

Environmental Services Committee – 12 January 2005

Minutes of the meeting of the **Environmental Services Committee** held on **12 January 2005** when there were present:-

Cllr J E Grey (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs T J Capon (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr R G S Choppen
Cllr T G Cutmore
Cllr Mrs L Hungate
Cllr C J Lumley

Cllr Mrs M S Vince
Cllr Mrs M J Webster
Cllr P F A Webster

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R A Amner, J M Pullen, P R Robinson and C G Seagers.

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Scrutton - Head of Planning Services
G Woolhouse - Head of Housing, Health & Community Care
S Blake - Environmental Protection Unit Manager
M Howlett - Senior Environmental Protection Officer
S Worthington - Committee Administrator

COUNTY COUNCIL OFFICERS PRESENT

P Grimwood - District Manager, County Highways

8 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 December were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

9 AIR QUALITY – SECOND REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care updating Members on the progress of the second review and assessment of air quality within Rochford District and providing a resolution on how the results will be acted upon.

Officers confirmed that feedback had now been received from DEFRA on the findings of the assessment. DEFRA had formally asked that a second period of PM₁₀ monitoring at Rawreth Industrial Estate be completed by mid May 2005. A further report would then be brought back to this Committee for consideration.

Responding to a Member enquiry relating to whether emissions from old-style

buses being used by Arriva within the District might be responsible for the high NO₂ readings at Bedloes Corner, Rawreth and the Eastwood Road/High Street junction, Rayleigh officers advised that any declaration of an air quality management area would require the active involvement of all relevant partners in tackling the problem.

In response to an enquiry about the possible erection of a canopy over operations by a waste transfer station at Rawreth Industrial Estate, officers confirmed that a planning application had been granted outline permission in December by the County Council.

Responding to a question raised about any borderline emission rates, officers advised that it was a statutory requirement that periodic air quality reviews be conducted; the next such one would take place in 2006. It was noted that such periodic reviews would address similar concerns expressed by Members relating to density of traffic along Main Road, Hockley and Southend Road, Rochford, as reviews examined traffic flows and the number of vehicle movements through junctions.

In response to a Member concern relating to Rawreth Court, officers confirmed that Rawreth Court was sufficiently distant from Rawreth Industrial Estate such that PM₁₀ levels in that vicinity should not affect Rawreth Court residents.

Members expressed concern about traffic not flowing well along Eastwood Road/High Road, Rayleigh which doubtless contributed to pollution levels in the area.

Responding to a further concern relating to buses being prevented from turning into Market Square, Rochford as a result of traffic queuing in West Street for car parking spaces in the square, officers advised that this was monitored on a regular basis and that there had been some improvement in this situation since the introduction of decriminalised parking enforcement.

Members felt that there would be merit in the keep clear signs in West Street being replaced with a hatched area.

Concluding the debate, there was a general consensus that the introduction of new houses in the South East could only result in exacerbating the current air quality problems.

Resolved

- (1) That NO₂ monitoring be continued at all three existing sites.
- (2) That additional NO₂ monitoring be carried out at the nearest receptor to the Eastwood Road/High Street junction to enable modelling of the effects of the NO₂ levels.

- (3) That a further 3 months of PM₁₀ monitoring be carried out early in 2005 at the nearest relevant receptor to Rawreth Industrial Estate.
- (4) That provision be made of an additional £10,500 funded from virements from existing budgets for 2004/5 for PM₁₀ monitoring and a bid also made in the draft revenue estimates for 2005/6 for £6,000, in order to carry out the additional NO₂ monitoring.
- (5) That a further report be made to this Committee at the end of the second period of PM₁₀ monitoring by mid-2005. (HHHCC)

10 DRAFT REVISED CIRCULAR ON PLANNING OBLIGATIONS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services seeking Members' views on the Government's proposals for revisions to Circular 1/97 on Planning Obligations (often referred to as Section 106 agreements).

During debate Members expressed concern about the Government's proposals for revising Section 106 agreements. Members concurred that there was a real risk that, in seeking to hurry along the planning application process, residents could end up with less protection than that currently afforded them by Section 106 agreements.

Members were also concerned about the proposals relating to unilateral undertakings; there was a general consensus that care would have to be taken, as there could be a risk of 'deals' between developers and Planning Authorities.

Responding to a concern relating to insufficient time being allowed for Members to consider these complex proposals, officers advised that the consultation document had been received on 8 November, but that it was difficult to keep up with the volume of Government consultations that were currently being circulated. Copies of consultation documents were, however, placed in the Members' Library.

Resolved

That, subject to the following Member comments, this report forms the basis of the Council's response to the consultation on the revisions to Circular 1/97:-

- there was a danger that the proposals, in seeking to speed up the planning application process, could lead to less protection for residents than currently afforded them by Section 106 Agreements;
- extreme caution would have to be exercised with respect to unilateral undertakings as there could be a risk of 'deals' between developers and Planning Authorities. (HPS)

11 THAMES GATEWAY SOUTH ESSEX – GREEN GRID STRATEGY CONSULTATION

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services seeking Members' views on the Thames Gateway South Essex Green Grid strategy. Consultation responses were required by 14 January 2005.

While Members were supportive of the principle of establishing a Green Grid strategy for Thames Gateway South Essex, there was concern that the strategic area framework for Southend and Rochford was clearly not based on a sound knowledge and understanding of the geographical area, as there were several inaccuracies within it.

Members concurred that the Rochford District should be at the centre of any TGSE Green Grid, rather than more industry or housing being located within the District.

Resolved

That, subject to the following Member comments, the TGSE Partnership be advised that this Council supports the principles outlined in the South Essex Green Grid strategy consultation document:-

- a Green Grid strategy for Thames Gateway South Essex should be supported;
- Rochford District should be at the centre of the TGSE Green Grid;
- the details of the overall strategic framework, as listed in paragraph 3.6 of the consultation document, were inaccurate and required much revision to better reflect the requirements for the Green Grid in Rochford. (HPS)

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm.

Chairman

Date