



Minutes of the meeting of the ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE held on THURSDAY 20 JULY 2006 at 7.30 PM

Present: Councillor Hopkins (Chair)
Councillors Eaton, Ferrans, Fraser, Holroyd, Legg and Tamagnini-Barbosa

Officers: G Beck (Head of Environmental Services), D Hackforth (Head of Planning and Transport), T Dove (Traffic and Transport Manager), A Hudson (Chief Waste Management Engineer), M Davies (Senior Planning Officer), F Bower (Overview and Scrutiny Officer) and G Lane (Committee Manager)

Also Present: Councillor Eastman

Apologies: Councillors Butler-Ellis, D McCall and Williams

Number of Public Present: 1

EP07 MINUTES

That the Minutes of the special Environment Policy Development Committee held on 6 June 2006, and the meeting held on 8 June 2006, be approved and signed by the Chair as correct records.

EP08 MEMBERS' ITEM

The Committee considered an item from Councillor Eastman regarding residents' parking on grass verges and pavements.

Councillor Eastman stated that a lack of parking throughout the City had compelled many residents to appropriate grass verges and pavements as parking space, creating a hazard for pedestrians and widespread damage to green verges and pavements.

Councillor Eastman made the following points of explanation:

- That the proliferation of vehicles across the City created additional pressure on the existing parking infrastructure.

- That older areas of the City, particularly those which existed before the conception of Milton Keynes, were not designed to accommodate cars and consequently lacked parking space.
- That many new estates had been developed with limited parking capacity and narrow roads which did not accommodate the growing demand for parking space.
- That the parking density requirements outlined in existing standards were inadequate and developers could not be compelled to provide the additional parking space needed.

In addition, individual Members made the following points:

- That the installation of drop-kerbs was prohibitively expensive and consequently an unpopular option with residents.
- That the proliferation of Houses in Multiple Occupation across the City had served to exacerbate existing parking pressures.
- That the garages on many new estates were often too narrow for modern cars, which displaced vehicles on to the roads.
- That the narrow roads on many new estates were not only inadequate for parking, but a danger for emergency vehicles.

The Committee considered a combination of measures to address these issues, including a campaign to educate residents, robust enforcement, promotion of the Parish Parking Permit, the installation of drop-kerbs, the redevelopment of verges to accommodate vehicles, and greater delineation between roads and pavements.

In order to address the concerns of Members, the Traffic and Transport Manager proposed that the former Parking Standards Review Group (comprised of officers from Development Control, Highways, Transport Policy and Traffic and Transport) be reconvened to consider the issues and report to the Committee.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Parking Standards Review Group be reconvened to consider parking issues and report to the Committee.

EP09

UPDATE ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS

Futher to Minute EP05, the Committee considered a report by the Traffic and Transport Manager on project management procedures and staff training relating to Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO).

Members heard that the final draft of the project management procedures was proceeding and that staff training was underway.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Committee receive a progress report on the project management procedures in January 2007.

EP10

UPDATE ON THE WASTE PROCUREMENT PROCESS

The Committee considered a progress report by the Head of Environmental Services on the Waste Procurement Process.

Members heard that Cabinet had authorised officers to enter discussions with other authorities to assess whether joint-working arrangements would ensure more robust waste management.

Joint-working posed a challenge, due to differences in policy on incineration, but the potential savings to be made ensured that it remained an attractive proposition for the Council, despite the delays to the procurement of the waste contract that it would cause.

Joint working arrangements would prove complex, and the Council might consider splitting the waste contract into separate modules.

In addition, a waste affordability analysis was underway to ensure best value. A project approach, complemented by technical modelling, would be adopted to ensure robust waste management.

The Government aimed to foster joint-working between authorities through the Waste Infrastructure Development Programme.

Members heard that levels of recycling had risen to 40.7% and was a significant improvement when compared with performance eighteen months ago. A target of 50% was a realistic proposition.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That Cabinet be commended for its decision to authorise officers to enter discussions with other authorities to assess the potential for joint-working on waste contracts.
3. That Cabinet be advised of the Committee's concern that these discussions could create delays in procuring the waste contract.

EP11

CARBON MANAGEMENT BY THE COUNCIL

The Committee considered a progress report from the Senior Planning Officer on the MK Carbon Management Programme.

Members heard that the Strategy and Implementation Plan for the Programme was approved by Cabinet in April 2006. The Plan was devised after a request by the Committee in December 2004 that the Council take robust action on sustainable energy.

Although the City was due to expand considerably, the Council had adopted an ambitious carbon emissions reduction target of 2.5%.

The Committee heard that the Programme required a capital expenditure of £788,000, but would generate a total cost saving of £3,133,000 and a carbon saving of 18,876 tonnes.

Members heard that the carbon offset fund would be used to promote better energy usage through the MK Energy Agency.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

EP12 SUSTAINABILITY AND CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS

The Committee considered a progress report from the Senior Planning Officer on Local Plan Policy D4 (Sustainable Construction), as adopted with the Local Plan in December 2005.

Members heard that recently published Supplementary Planning Guidance endorsed the provisions of Policy D4 and that officers intended to draft a revised and improved version.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

EP13 THE COUNCIL, THE PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE AND THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Planning and Transport on the roles and relationship between the Council, the Milton Keynes Partnership Committee and the planning process.

Members heard that, in addition to the Development Plan, material planning considerations included previous permissions, views from the public as related to planning matters, consultation responses and technical information provided by professional agencies.

Milton Keynes Partnership was bound by the Development Plan, unless material planning considerations suggested otherwise.

When undertaken by an applicant, Environmental Impact Studies became a material consideration in determining planning applications. Environmental considerations included flooding, subsidence, ground conditions and emissions from industry.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

REVIEW OF PLANNING SERVICES AND USE OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Planning and Transport on the review of Planning Services and the use of Section 106 Agreements.

The Head of Planning and Transport identified the following areas as potential sources of interest for the Committee:

- Performance Improvement.
- Planning and the Use of Information Technology.
- Revision of the Officer Scheme of Delegation.
- Quasi-Judicial Functions.
- Assessment of the Customer Experience of Services.

Members heard that the Development Control section had recently cleared a backlog of planning applications. The backlog had been caused by a combination of staff turnover, a sudden rise in planning fees in April 2006 which prompted the early submission of many applications and protracted negotiations over S106 Agreements.

The Committee heard that the pending Barker Review of Land Use Planning could result in reforms to the planning system, including the relaxation of Government policy on major infrastructure projects and the redefinition of developments requiring planning permission.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a Planning Services Working Group be established, on a 1:1:1 basis, to undertake a review of Planning Services.
3. That the task of formulating the terms of reference of the Working Group be delegated to the Group itself.
4. That the Working Group be required to report in six months.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 9.50 PM