



Minutes of the meeting of the ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE held on WEDNESDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2006 at 7.30 PM

Present: Councillor Hopkins (Chair)
Councillors Butler-Ellis, Eaton, Ferrans, Fraser, Holroyd and Seymour (substitute for Councillor Tamagnini-Barbosa)

Officers: G Beck (Head of Environmental Services), D Hackforth (Head of Planning and Transport), G Waghorn (Deputy Head of Finance), R Baxter (Finance Manager), I Dyer (Passenger Transport Manager), F Bower (Overview and Scrutiny Officer) and G Lane (Committee Manager)

Also Present: Councillors Crooks, D McCall, Morris, Pugh and Williams

Apologies: Councillor Tamagnini-Barbosa

Number of Public Present: 2

EP15 MEMBERS' ITEM - 20 MPH SPEED LIMITS

The Committee considered an item from Councillor Crooks on the need to review the introduction of 20 mph speed limits on several estates, with particular emphasis on estates under construction.

The Committee heard that a recent survey conducted on some estates by Councillors Crooks and Eastman had indicated support for lower speed limits.

Councillor Crooks suggested that possible mitigating measures might include one or more of the following:

- The introduction of blanket speed limits across all estates.
- The introduction of speed limits, where requested by residents.
- Speed restrictions around schools and hospitals.
- Estates should be designed for low speeds and low speed limits designated from when they are built.

Officers reported that the Council was required to undertake statutory consultation prior to the introduction of new speed limits.

Individual Members commented that:

- Speed limit policy should be incorporated into the Road Safety Strategy.
- A flexible solution would be needed, as conditions and requirements varied across the Borough.
- For speed limits to be successful, local people needed to agree with them.
- Consultation should be carried out from the Parish and Town Councils upwards.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Parking Standards Review Group be requested to consider the problem of speeding on local estates and report to the Committee.

EP16

PARK AND RIDE STRATEGY

The Committee considered a referral from the Performance Review Panel requesting that it develop a Park and Ride Strategy to relate Park and Ride to other strategies and enable the performance of the service to be assessed, for recommendation to Cabinet.

The Committee was informed that:

- Local transport policy was spread across a range of policy statements and needed to be unified in a single strategic document, for commercial reasons and in order to ensure a consistent and transparent policy approach.
- English Partnerships had engaged the services of an officer to assimilate policy into a single document, including issues pertaining to redways, walking and Park and Ride.
- In a similar approach, Council officers should be requested to develop a Park and Ride strategy and improvement programme for consideration by the Committee.
- Significant infrastructure improvement would not be viable prior to the pending redevelopment of the Coachway.
- A range of service improvements had been identified and would be implemented in order to effect immediate improvement in the local transport service, including the redevelopment of bus timetables and greater punctuality regarding the emptying of bins at the Coachway.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That officers be requested to develop a Park and Ride strategy and improvement programme for consideration by the Committee.

EP17

URBAN BEACH FEASIBILITY STUDY

The Committee considered the preliminary feasibility study on proposals for the creation of a local 'urban beach' in Milton Keynes on the model of other temporary beaches in major European cities.

Members heard that the preliminary feasibility study, undertaken by consultants Pell Frischmann, had considered several possible locations for a local urban beach and concluded that the western end of Campbell Park would be a suitable type of location.

Individual Members made the following points:

- That any proposals in support of an urban beach should not undermine the development of Campbell Park, as agreed in the Milton Keynes Adopted Local Plan.
- That any proposals in support of an urban beach should not jeopardise plans for the establishment of a local university.
- That Furzton Lake would not be a suitable location for an urban beach due to its diverse wildlife and water quality.
- That a detailed feasibility study, to be commissioned by the Project Board of the Milton Keynes Partnership Committee, would be necessary to address outstanding issues, including the potential costs associated with a local urban beach.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Project Board of the Milton Keynes Partnership Committee be invited to consider commissioning a detailed urban beach feasibility study to address outstanding issues, including the potential costs associated with a local urban beach.

EP18

REVIEW OF SUBSIDISED BUS NETWORK

The Committee considered a report by the Passenger Transport Manager on the criteria used to prioritise subsidised routes and the provision of services on the local bus network.

Members heard that the Council had no control over commercial routes, but retained the responsibility for providing services needed, for example, by older people. It had recently increased subsidy of

routes considerably. A review of the present Bus Strategy was underway and the Committee were invited to comment.

Consultation on the Bus Strategy would lead to it going to Cabinet later this year for approval and then to Government in July 2007.

Individual Members made the following points:

- That the Council had to broker a balance between the commercial needs of private bus operators and local residents' need for a reliable and affordable bus service.
- That although bus services did not presently serve the needs of all residents, the number of clients had risen on all routes.
- That the local grid road system did not lend itself to the provision of a commercial bus service, but significant improvements in route planning had been achieved.
- That the bus network aimed to substitute the present 'hail and ride' model of services for the provision of fixed local bus stops, in order to increase public access to services.
- That real-time electronic bus timetables were due to be introduced in the City Centre and surrounding areas, in addition to planned improvements in conventional timetables.
- That all Members would have a view on the delivery of services in their respective wards, and this was a wide issue that should be considered by all Members.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That Groups receive a presentation by Councillor Williams and an appropriate officer to facilitate consideration of the issue. The outcomes to be fed into the consultation on the Bus Strategy.
3. That Committee spokespersons be invited to contribute to the review of the Bus Strategy, prior to consideration of the final revised Strategy by the Committee.

EP19

BUDGET REVIEW GROUP

The Committee considered a progress report by the Chair of the Budget Review Group, Councillor Pugh, on the Environment Directorate and proposed Directorate actions.

Individual Members of the Committee made the following comments regarding the performance of the Environment Directorate:

- That a robust regime of monitoring and performance management was required to promote responsive services.

- That the provision of proactive, rather than reactive services, would serve to promote efficiency and reduce expenditure.
- That the promotion and improvement of the Passenger Transport Service, particularly the performance of the local bus service, must be a strategic priority for the Directorate.
- That more robust performance management of the Cory contract was required to ensure that open spaces remained sanitary and that all cleaning schedules were adhered to.
- That more robust performance management of the Synergy contract was required to improve landscaping services.
- That the progressive reduction of response times must be an operational priority for the Environmental Services Helpline.
- That the introduction of a new monitoring system, based upon the issue of Unique Reference Numbers, was required for the Environmental Services Helpline in order to track the progress of individual calls and reduce response times.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the progress of the Budget Review Group be noted.
3. That the recommendations of the Budget Review Group be noted.

EP20

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE WASTE CONTRACT

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Environmental Services on progress regarding the Waste Contract.

Members heard that the Council was working with South Northants Council and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to organise the provision of further waste collections.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

EP21

WASTE CONTRACT

The Chair agreed to circulate a written submission on the Waste Contract to Members of the Committee following the meeting.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 9.05 PM