

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 12 September 2012

PRESENT: Councillors Richard Stogdon (Chairman), Godfrey Daniel, Terry Fawthrop (Vice-Chairman), Jon Freeman and Pat Rodohan.

ALSO PRESENT Councillor Carl Maynard (Lead Member for Transport and Environment); Councillor Matthew Lock (Lead Member for Economy)

Scrutiny Manager Paul Dean

Rupert Clubb, Director Transport and Environment;
Mo Hemsley, Assistant Director Economy, Transport and Environment;
Andy Robertson, Assistant Director, Environment;
Karl Taylor, Assistant Director Transport and Environment
Kieran McNamara, Assistant Director of Economy;
Andy Arnold, Team manager – Environmental Advice (for item 5: Trees and Woodlands Scrutiny Review);
Claire Warwick, Assistant Manager Transport Development Control (for item 7: Residential Parking Standards);
Chris Stanyard, Senior Development Control Officer (for item 7: Residential Parking Standards).

12. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

12.1 RESOLVED – to approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2012 subject to a clarification provided by Sussex Police in respect of minute 6.10 as follows:

6.10 Public requests to reduce speed limits by introducing signage alone rarely works (as the review report noted). The police continue to oppose requests for lower speed limits that would rely solely on enforcement.

Sussex Police have stated:

Sussex Police have never formally objected to a speed limit proposal put forward by East Sussex County Council (ESCC) over the last eight years. Sussex Police works closely with the ESCC Traffic and Safety team to ensure that a consistent approach to speed limits is maintained in accordance with [government] guidance.

It has long been the principle that no speed limit should be introduced that relies solely on enforcement to make it work. If the existing mean speeds are not appropriate for the introduction of a proposed speed limit, further measures need to be introduced, along with any lower limit, to ensure good levels of compliance. Enforcement alone is insufficient. We

do not have the capacity [for enforcement] for each location, and some engineering must be introduced at these locations to achieve a satisfactory outcome for all concerned.

ESCC and Sussex Police have worked very successfully within these principles to agree on many changes during the countywide speed limit review undertaken over the last five years or so as well as many other changes that have been introduced.

13. APOLOGIES AND TRIBUTES

13.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Philip Howson and Barry Taylor.

13.2 The Committee paid tribute to Andy Robertson, Assistant Director, Economy, Transport and Environment, who was shortly to leave the Council, and thanked him for his support to Members over several years.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

14.1 Councillor Daniel declared a personal, non prejudicial interest as candidate for the Police and Crime Commissioner in respect of item 6 (Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources) and as Chair of Planning at Hastings Borough Council in respect of item 7 (Residential Parking Standards).

14.2 Councillor Rodohan declared a personal, non prejudicial interest as an officer of the Federation of Small Businesses in respect of item 6 (Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources).

14.3 Councillor Maynard declared a personal, non prejudicial interest as Leader of Rother District Council in respect of item 7 (Residential Parking Standards).

15. REPORTS

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

16. TREES AND WOODLANDS SCRUTINY REVIEW

16.1 The Committee considered a six-month monitoring report by the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment which detailed the progress made against the recommendations agreed by the Scrutiny Committee on 14 March 2012 following the Scrutiny Review of Trees and Woodlands Policy in East Sussex.

Dutch Elm Disease

16.2 Since the scrutiny review, officers have researched the effectiveness of alternative treatment strategies for Dutch Elm Disease to identify any national lessons that may be of use locally. The research will facilitate a modelling exercise to generate evidence to identify the most efficient way of dealing with the disease in East Sussex. The results are likely to be available for further discussion at the March 2013 scrutiny committee.

16.3 The Committee considered that:

- A speedy conclusion is needed on what, if any action, is to be taken as, presumably, the disease is spreading rapidly in the meantime.

- Given overall budget pressures facing all the public authorities involved, it is important not to spend any further resources on tackling the disease unless the chosen methods are proved to be cost effective.
- The Council's partners need to be fully involved in sharing the responsibility and the costs of any action.

Highway stewards

16.4 Generally speaking, the highway stewards have authority to deal with all kinds of tree problems on the highway, especially where safety is a concern. However, there are occasions when they would need to call on additional expertise, such as an Arboriculturalist, to provide advice before taking any action.

Draft Highway Tree Management Policy

16.5 Nuisance: this paragraph to be amended to provide some flexibility as to when the County Council could undertake works on a tree to mitigate nuisance so that each situation would be treated on its own merits.

16.6 Distance from the kerb in rural situations: this paragraph to be amended to provide a clearer indication that each case will be treated on its own merits when determining the minimum distance a tree must be planted from the edge of the road.

16.7 Resources: the policy needs to include mention of the increasingly limited resources available to public authorities for projects such as highway tree planting and maintenance.

16.8 Jargon: references to BS3936, and the like, need to be explained or preferably avoided.

16.3 RESOLVED - to welcome the progress made in delivering the recommendations of the scrutiny review and to endorse the proposed action and policy revisions, subject to the Committee's comments set out above.

17. RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES (RPPR)

17.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive setting out the detailed planning for 2013/14 and beyond as outlined in the State of the County report discussed at Cabinet on 24 July 2012.

17.2 The Committee made the following comments about the policy steers, strategic performance summary and overview financial information. Responses from Lead Members and officers are indicated:

- Policy steer 1 (Economy, Transport and Environment) could be improved to ensure that the condition of pavements is also included. The policy steer would now read: *Improve the condition of our highways.*
- Agreed to delete Economy, Transport and Environment policy steer 2 (Achieve a fair balance between economic growth and the protection of our urban, rural and coastal environment) and policy steer 7 (Strike a balance between the needs of the settled and Gypsy and Traveller communities) on the basis that these points are covered by other policy steers.
- Where are the projected savings of £5m per year for three years in the Economy, Transport and Environment budget likely to fall based on current thinking?

- Whilst it will be difficult to achieve savings on the £27.9m waste PFI contract budget, new income opportunities are being explored
- Of the £10.2m passenger transport budget, £7.5m is for concessionary fares – it is difficult to achieve savings in this area also.
- Whilst the highways budget (£16.3m) is unlikely to be exempt from savings, the benefits of the investment in the transformation programme to prepare for the re-tendering of the highways contract should not be compromised because of the long term benefits this work will invoke. Opportunities to achieve efficiencies from closer working with neighbouring authorities are being explored.
- If these budget areas are protected to some degree, then this might mean that some 36% savings are likely to be required on the remaining budgets (£40m) over three years. The challenges ahead are therefore significant as it is difficult to envisage achieving this level of savings without impacting on services that are demonstrably important to residents.
- Options for budget savings are being developed that are greater than the levels likely to be required. This is intended to provide flexibility as Members assess future priorities.

17.3 The Committee viewed the budgetary position with considerable misgiving and questioned whether there was scope to seek means by which moneys can be applied from other departments to mitigate the impact on the proposed cuts to those Economy, Transport and Environment activities that are of significant importance to the majority of East Sussex residents.

17.4 RESOLVED – To (1) report the above observations and proposed amendments to the policy steers to Cabinet; and

(2) Establish an RPP&R Board to meet in December 2012 to consider (a) the key outcomes and the targets that show whether our priorities will be delivered; (b) the detailed portfolio and budget plans; (c) the emerging savings strategy; and, that the membership of the Board shall be Councillors Stogdon, Daniel, Freeman and Fawthrop.

18. RESIDENTIAL PARKING STANDARDS

18.1 The Committee welcomed a report by the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment, and the draft document '*Guidance for Parking at New Residential Developments* which will become the Highway Authority's adopted policy for developers and their agents.

18.2 The Committee commented on the draft guidance document as follows:

- The shift in style from the earlier document (that set out prescriptive standards) to one providing guidance and advice was warmly welcomed as a means of achieving greater 'sign up' than has been achieved previously. Evidence from neighbouring counties appears to suggest that this is a good move.
- The document would benefit from a clearer 'vision' setting out the purpose of the guidance in achieving the County Council's environmental and other objectives, whilst linking it to relevant provisions in the Local Transport Plan 3.
- The document would benefit from the inclusion of some brief good-design 'pointers' whilst recognising that there is a wealth of detailed advice on design matters available elsewhere.

18.3 RESOLVED – to (1) welcome the draft *Guidance for Parking at New Residential Development* as a document of the highway authority for assessing car parking provision for new residential development proposals in East Sussex, and (2) request that the considerations listed above are incorporated into the final version of the document.

19. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

19.1 The Committee noted its work programme.

20. FORWARD PLAN

20.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period 17 September 2012 to 31 December 2012. Members are 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.

21. NEXT MEETING

21.1 The meeting ended at 12.20pm. The next meeting of the Committee will be held on **20 November 2012.**