

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **ECONOMIC PROSPERITY, ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS BOARD** held at 10.30 am on 26 January 2016 at Ashcombe, County Hall, Penrhyn Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Board at its meeting on Thursday, 10 March 2016.

**Elected Members:**

- \* Mr David Harmer (Chairman)
- \* Mr Bob Gardner (Vice-Chairman)
- \* Mrs Nikki Barton
- \* Mr Mike Bennison
- \* Mrs Natalie Bramhall
- \* Mr Stephen Cooksey
- A Mrs Pat Frost, Substituted by Mr Michael Sydney
- \* Mr David Goodwin
- A Dr Zully Grant-Duff, Substituted by Mrs Margaret Hicks
- \* Mr Ken Gulati
- \* Mr Peter Hickman
- \* Mr George Johnson
- \* Mr Richard Wilson
- \* Mrs Victoria Young

**Substitute Members:**

Mrs Pat Frost, Substituted by Mr Michael Sydney  
Dr Zully Grant-Duff, Substituted by Mrs Margaret Hicks

**In attendance**

Mr John Furey, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Flooding  
Mr Mike Goodman, Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning

**1/16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]**

Apologies were received from Dr Zully Grant-Duff and Mrs Pat Frost. Mrs Margaret Hicks substituted for Zully Grant-Duff and Mr Michael Sydney substituted for Mrs Pat Frost.

**2/16 MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 10 DECEMBER 2015 [Item 2]**

Victoria Young commented that the minutes of the previous meeting required an amendment on her attendance. Upon this correction, the Board agreed the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting.

**3/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]**

There were no declarations of interest.

**4/16 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]**

There were no questions or petitions.

**5/16 RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 5]**

The Board noted the progress made on the Recommendation Tracker and reviewed the Forward Work Programme.

**6/16 UPDATES FROM MEMBER REFERENCE GROUPS AND TASK GROUPS [Item 6]**

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The spokesperson for the Customer Service Excellence Member Reference Group reported that there has been no meeting of the group; however when the next Project Horizon schemes are introduced the group plans to visit local businesses to gauge the impacts on businesses.
2. The spokesperson for the Basingstoke Canal Task Group reported that the group had not met as it was waiting for a business plan from officers.
3. The spokesperson for the Countryside Management Member Reference Group reported that the group had not met, however the content of this meeting covered the remit of the MRG.
4. The spokesperson for the Finance Sub Group informed the Board that the group had scheduled a meeting but this had been cancelled due to the changes in central government funding for the Council budget which meant there was not enough information to hold a finance meeting.
5. The spokesperson for the Highways for the Future Member Reference Group reported that the group was pleased that the Board endorsed the recommendations from its paper from the 10 December 2015

board meeting. The group will reconvene after the Cabinet meeting on 2 February 2016 to review the group's role and assess its priorities going forward.

## **7/16 REFERRAL OF COUNTY COUNCIL MOTION [Item 7]**

### **Declarations of interest:**

None.

### **Main Speakers:**

Cllr Hazel Watson (Mover of the Motion)  
Cllr Stephen Cooksey (Motion Secunder)  
Cllr Tim Hall, County Councillor  
Mr Richard Bolton, Local Highways Services Group Manager

### **Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The following motion was referred to the Board for consideration.  
  
"Council notes that when roads are surface dressed in order to prolong the life of roads by sealing them and to save money before a full resurfacing, the road surface becomes noisier for residents living nearby.  
  
This Council requests the Cabinet to amend its policy to take into account not just cost but also the quality of life of residents, including noise levels of different road surfaces when deciding on different types of materials and processes for surface dressing or full road resurfacing."
2. Cllr Watson made the following points in support of her motion:
  - Highways laid a new road surface on a major road within her ward. After some years a preventative surface dressing scheme had caused a rise in noise level on the road.
  - That it was wrong to subject local residents to that level of noise.
  - That decisions on road surface treatments should be balanced on quality of life for residents as well as cost.
  - That the Council should adopt a similar policy to Lincolnshire County Council and Surrey County Council should accept that what has happened has had a detrimental effect on the quality of life to residents.
3. The motion was formally seconded by Cllr Cooksey, who reserved his right to speak.
4. Tim Hall, a Member for an adjacent ward was granted permission to speak by the Chairman and made the following points in support of the motion:

- An example of ineffective road surface treatment was given by Mr Hall in relation to the Leatherhead Bypass; this was evidence that something had to be changed to current policy.
  - That criterion was not correctly being followed and that the surface treatment used in Cllr Watson's case was perhaps not the right solution for the area.
5. The Local Highways Services Group Manager made the following points:
- There were a number of prevention strategies in place and that one option was resurfacing.
  - A newly laid road surface has a negative texture surface, whereas following preventative surface dressing a road has a positive texture surface, and a positive texture surface causes more road noise.
  - The Highways industry has developed quieter road surfaces so the effects of road surface treatment makes the noise differential greater.
  - Preventative surface dressing can lengthen the life of an asset considerably.
  - A preventative scheme covers more surface area for cost compared to road resurfacing.
  - There were a number of materials used for surface treatment and decisions were made on geography, traffic flow and the quality of the road. Some materials were unsuitable for certain roads due to traffic volumes or speeds.
  - Engineers make assessments on noise, but decisions rely on officer judgement. There was no national guidance on noise levels for roads.
  - Road surface specification will vary along a road depending on its layout, geography, traffic volume and speed.
6. Members of the Board including Cllr Cooksey made the following points:
- Quality of life can be interpreted differently.
  - There was no national guidance policy on treatment schemes.
  - Highways should consider and implement the best road surfaces in the correct areas.
  - Surrey's roads are among the most heavily used roads in the Country.
  - Inevitably some areas of road will run in the proximity of residents though it is unsuitable to change a road surface because residents live nearby to the detriment of safety.
  - Quality of life is not fully considered and the motion asks for this to be considered alongside cost.
  - Noise pollution can be stressful to residents.
  - Highways engineers are trained professionals and the materials used are subject to extensive scientific testing before use. Engineers choose the best surface for the roads and do consider the noise impacts on residents.
7. The mover of the motion was given an opportunity to comment on the discussions that had taken place and urged the Board to support the motion.

8. The motion was then put to the vote by the Chairman with five Members voting for and eight Members voting against, though there was one abstention. Therefore the motion was lost.

**Recommendation:**

- a) That the outcome of the motion is reported back to County Council at its next meeting.

**Actions:**

For the Chairman to report back on the outcome of the Motion at the next Council meeting.

**8/16 CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE IN HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT [Item 8]**

**Declarations of interest:**

None.

**Witnesses:**

Mike Dawson, Customer Service & Improvement Manager  
Richard Bolton, Local Highways Services Group Manager  
John Furey, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Flooding

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. Officers outlined that Highways began its Customer Service Excellence journey in 2013. At that time Highways had the highest volume of Stage 1 complaints across County's services, and Highways was considered as a major issue for Surrey residents.
2. Officers explained that the Customer Service Excellence accreditation is a mark of year-on-year improvement to customer service, using customer feedback to drive improvements. The Customer Service Excellence work was supported by the Board's Customer Service Excellence Member Reference Group.
3. Highways were independently inspected in 2014 and retained the accreditation in 2015. Officers confirmed that work on improving customer services continues.
4. Officers highlighted that Highways was using customer feedback to help identify trends and future improvements to the service and cited results from a national survey, and results from Highway's Customer Panel.
5. Officers explained that they were open to suggestions for driving improvements to their service for customers and that Officers were working on improvements previously identified at a Resident Experience Board meeting on Highways Customer Service

Excellence.

6. Members queried whether collecting grass cuttings from the side of the highway could contribute positively to customer satisfaction as well as an improvement to recycling statistics.
7. Officers explained that although Highways was responsible for grass cutting, there was no authority that collects the grass. Collection of cuttings would result in substantial additional workforce and logistical costs, making the idea less financially viable.
8. Cabinet Member John Furey commented that current spending on grass verges was quite discretionary as Highways only needed to meet statutory safety requirements.

Cabinet Member Mike Goodman arrived at 11.48am.

9. Members commented that residents were not aware of which authority is responsible for which Highways service and that clarity should be made around this. Members suggested that work should be done with the contact centre to clarify this at the first point of call.
10. Officers reported that Highways was in the process of reviewing its web pages and that the service had no target figure for 'hits' at the time. The Customer Service & Improvement Manager explained that the Community Partnership Team was currently working through the Customer Service Accreditation and both would be working together in the future.
11. Members commended the work of the Works Communication Team and requested an update into the review of the Dorking Project Horizon scheme. Officers confirmed that the Dorking Project Horizon works were discussed at the most recent Member Reference Group meeting, and that the group was awaiting the result of a survey.
12. A member of the Committee suggested that when surveys were put together comparisons should be made with similar sized authorities with similar landscapes, for example Hertfordshire.

**Recommendation:**

- a) The Board noted the report.

**Actions:**

None.

**9/16 SUPERFAST BROADBAND UPDATE [Item 9]**

**Declarations of interest:**

None.

**Witnesses:**

Graham Cook, Programme Manager, Superfast Surrey Broadband Programme.

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Chairman explained that the Superfast Surrey Broadband Programme would return to the agenda in April rather than March as previously scheduled.
2. The Programme Manager explained that Superfast Surrey Programme had reached the end of the main deployment phase and had provided Superfast Broadband to 86,000 Surrey properties from the intervention area drawn in 2012.
3. It was explained that the final months of the programme focussed on connecting properties that were more challenging; mostly rural homes. It was reported that these works were mostly complete however officers were ensuring completion before finally signing the work off.
4. It was reported that approximately 96% of Surrey had access to download speeds of 15Mb or higher, and expects a rise to 97% around 2018 if there is no further intervention in the market.
5. The Programme Manager and BT were waiting for the terms of the agreement between Broadband UK and the European Union to be renegotiated before further works could be carried out, however the Council was working with BT to identify potential areas for deployment within the original intervention area.
6. Members queried when it would be likely for residents to be included in future broadband programmes. The officer explained that until the EU agreement with Broadband UK had been signed, the OMR process and consultation could not start. It would be very difficult to put a date on timescales but this could potentially be months.

**Recommendation:**

- a) That the Board receives a progress report at its April 2016 board meeting.

**Actions:**

For the Scrutiny Officer to include this item on the forward work programme.

**10/16 THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL AND SURREY WILDLIFE TRUST TO MANAGE THE COUNTRYSIDE ESTATE [Item 10]**

**Declarations of interest:**

None.

**Witnesses:**

Lisa Creaye-Griffin, Countryside Group Manager  
Ian Boast, Assistant Director for Environment  
Nigel Davenport, Chief Executive, Surrey Wildlife Trust  
Roger Wild, Director of Finance, Surrey Wildlife Trust  
Mark Pearson, Director of Countryside Management, Surrey Wildlife Trust  
Mike Goodman, Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning.

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning commented that Surrey Wildlife Trust were willing to engage and make amendments to their contract with Surrey County Council. He also commented that both parties had been on a long and difficult journey to reach an agreement but believed that both parties agreed on the same direction of travel.
2. Officers reported that a number of plans had been drawn up, with the key to success being the main business plan, monitoring progress via agreed key performance indicators, and applying the correct investment opportunities. It was also reported that Surrey Wildlife Trust were looking to create efficiencies from their own resources.
3. The Chief Executive of Surrey Wildlife Trust commented that the Trust and Surrey County Council had been working well together and that the relationship between them had improved, and that there was an understanding of the importance of making the countryside estate self-financing.
4. It was reported that the risks to the Trust, should the plans fail, were significant and that therefore it was in the Trust's interest to succeed. It was reported that the Trustees would be discussing the Memorandum of Understanding, their formal commitment to the Council, at a meeting on 8 February 2016.
5. Members queried some of the figures around the woodland plan citing; 1,150 hectares generating £116,500 net income. The Director of Countryside Management explained that the Trust had commissioned an assessment of all nineteen woodlands on the countryside estate, and that they had been surveyed; however, at the time of writing the business plan they focussed on the four most productive woodlands, though assessments were still coming in for woodlands across the rest of the estate. The assessments have been completed, DWT are now working on the management plans for each woodland.
6. Members commented that a 0.1% per annum return was not a good prospect, however the Director of Countryside Management explained that the figures were based on wood prices and that opportunities would increase year on year, and that the low return on woodlands would be investigated.
7. Members commented that there were many income generating ventures that could be achieved in woodlands that did not require cutting down the wood. Officers agreed that recreational and amenity based activities were potentially viable in Surrey's woodland estate.



The Director of Countryside Management explained that discussions were taking place with contacts in the wood fuel industry around income generating opportunities. Some members raised concerns around levels of return.

8. The Chairman of the board agreed for the item to be taken into Part 2, by virtue of paragraph(s) 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person including the authority holding that information). The Chairman invited the Director of Finance from Surrey Wildlife Trust to stay for the first part of this section of the meeting to which he agreed.
9. Members further discussed the agreement between Surrey County Council and Surrey Wildlife Trust and outlined their concerns regarding the agreement. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning assured members of the Board their comments would be taken on board.

**Recommendation:**

- a) For the Board to send a recommendation to Cabinet outlining concerns around the agreement between Surrey County Council and Surrey Wildlife Trust to manage the Countryside Estate.

**Actions:**

For a recommendation outlining the Boards concerns to be sent to Cabinet for consideration.

**11/16 SURREY INFRASTRUCTURE STUDY [Item 11]**

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

**12/16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 10 MARCH 2016 [Item 12]**

The next meeting of the Economic Prosperity, Environment and Highways Board will be held on Thursday 10 March at 10.30am in the Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston-upon-Thames.

Meeting ended at: 2.55 pm

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**Chairman**