

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Transport and Environment held at County Hall, Lewes on Wednesday 24 November 2010

PRESENT: Councillors Stogdon (Chairman), Belsey (Vice-Chairman), Dowling, Fawthrop, Freeman and Rodohan.

Scrutiny Lead Officer Paul Dean, Scrutiny Manager

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Lock, Lead Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment
Rupert Clubb, Director of Transport and Environment
Karl Taylor, Assistant Director, Operations
Neil Maguire, Passenger Transport Services Manager for item 5 (see minute 27)
Jon Wheeler, Team Manager, Transport Policy
Colin Clarke, Road Safety Specialist (see minute 29)

23. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

23.1 RESOLVED – to approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2010.

24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

24.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Daniel.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

25.1 Cllr Lock declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 6 (Local Transport Plan 3) as a Member of Hastings Borough Council.

25.2 Cllr Belsey declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 8 (Waste Management Arrangements) as a Member of Eastbourne Borough Council.

26. REPORTS

26.1 Copies of the reports referred to below are included in the minute book.

27. REVIEW OF SUPPORTED BUS SERVICES IN HASTINGS AND ROTHER INCLUDING SOME PARTS OF LEWES AND WEALDEN

27.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Transport and Environment which updated Members on the progress of the review of supported bus services in Hastings and Rother, including some parts of Lewes and Wealden districts.

27.2 The Committee sought to understand the future impact of various budget pressures on bus services arising from:

- A County Council requirement to assess the impact of a 25% cut in specific grants of which the rural bus subsidy grant is one; this equates to £250,000.

- An efficiency saving of £50,000 required to be achieved in 2011/12 by retendering and reviewing bus routes
- The future provision for concessionary fares the detail of which is currently unknown, but the cost implications may be as much as £500,000.

27.3 The following table illustrates the cost of providing different elements of supported bus services in East Sussex:

• Sunday services	£46,000
• Evening services	£68,000
• Community Transport services	£73,000
• Pump priming community services	£200,000
• Saturday services	£135,000

27.4 During the consultation to date, stakeholders raised concerns about possible loss of services and requested improvements to weekend services.

27.5 Despite the gloomy financial outlook, several bus service improvements have been achieved over recent years on a 'standstill budget'. These have included increased numbers of passenger journeys across the County, improved journey times and a greater service frequency on some routes. Continuing creative solutions will be required in the future.

27.6 Ideas discussed and endorsed by the Committee included:

- Negotiating greater efficiencies in the re-tender process by, for example, trying to persuade bus operators to take on marginal services on a commercial basis and to resist 'cherry picking' only the current profitable routes
- Continuing efforts to resolve the difficulties of ticket transferability between bus companies to benefit passengers travelling with more than one company
- Promoting more company sponsorship of bus or Community Transport services where feasible.
- Exploring the scope for greater 'dovetailing' of transport services required by different user groups. Much work has already been done but there are barriers to be overcome:
 - Home to school transport bus provision is efficiently provided, but does not currently meet commuters' needs as effectively
 - Utilising transport assets more efficiently across education and social care is difficult because most transport demand is concentrated at peak periods, with significantly less demand at other times of the day.
- Promoting Community Transport operations and reducing 'red tape' to make it more flexible (next update on Community Transport due at the 6 June 2011 Committee).

27.7 RESOLVED – (1) to note and endorse the work being undertaken in reviewing supported bus services in Hastings and Rother (including some parts of Lewes and Wealden); and

(2) the Scrutiny Committee to receive a post-implementation review in June 2011 detailing the outcomes arising from funding pressures, and progress with developing creative solutions and ideas for efficiencies as outlined above.

28. LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 3 (LTP3)

28.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Transport and Environment which outlined the LTP3 process, specifically the responses received from the three-month consultation to date. The consultation ends on 4 January 2011.

28.2 Overall the Committee was impressed with the high quality of the background information contained in the draft document. The Committee suggested that the LTP should address or emphasise the following points in order to better demonstrate the value of undertaking the considerable amount of work involved in producing the LTP, and to improve the clarity of the Plan's long term objectives:

- LTP3 has been re-confirmed as a statutory requirement by the Coalition Government
- LTP3 is essential in guiding priorities for transport investment at a time when increasing value for money is expected; the LTP increases the opportunities to bid for resources, for example for sustainable transport schemes
- The LTP sits alongside Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) and needs to reflect those priorities such as promoting and supporting economic development; the practical impact of this requirement will need further clarification
- Members were concerned that road safety appears as an assumed, integral component of the LTP rather than an independent element
- The consultation response rate (after one month of the three month consultation) appeared low to the Committee; the Committee questioned whether the consultation was correctly targeted and contained the right level of detail.

28.3 The Committee thanked the officers involved in developing the plan and RESOLVED – to (1) note the progress made to date and the themes emerging from the consultation;

(2) request the Director of Transport and Environment to provide Members of the Committee with an update on the results of the draft LTP3 consultation early in 2011 after all the responses have been analysed; and

(3) RECOMMEND that the following elements be considered for inclusion and/or receive greater clarity and emphasis in Local Transport Plan 3:

- Promotion of public 'self help' and alternative approaches to conventional environmental and transport schemes, as highlighted in earlier scrutiny reviews; these could helpfully build on known illustrative examples.
- Greater clarity on how Members can better help to manage public expectations in a future environment of reduced resources and increasing public demand; this could helpfully include advice on the use of petitions so as not to raise unrealistic public expectations.

29. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ROAD SAFETY IN EAST SUSSEX

29.1 The Committee considered the report by the Chairman of the Scrutiny Project Board which presented the outcomes and recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Road Safety in East Sussex. The Director of Transport and Environment and the Lead Member welcomed the report.

29.2 The Scrutiny Committee acknowledged that many practical aspects of road safety, such as future funding and partnership arrangements, were still under discussion. It was possible that, as a clearer picture emerged, some of the report's findings and recommendations would need to be interpreted in a different context to that in which the scrutiny review Board undertook its work.

29.3 The Scrutiny Committee decided that the benefits of submitting the report to Cabinet at this stage outweighed the potential disadvantages of reporting with an incomplete picture. The report contained critically important messages and principles which applied regardless of other practical considerations. The Scrutiny Committee would therefore accept a flexible interpretation and response to some of the recommendations to take account of the latest information available.

29.4 RESOLVED – to endorse the report on the Scrutiny Review of Road Safety in East Sussex and to submit the report to Cabinet and full Council.

30 JOINT WASTE MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

30.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Transport and Environment which outlined the progress made to date on the joint approach to Waste Management in East Sussex.

30.2 RESOLVED – to organise site visits (and associated explanatory presentations) for Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee Members to various waste treatment facilities including:

- Waste transfer and recycling depot, Pebsham.
- Materials Recovery Facility and Waste Transfer Station, Hollingdean Lane, Brighton.
- Mountfield Household Waste Site, Battle.

31. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

31.1 The Committee considered the Committee's work programme:

- Replacement of trees on highways and the 2001 Trees and Woodlands Strategy: Scrutiny treatment will be decided following an informal meeting between T&E departmental officers and Cllr Lambert, the promoter of the item.
- Highways maintenance re-procurement project: Site visits to Bedfordshire County Council and/or Northamptonshire County Council will be organised and open to all scrutiny committee Members with a view to understanding different possible contract models.
- T&E Departmental communications: The Director provided the Committee with a Transport and Environment Management structure chart. Further detail will follow in due course, meanwhile the department will re-issue an updated 'Meet the Managers' document.

A corporate communications review was currently underway and a first step would be to explore the potential involvement of Transport and Environment Scrutiny

Committee Members in that review before considering whether to undertake any further scrutiny of T&E communications issues.

- Winter service: The Committee commented that the item in *Your County* magazine about winter preparedness was not particularly helpful but that a subsequent press release was significantly better. It was unclear whether additional farmers had been added to the list of farmers on the Council's farmers' scheme and this information would be provided to the Committee.

31.2 RESOLVED - To agree the work programme.

32. FORWARD PLAN

32.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period 1 November 2010 to 28 February 2011. Members were reminded of the need to monitor the Forward Plan when it was published online to identify any queries or concerns at an early stage. Requests for information should be raised with the listed contact officer and any scrutiny issues with the Scrutiny Manager.

33. NEXT MEETING

33.1 Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 9 March 2011.