

## **Environmental Services Committee – 11 December 2003**

---

Minutes of the meeting of the **Environmental Services Committee** held on **11 December 2003** when there were present:-

Cllr J E Grey (Chairman)  
Cllr R G S Choppen (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Mrs T J Capon  
Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn  
Cllr Mrs L Hungate  
Cllr A J Humphries

Cllr C G Seagers  
Cllr Mrs M S Vince  
Cllr Mrs M J Webster

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R A Amner, Mrs S A Harper and J M Pullen.

### **SUBSTITUTES**

Cllr D G Stansby

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

S Clarkson	- Head of Revenue and Housing Management
S Scrutton	- Head of Planning Services
G Woolhouse	- Head of Housing, Health and Community Care
S Worthington	- Committee Administrator

### **COUNTY OFFICERS PRESENT**

K Bristow - District Manager, Transportation & Operational Services

### **576 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2003 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **577 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr C G Seagers declared a personal interest in item 13 of the agenda by virtue of being the owner of one of around 600 houses that may be at risk.

Cllr Mrs T J Capon declared a personal interest in item 8 of the agenda by virtue of being a resident of Stambridge and in items 8 and 14 of the agenda by virtue of being a Ward Member.

### 578 ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

#### (1) **Assessment of Odour Emissions from the Stambridge Sewage Treatment Works**

The Committee considered the report of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 18 November 2003.

During debate, Members were minded that quotations should be sought from 3 different companies for the monitoring work.

Responding to a Member enquiry relating to the last time an odour survey was conducted at the works, officers confirmed that the last such survey had taken place some considerable time ago, at the time of the problems with the N-Viro process at the works.

Responding to a Member concern about a leaflet distributed anonymously to local Stambridge residents and included in the officer's report, officers advised that the actual request for the monitoring at the works had been made by Stambridge Parish Council.

Disappointment was expressed that DEFRA would be issuing a voluntary, rather than statutory, code of practice for the industry.

Responding to a Member concern about the survey, officers confirmed that they would be liaising closely with Members of the Stambridge Sewage Treatment Works Liaison Committee to ascertain the optimum times for monitoring to take place at the works.

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That expenditure of up to £10,000 for the provision of an independent odour survey be made available from virements within the 2003/04 budgets and that 3 quotations be sought.
- (2) That officers approach the NHS on the possibility of their nominating an appointee to the working group being established by Anglian Water. (HHHCC)

### 579 PROGRESS ON DECISIONS

The Committee received the Schedule relating to Progress on Decisions.

#### **Twice Yearly Update from Essex County Council (Minute 106(1)/03)**

Members were pleased to note that Upway, Love Lane and Station Crescent had been reinstated in the District's winter salting programme.

The County Council officer confirmed that it would be the responsibility of the County Council to place salt in salt bins purchased by Hawkwell Parish Council.

### **Village and Town Centre Regeneration Schemes (Minute 318(03)/03)**

The County Council officer confirmed that £15,000 would be required from within the capital programme for the Hullbridge phase two scheme.

### **Development Monitoring Services Provided by Essex County Council (Minute 394/03)**

Officers advised that the District Council would bear the costs of this service, which were approximately £4,000 per annum over three years.

### **Hall Road Cycle Link to Rochford Town Centre (Minute 451/03)**

Members noted that the Central Government funding for this initiative would now be lost.

## **580 DECRIMINALISED PARKING ENFORCEMENT – PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management on progress towards implementing Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) in the Rochford District.

Members noted that the recommendation that the Patrol Officers' role be extended to include environmental enforcement had been approved, but that because of financial constraints on the 2004/5 budget it would not be possible to implement this until 2005/6. The implementation plan would be amended accordingly to reflect that this newly defined service would not be tested competitively until a later date.

During debate, there was a general consensus that officers were to be commended for their work on DPE. It was anticipated that DPE would enable traffic to flow more smoothly within the town centres and free up parking spaces for those who need them.

Members were advised that there was much work to be conducted on DPE over the next six months and that it was crucial that office accommodation be created for DPE staff at the Civic Suite early in the New Year.

Responding to a Member enquiry relating to funding for the scheme, officers advised that the County Council had confirmed that this Council was eligible for around £80,000 to cover set-up costs.

In response to a Member concern relating to endorsable parking offences, officers advised that, although the Police would retain responsibility for such

offences, it was anticipated that the Patrol Officers would have appropriate links with the Police to enable any such offences outside the jurisdiction of this Council to be reported rapidly to the Police.

Officers confirmed that publicity material planned for DPE could also include reminders to motorists about Highway Code guidelines.

Responding to a further Member enquiry relating to disabled parking, officers confirmed that on certain roads, such as urban clearways, signage would be displayed barring all parking, including disabled parking, in order to facilitate traffic flow. Furthermore, this Council would have responsibility for parking in controlled lay-bys.

Members were advised that the issue of residents' parking permits would be addressed once DPE had been well established in the District.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That progress towards the implementation of DPE be noted.
- (2) That quarterly progress reports be considered between January and October 2004.

### **Recommended to Council**

- (3) That Committee Room 3 at the Civic Suite be converted into office accommodation for the Transportation Team. (HRHM)

## **581 TAXI VOUCHER SCHEME**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management providing an update on the operation of the Taxi Voucher Scheme.

During debate, there was a general consensus that the taxi voucher scheme provided its users with real freedom of choice.

It was noted that there might be merit in raising with Social Services the issue of admission criteria for the scheme being amended to allow people under 18 years old in wheelchairs to access the service, although the issue should be carefully explored before any decisions could be taken.

Members concurred that drivers and operators should be given the choice of a weekly reimbursement for used vouchers, although this should be achieved via the Direct Credit system, due to the large costs associated with more frequent issuing of cheques. Members, while supportive of an increase in the quarterly issue of vouchers, believed that £1 vouchers should be introduced as soon as practicable.

### Resolved

- (1) That reimbursement of used vouchers be offered to Operators and Drivers weekly, subject to the use of the Direct Credit system.
- (2) That the requirement for drivers to give change for fares paid using vouchers be removed from 1 January 2004, and that all users of the scheme be notified with the January 2004 issue of vouchers.
- (3) That the quarterly issue of vouchers be increased to 36 vouchers (£72) for ambulant users, and 54 vouchers (£108) for wheelchair users, effective from 1 January 2004, with future introduction of £1 vouchers when practicable.
- (4) That the budget allocation for the Taxi Voucher Scheme be maintained at £90,000. (HRHM)

### **582 DRAFT LOCAL SERVICE AGREEMENT ON HIGHWAYS**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive updating Members on progress now made in relation to the Local Service Agreement initiative with Essex County Council in respect of Highways. In the light of the details now coming forward, Members' views were sought before progressing the matter further.

During debate, Members concluded that, although there would be merit in continuing negotiations with the County Council with respect to establishing a local service agreement on highways at a future date, the details as set out in the current draft Agreement were sketchy, and it would therefore seem more appropriate to maintain the status quo.

On a motion moved by Cllr A J Humphries and seconded by Cllr Mrs T J Capon, it was:-

### Resolved

That the status quo be maintained, but that negotiations continue with Essex County Council with respect to establishing a local service agreement on highways at a future date. (CE)

### **583 PROPOSAL FOR SINGLE TIER FLOOD DEFENCE COMMITTEES: ENVIRONMENT AGENCY CONSULTATION**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive bringing to Members' attention a consultation outlining the Environment Agency's proposal for Single Tier Flood Defence Committees in the Anglian region. If accepted, this would replace existing flood defence committee arrangements

from April 2005, subject to the enactment of the Water Bill currently going through Parliament.

During debate, there was a general consensus that it would be preferable to retain the current Essex local flood defence committee rather than opting for a regional committee. Members were of the opinion that the coastline in Essex was very different from that of Norfolk and Suffolk. Furthermore, the local committee had a great deal of specialist local knowledge about important local flooding issues that were not shared by the Anglian wide region. There was a concern that, in the event of Essex becoming part of a larger, regional flood defence committee, the input of this Council would be dissipated, as the views of large population areas in Norfolk and Suffolk would be more likely to be heard.

Members noted a concern that arose at a meeting in Great Wakering last week that, although there was agreement amongst the Association of British Insurers that, for insurance purposes, a risk to flood defences of 1 in 75 years would be accepted, the actual level of protection was about 1 in 50 years in the Great Wakering area. This could lead to instances of houses being uninsurable.

It was felt that there would be merit in issuing a press release, together with an item in *Rochford District Matters*, and informing the 2 local MPs and other Local Authorities in Essex of this Council's opposition to the creation of regional flood defence committees.

On a motion moved by Cllr Mrs M J Webster and seconded by Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn it was:-

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the principle of an option that mirrors as closely as possible the retention of the existing Essex Flood Defence Committee be supported.
- (2) That a press release be issued, together with an item in *Rochford District Matters*, and that the 2 local MPs and other Local Authorities in Essex be informed of this Council's decision. (CE)

## **584 HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE – ADDITIONAL ALLOCATION OF FUNDS**

**Note:** The Chairman admitted this item of urgent business as Essex County Highways were seeking agreement to the proposals by the end of the week.

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) seeking Members' approval to allocate the additional funds allocated by Essex County Council to repair Scotts Hall Road, Canewdon.

Members were pleased with the officer recommendations, as there had been substantial damage to Scotts Hall Road as a result of the summer drought and residents have complained about the road for some time.

Officers advised that, at the southern most section of Scotts Hall Road, the ditch had subsided and was therefore not supporting the carriageway. Piping would be laid, with backfilling over it, thus providing structural support for the carriageway; the surface of the carriageway would then be repaired. The work would be scheduled for completion as soon as practicable.

### **Resolved**

That the recommendation of the Area Highways Manager South that the additional funds be used to repair Scotts Hall Road be accepted. (CD(F&ES))

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....