

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMY, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Economy, Transport and Environment held at County Hall, Lewes on 14 March 2012

PRESENT: Councillors Stogdon (Chairman), Daniel, Fawthrop (Vice-Chairman), Freeman, Howson, Rodohan and Taylor.

ALSO PRESENT Councillor Carl Maynard, Lead Cabinet Member for Economy, Transport and Environment

Scrutiny Manager Paul Dean

Andy Robertson, Assistant Director, Economy, Transport and Environment

Karl Taylor, Assistant Director, Economy, Transport and Environment

Kieran McNamara, Assistant Director, Economy, Transport and Environment.

Also in attendance: Jon Wheeler, Team Manager - Infrastructure and Development, for item 5 (see minute 35); Brian Johnson, Head of Trading Standards and Louise Baxter, Team Manager – Trading Standards for item 6 (see minute 36).

31. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

31.1 RESOLVED – to approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2011 (noting that Cllr Rodohan was an officer and not an employee of the Federation of Small Businesses: minute 23 refers).

32. APOLOGIES

32.1 No apologies for absence were received.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

33.1 Councillor Howson declared a personal non-prejudicial interest as a trader in the 'Buy with Confidence' scheme in respect of item 6 (Work of the Trading Standards service).

34. REPORTS

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

35. PETITION: EASTBOURNE CYCLING

35.1 The Committee warmly welcomed Jay and Scarlett McNally, members of the Bespoke cycling campaign group, who had presented a petition of 3,111 signatures calling

for: better cycling provision in Eastbourne, a seafront cycle route, and for responsible cycling to be allowed on Eastbourne seafront. The Committee also considered a report by the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment.

The Committee accepted the broad thrust of the petitioners' submission and debated the following key points:

- Safety fears: the petitioners argued that 'fear of injury' was the single biggest deterrent to people taking up cycling (based on surveys they have undertaken in Eastbourne). Addressing this and increasing the numbers of people cycling would therefore require various approaches including: more off road provision (eg. dedicated cycle routes / shared pedestrian and cycle spaces) and safer on-road provision (eg. advance stop lines at junctions), leading eventually to a joined up cycle network.
- Shared use areas for cyclists and pedestrians: proposals need to be tailored to each situation and invariably generate local controversy at first. But carefully designed schemes do work and success requires cyclists and pedestrians to be mutually respectful. Recent trials (eg. Bexhill seafront) have worked well. The petitioners highlighted the powerful evidence provided by children that helped to shift opinion in support of the Bexhill scheme.
- Should funding be shifted from other transport schemes to support cycling schemes? The petitioners argued for a small shift of resources towards supporting more advanced stop lines at traffic junctions in order to help address safety fears and encourage and support utility cycling. The committee did not wish to see any shift away from bus and other schemes within the LSTF bid. However, there are a range of schemes, some included in the bid and elsewhere in the Integrated Transport Capital Programme, where every feasible opportunity to introduce advance stop lines and other cycling provision would be taken. (The LSTF bid has a large capital element, a significant proportion of which would go towards walking and cycling schemes, including in Eastbourne).

RESOLVED - (1) to support the broad aspirations of Bespoke and welcome their continuing involvement in developing cycling provision in Eastbourne;

(2) to note and welcome the ongoing work with Eastbourne Borough Council in developing a cycling strategy which will help deliver better cycling provision in the town; and

(3) to note the recent submission to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) which includes capital schemes and revenue initiatives that if successful would deliver a package of measures to increase cycling in Eastbourne as well as other towns in the bid area.

36. WORK OF THE TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE

36.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment and warmly welcomed a presentation by Brian Johnson (Head of Trading Standards) and Louise Baxter (Trading Standards Team Manager) outlining the work of the service. In presenting a comprehensive picture, Members were requested to ensure they share any useful information that would be of assistance with the service.

36.2 RESOLVED - to note the report and presentation.

37. RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES

37.1 The Committee considered a report by the Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Community Services summarising the outcomes, observations and findings of the scrutiny Reconciling Policy Performance Review Board (RPPR) held in December 2011.

37.2 Rights of Way maintenance and staffing: The committee considered they had received an inadequate appraisal of the impact of the £285,000 saving (at the time of the RPPR board and subsequently) given the importance of the rights of way and countryside management functions for tourism and the local economy.

37.3 Street lighting: The committee welcomed the Lead Member's decision to ensure that street lighting schemes would only be introduced following consultation with local Members.

37.4 RESOLVED – to present the following ideas to improve the RPPR process in future:

- RPPR is one of the most important tasks for scrutiny and the most critical stage, the RPPR board, is compressed into a single short meeting in December with participation by only a couple of committee members. To improve scrutiny's input requires earlier opportunities for the RPPR board to:
 - gain a broader perspective on the whole departmental budget in addition to the more detailed consideration of proposed savings and impacts as happens currently; and
 - engage in exploratory discussions, leading up to the December RPPR board, about potential areas for budgetary changes together with likely impacts, or consideration about how impacts might be assessed.

38. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF TREES AND WOODLANDS POLICY IN EAST SUSSEX

38.1 The Committee received a report of the Chairman of the Scrutiny Review Board for trees and woodlands policy in East Sussex.

38.1 RESOLVED: to endorse the recommendations of the scrutiny review board and submit the findings to the Lead Member for Economy, Transport and Environment for implementation.

39. 2011/12 WINTER MAINTENANCE SERVICE IN EAST SUSSEX

39.1 The Committee welcomed the progress report of the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment outlining the latest performance on the winter maintenance service. Of particular note were:

- The website is increasingly being used by the public to access details such as gritter routes
- The expanding use of Twitter has facilitated a dialogue with the residents and businesses which has helped us to resolve problems in a more timely and effective way.
- The department is assessing the feasibility of adding school approach roads to gritting routes to avoid schools having to close solely because their approach roads are blocked by snow.

- Farmers' use of snow ploughs has been successful. Council gritters, with their faster speeds, are unable to set their ploughs to clear snow down to the road surface for safety reasons, whereas Members report that farmers appear to do a better job in this respect.

39.2 RESOLVED: to welcome and endorse the excellent progress with winter maintenance management in East Sussex.

40. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

40.1 The Committee reviewed its work programme as follows:

40.2 Water shortages: The committee established a scrutiny review board comprising Councillors Stogdon, Freeman, Howson and Fawthrop. The detailed terms of reference and timescale are yet to be determined but it is intended that the review would consider:

- the short and long term consequences of a regional drought
- the emergency planning considerations involved
- the likely effectiveness of the long term plans of the key agencies involved.

40.3 Remedial works to roads by utility companies: Hastings Borough Council is currently undertaking a similar scrutiny review; the outcomes of that will be examined (due in May 2012) before deciding whether further scrutiny is needed.

40.4 Highways maintenance re-procurement project: to further the work of the Member reference group a visit to Ringmer Depot will be arranged to:

- provide an update on the Transformation Project
- tour the new Control Hub
- meet some of the Highways Stewards and see the tablet technology they are using
- meet team managers and staff to get their perception of the project, changes and how the contract is now working
- review the programme for re-procurement and the future involvement of the reference group in this process.

41. FORWARD PLAN

41.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period 14 March 2012 to 30 June 2012. Members were reminded of the need to monitor the Forward Plan when published online to identify any queries or concerns early. Requests for information should be raised with the listed contact officer and any scrutiny issues with the Scrutiny Manager.

42. NEXT MEETING

42.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 19 June 2012.