

Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 26 June 2002

Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **26 June 2002** when there were present:

Cllr P A Capon (Chairman)

Cllr R A Amner

Cllr C I Black

Cllr Mrs R Brown

Cllr C A Hungate

Cllr P K Savill

Cllr P F A Webster

Cllr Mrs M A Weir

PARISH COUNCILLORS PRESENT

Cllr H Horsey, Hullbridge Parish Council

Cllr Mrs S James, Hockley Parish Council

Cllr R E Vingoe, Hockley Parish Council

DISTRICT OFFICERS PRESENT

| | | |
|---------------|---|--|
| R Crofts | - | Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) |
| S Clarkson | - | Head of Revenue & Housing Management |
| S Scrutton | - | Head of Planning Services |
| T Metcalf | - | Audit & Process Review Manager |
| J Kevany | - | Audit Officer |
| S Worthington | - | Principal Committee Administrator |

COUNTY OFFICERS PRESENT

| | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| N McCullagh | - | Area Manager, County Highways |
| J Martyn | - | Senior Engineer, County Highways |
| T Tite | - | District Engineer, County Highways |
| L Harvey | - | Assistant District Engineer, County Highways |
| P Bowden | - | Alfred McAlpine |
| G Witham | - | Alfred McAlpine |

264 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2002 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

265 OVERALL WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which outlined the 2002/2003 work programme agreed by this Committee in March 2002 and now seeks Members' agreement to the revisions as outlined.

Resolved

That the revised work programme be agreed as outlined in the report attached to the signed copy of these Minutes. (C Ex)

266 RAYLEIGH TOWN CENTRE – OUTSTANDING ISSUES

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services which updated Members on the Rayleigh Town Centre outstanding issues discussed at the Environmental Services Committee on 12 March 2002.

During discussion it was generally perceived that there were too many issues to be addressed adequately by this Committee given the volume of business.

On a motion moved by Cllr P F A Webster and seconded by Cllr Mrs R Brown it was:-

Resolved

- (1) That a Rayleigh Town Centre Sub-Committee comprising 4 Members be set up to examine these outstanding issues.
- (2) That Cllrs P A Capon, C A Hungate and P K Savill be Members of this Sub-Committee and that the Committee Section be informed of the outstanding Member nomination. (HPS)

267 REVIEW OF HOCKLEY, HULLBRIDGE AND ROCHFORD CENTRE SCHEMES

The Committee considered the report of the Area Manager, County Highways which updated Members on the Hockley, Hullbridge and Rochford centre schemes, expenditure to date and update of scheme progress, programme and estimates.

Hullbridge

County Officers confirmed that work began on the Hullbridge scheme on 10 March 2002 and has been largely completed. More work than anticipated had had to be conducted on the private forecourts in terms of resurfacing and drainage. The revised costs of the scheme were £93,500.

During debate concern was expressed that original cost estimates for the Hullbridge scheme were greatly exceeded, with, in particular, no breakdown of £30,00 spent on work to the private forecourts and that

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the work had taken 16 weeks rather than 6 – 8 weeks as originally advised by the contractors. The following additional concerns were raised:-

- There was no gold paint on the street furniture, and that this had been hand painted rather than power painted for durability.
- No tree gratings had yet been placed in areas that had been re-surfaced.
- One of the new bollards had been uprooted and thrown away.
- Bollards outside the Co-op store had been placed too far apart with the result that lorries were continuing to park on the pavement.
- The wall outside the Co-op store was still standing.

County Officers confirmed that costs rose for works to the private forecourts as a result of the need to address major differences in levels prior to applying surfacing materials.

With respect to delays on completing the work, contracts awarded by the County Council were not subject to time penalties; the work in Hullbridge involved the necessity of maintaining multiple accesses, which extended the original time estimates.

County Officers confirmed that the uprooted bollard would be addressed as a routine maintenance issue. Written agreement had not yet been received from the Co-op store about pulling down the wall outside the premises.

Hockley

County Officers confirmed that the revised costs of the ducting work for the Hockley scheme were £50,000. Eastern Electricity had originally specified that a single duct along Spa Road would be required; this was subsequently changed to a double duct which caused an increase in costs.

District Officers confirmed that the Hockley scheme was always over budget; the former Working Group had therefore agreed that as much of the scheme as possible would be completed within the available budgets and work was prioritised accordingly.

Members expressed concern that the County Council had agreed the original estimates. Members felt that the County Council should therefore be asked to contribute towards the increased costs.

County Officers confirmed that they would explore budgets with a view to progressing the Hullbridge and Hockley schemes through other sources of funding and would give a firm response to this Committee by the end of July.

Parish Councillors requested that they be given the opportunity to comment before any decisions were taken to reduce the scale of the Hockley scheme.

Rochford

The Rochford scheme is well on the way to completion.

In concluding the discussion, Members requested that County Officers provide them with final detailed costs of the schemes, including the original estimated costs.

Recommended to the Environmental Services Committee

That work continue on the Hockley scheme in the order prioritised by the former Hockley Town Centre Working Group. (CD(F&ES))

268 HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE LICENSING

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which asked Members to determine the process and timetable for a review of the licensing function in the District.

During debate it was considered that further consideration should be given to this issue.

On a motion moved by Cllr P F A Webster and seconded by Cllr P A Capon it was:-

Resolved

- (1) That a Taxi Licensing Sub-Committee comprising 4 Members be set up to examine issues relating to taxi licensing.
- (2) That Cllrs Mrs R Brown, C A Hungate and P F A Webster be Members of this Sub-Committee and that the Committee Section be informed of the outstanding Member nomination. (HRHM)

269 PLANNING SERVICES – ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEVELOPMENT CONTROL SITE VISITS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services

which sought views on revised arrangements for Member site visits in connection with planning applications, arising from proposals considered during the Best Value Review of the Development Control and Building Control Services.

During debate Members were supportive of the revised arrangements proposed by the report that, within 14 days of receipt of the Parish List, Members could request a site visit. However, Members felt that it was important that site visits could still be requested at Planning Services meetings, though if the new system operated well, such requests would be rare.

On a motion moved by Cllr P F A Webster and seconded by Cllr C A Hungate it was:-

Recommended to the Planning Services Committee

That the revised arrangements for Member site visits be implemented from 1 September 2002, as outlined in the report of the Head of Planning Services, attached to the signed copy of these Minutes.
(HPS)

Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved

That the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining business on the grounds that exempt information as defined in paragraphs 11 and 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 would be disclosed.

270 AUDIT REPORT

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Chief Executive which drew Members' attention to the completed audit investigation of service contracts and provided an update of audit recommendations.

On a motion moved by Cllr P F A Webster and seconded by Cllr P K Savill it was:-

Resolved

That the updated information on the audit recommendations be agreed.
(C Ex)

271 DEVELOPMENT CONTROL/BUILDING CONTROL BEST VALUE REVIEW – INTERIM FINDINGS

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Planning

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Services which provided Members with a preview of the findings of the Audit Commission's review of the development control and building control services. Members' views were sought on the initial findings to feed into the final version of the report.

Concern was expressed that the report disregarded the fact that Members of this Council had voted overwhelmingly to retain a Planning Services Committee of 39 Members.

In response to a Member enquiry, the Head of Planning Services confirmed that this Council would not lose the 2 star rating for development control and building control services should it retain its Planning Services Committee of 39 Members. However, Members would, on receipt of the final report, be asked to make decisions relating to the Audit Commission's recommendations.

On a motion moved by Cllr P F A Webster and seconded by Cllr Mrs R Brown it was:-

Recommended to the Environmental Services Committee

- (1) That the interim findings of the Audit Commission on this Council's development control and building control services be noted.
- (2) That the Head of Planning Services and his team be congratulated for their diligence in attaining a 2 star rating. (HPS)

272 FLAGS ON TAXIS

(Note: the Chairman admitted this item to the agenda as a late item of business)

Officers had recently granted taxi operators permission to fly on their taxis union jack or St George cross flags in honour of the Golden Jubilee and the World Cup Football Championship.

It was the general consensus of the Committee that this permission should be extended to the taxi operators on a permanent basis.

On a motion moved by Cllr P F A Webster and seconded by Cllr Mrs R Brown it was:-

Recommended to the Environmental Services Committee

That this Council extends permission indefinitely to the taxi operators to fly union jack and St George cross flags on taxis. (HRHM)

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The meeting closed at 8.10pm.

Chairman _____

Date _____