of a five year plan would enable a notice period of three months for non-emergency work.
5. The Committee were informed that there would be work undertaken to measure investments against outcomes. The criterion for measuring this were still in the process of being defined. It was also reported that a number of Key Performance Indicators were in the process of being developed.
6. The Committee were informed that 25 parish councils had expressed an interest in managing their highways. Proposals were being drawn up, and it was felt by officers that the benefit of these changes would ensure that highways management was more responsive to detail on a local level.
7. The Committee asked for further clarification with regards to the comments about an increase in customer satisfaction contained within the report, and asked what measures were being put in place to ensure this trend continued. Officers responded that it was problematic trying to identify the key drivers behind customer satisfaction, as trends demonstrated a disjunction between investment and satisfaction. Highways were consulting with peers in the SE7 Group in order to develop strategies to improve customer satisfaction.
8. Members raised a question around the need for more flexible working in order to minimise the economic impact of roadworks. Officers responded that efforts were made to target work around off-peak hours in order to minimise disruption, however it was necessary to offset this against the rises in cost as result of imposing less flexible working patterns.

9. Members raised concerns about the current levels of staffing, and how the Transformation Project would feed into addressing these. The officers responded that the issues around workload management for staff were being addressed through a process of mapping which skills were required. Further to this, work was in place to address issues created by the current IT systems. The emphasis was that the problems with workload were connected with process rather than levels of staffing.
10. Members questioned whether there was a strategy in place to shorten lead-in times for roadworks. Officers outlined that shorter lead-in times had a significant impact in incurring costs. It was expressed that the primary focus was on providing works at a lower cost. The Committee expressed that Members should be Committee that members should be advising officers as to the public's expectation in terms of deciding the appropriate balance between response times, within the budget framework. It was noted that the lead time and cost implications were varied and it was agreed that this would be covered in the January 2013 report.
11. The Committee discussed communications with the public with regards to roadworks. It was suggested that contractors should take responsibility for informing residents of roadworks, particularly when works were being carried out within a short period of one another.
12. The Committee discussed how Highways intend to manage public expectations around Highways schemes. There was a discussion around the Highways Roadshows that had been conducted in October 2012. The Committee felt that the Roadshows risked raising public expectations too high and could have benefited from Member input prior to public engagement. It was felt that there would need to be a stronger commitment around working together with Members to provide an integrated and holistic approach to directing and communicating the work of the Highways Transformation Project. Officers responded that they would consult fully with Members before any future public engagement activities.
13. The Committee queried how Highways would manage a five year plan with Government setting budgets on an annual basis. Officers stated that the changes within budgets were historically minimal while also acknowledging that a five year plan would allow a greater management of risk.
14. The Committee raised the question of how residents and Local Committees would communicate with the 5 year plan. The suggestion was made that a clear communications strategy would be developed in conjunction with Local Committees. The Committee expressed the view that there was a clear need to involve both Local Committee members and Community Highways Officers.
15. There was a discussion around the identification of key priorities in relation to project outcomes. It was noted that there will be work in place to develop and define these.

16. The Committee were informed of the Laboratory & Materials Review. A question was raised as to the benefits of keeping a materials laboratory. The Assistant Director explained that private professional laboratories focused more on development of the highway network rather than on a local level, and often tended to be risk adverse. It was also expressed that within such a context, external partners found trading partnerships with the public sector highly desirable.
17. There was a discussion around the relationship between the Highways Transformation Project and the Localism agenda. The Assistant Director explained that the County Council would act as the strategic Highways authority; however opportunities were being developed for both Borough and District Councils and Parish and Town Councils to develop collaborative working. It was raised that there would need to be work done to ensure that there was clarity about the responsibilities of each of the three tiers.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Recommendations:

None.

Select Committee next steps:

The Select Committee will scrutinise the Highways Transformation Project in January 2013 covering the concerns raised by the Committee, in advance of a formal report being submitted to Cabinet in February 2013.

68/12 FLOOD MANAGEMENT - CONSULTATION RESPONSE [Item 8]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: Deborah Fox (Strategy and Commissioning Team Manager)
Mark Howarth (Flood & Water Strategy Manager)
Jason Russell (Assistant Director, Highways)

John Furey (Cabinet Member for Transport and the Environment)

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Strategy and Commissioning Team Manager outlined the scope of the public and Member consultation in relation to Draft Surrey Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. The Committee praised the breadth and scope of the consultation.
2. There was a discussion around the new responsibilities Surrey County Council would be taking on in relation to flood risk management in its capacity of lead local flood authority. It was noted that Surrey would be one of the first Local Authorities to publish a draft Flood Risk Management Strategy.

3. There were questions raised regarding the advice provided by the Environment Agency in the planning process. It was expressed that this often proved inconsistent. This created an extra difficulty as planning applications could not be refused as a flood risk if the Environment Agency has not raised any objections. The Committee also raised concerns that there was no change to insurance risk after flood management developments.
4. The Strategy and Commissioning Team Manager briefly outlined the development of a drainage approving body and the intention to look at how this would be implemented. Proposals for this would be developed for March.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Recommendations:

- a) That the Select Committee support the publication of the draft Surrey Flood Risk Management Strategy.
- b) That officers proactively develop a draft policy whereby Districts and Boroughs are required to receive advice from the County in its capacity as Lead Local Flood Authority regarding planning and developments in flood risk areas.

Select Committee next steps:

The Select Committee will consider the Surrey Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and proposals for a drainage approving body at its meeting in March 2013.

69/12 TREE MAINTENANCE [Item 9]

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:

1. The Operations Group Manager updated the Select Committee following the Committee's previous recommendations in relation to Tree Maintenance.
2. There had been little take-up from District & Borough Councils with regards to responsibility for tree maintenance. It was questioned whether District & Boroughs were able to request a tree survey from Surrey County Council if needed. Although the Local Authority currently provided a survey, this is not a condition survey but still satisfies the requirements of the Well Maintained Highways code of

practice. It was stated there would be a difficulty around resourcing any changes to this process without clear evidence of the cost benefits.

3. The view was expressed that measures of success from Epsom and Ewell and Woking could be used to determine the possibility of devolving responsibility for tree maintenance to other Boroughs and Districts. It was noted however that Epsom and Ewell currently paid comparatively more money on insurance than the County.
4. It was noted that the current emphasis on policy was around risk management, with identified pollarding programmes and general maintenance on a limited basis. Officers acknowledged that there was currently a large gap with regards to the level of service achieved by the management of risk and carrying out general maintenance across the network.
5. The Committee asked what work was being undertaken to address the significant tree maintenance backlog that had been reported by local officers. The Operations Group Manager responded that the current contractor was working to respond primarily to those with the greatest risk, with the backlog being addressed gradually when the resources were available. The Committee asked as to the process whereby Members would be able to highlight local issues. Any request would need to be directed to the Community Highways Officer or send the request to the Councillor's inbox.
6. The Committee discussed the possibility of identifying approved external contractors to undertake bespoke work. There was a further discussion of identifying suitable guidelines for this work to be undertaken. The Operations Group Manager identified that local teams funded vegetation gangs and would investigate the possibility of this being expanded to include tree maintenance.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Recommendations:

- a) To more proactively engage on the potential for devolvement of tree maintenance, within contractual constraints, identifying opportunities to increase levels of interest across the Districts and Boroughs and/or other potential interested parties including Local Committees.
- b) To identify longer term actions/plans to achieve potential devolvement including enhancing the existing survey on an area by area basis or by amending current maintenance regime where feasible.

Select Committee next steps:

That a further report on tree maintenance, to include information on further work towards devolvement and the current backlog of work be considered by the Committee at its meeting in March 2013.

70/12 REVIEW OF THE ENGLISH NATIONAL CONCESSIONARY SCHEME [Item 10]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: Paul Millin (Travel and Transport Group Manager)

John Furey (Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment)

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Travel and Transport Group Manager outlined the current arrangements for the administration of the English Concessionary Travel Scheme. It was requested that Committee noted that the Department of Transport had released a new cost calculator. This was going to have an estimated impact of £280,000 increase in spend for 2013/14. The Travel and Transport Group Manager also asked the Committee to note that the estimated cost of the enhanced scheme offered by Surrey was £150,000 and not £250,000 as stated in the report.
2. The Committee queried the split in cost for the enhanced scheme. The Travel and Transport Group Manager reported that the split was one third going towards companion passes, with the remaining two thirds going towards providing disabled passengers with transport before 9.30am.
3. It was suggested that Surrey could consider a separate scheme whereby a 'hospital pass' was issued to residents who needed to attend medical appointments prior to 9.30am, should the start time of concessionary fare operation be moved to a later part of the day. Officers responded that this would be unworkable, and that need to attend medical appointments would have to be taken into account as part of the overall concessionary fare scheme.
4. The Committee asked what expenditure went towards publicity to promote the scheme. The cost for this promotion had been produced in partnership with the Boroughs & Districts as part of the transition in responsibility.
5. The Committee expressed that there was a need to consider a change in the current criteria, as there was some inconsistency between Borough & Districts in how the scheme was administered. The Committee identified that it would like to see an increased emphasis on the burden of proof in time for the renewal of the scheme in 2014/15.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Recommendations:

- a) To consider the 2013/14 scheme offer to Surrey residents and pass the views of the Select Committee to Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 27 November 2012.
- b) To review Surrey's offer for the 2014/15 ENCTS enhanced scheme provision including the criteria and documentation required for a Disabled Persons and Companion Pass, and time restrictions. A report will be presented to Cabinet during summer 2013.

Select Committee next steps:

The Committee will consider a report on the 2014/15 English National Concessionary Scheme in summer 2013.

71/12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 11]

The next meeting of the Committee will be on 10 January 2012.

Meeting ended at: 1.00 pm

Chairman

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