

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 19 November 2002

Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **19 November 2002** when there were present:-

Cllr P A Capon (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs R Brown (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr R A Amner
Cllr C I Black
Cllr C A Hungate

Cllr P K Savill
Cllr P F A Webster
Cllr Mrs M A Weir

OFFICERS PRESENT

R Crofts	Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
A Bugeja	Head of Legal Services
S Clarkson	Head of Revenue and Housing Management
S Scrutton	Head of Planning Services
J Bourne	Leisure & Contracts Manager
J Kevany	Audit Officer
M Martin	Committee Administrator

REPRESENTING ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

Cllr R Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation

COUNTY OFFICERS PRESENT

N McCullagh	Area Manager, Highways and Transportation Group
J Martyn	District Manager, Highways and Transportation Group
L Harvey	District Engineer, Highways and Transportation Group
G Witham	Engineer, Highways and Transportation Group

REPRESENTING THE PARISH COUNCILS

Cllr K Attridge	Rochford Parish Council
Cllr S Karsten	Hullbridge Parish Council
Cllr Mrs S James	Hockley Parish Council
Cllr R Vingoe	Hockley Parish Council

ALSO ATTENDING

S Livingstone	Contract Network Manager, Alfred McAlpine
T Steel	Sales & marketing Director, First Great Eastern
S Whitehead	Sales & Marketing Manager, First Great Eastern

561 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2002 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

562 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor T G Cutmore declared a personal interest on the item on First Great Eastern by virtue of being a season ticket holder.

Councillors R A Amner, Mrs M S Vince and Mrs M A Weir each declared a personal interest on the item on Review of Hockley, Hullbridge and Rochford Town Centre Improvement Schemes by virtue of being a Rochford Parish Councillor.

Councillor Mrs R Brown declared a personal interest on the item on Review of Hockley, Hullbridge and Rochford Town Centre Improvement Schemes by virtue of being a Hullbridge Parish Councillor.

563 TAXI TARIFF – CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTIONS

The Committee noted the report of the Head of Administrative & Member Services relating to a decision taken by the Environmental Services Committee at its meeting held on 7 November 2002. Pursuant to Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 15, three Members of the Council had requested that the decision relating to the above be called in for scrutiny by this Committee.

At that meeting Members had been advised that legal fees in connection with any appeal to the Magistrates Court were likely to be in the region of £700. However, an appeal in such circumstances can only relate to changes in licence conditions; there is no appeal against setting a tariff except by way of judicial review. This would involve appeal to the High Court on a point of law or procedure; it would not provide a means to challenge the merits of the decision itself.

Members did not disagree with the decision reached by the Policy Committee but noted that full information with regard to the right of appeal might not have been clear at the time and

Resolved to refer the matter back to the next meeting of the Environmental Services Committee to reconsider their decision in the light of the above. (HRHM)

564 PRESENTATION BY GREAT EASTERN

The Chairman welcomed representatives from First Great Eastern who updated the Committee on the proposals for a new regional rail franchise for East Anglia in 2004.

Members noted the following objectives/issues relating to rail services generally across the region and specifically serving this District:-

- The consolidation of the existing Great Eastern, Anglia and West Anglia rail franchises to produce one operator for all services at Liverpool Street.
- Enhanced integration of the railway operation by controlling (but not owning or maintaining) timetabling, signalling and train control.
- Greater capacity on the congested lines into Liverpool Street.
- Improved punctuality and reliability.

- Co-ordinated services across the region with a greater degree of bus/rail integration and the introduction of regular 'clock face' services on local routes.
- Improved car/bicycle parking facilities close to stations.
- Investigate use of available land in the vicinity of existing stations.
- Investment in stations to provide a welcoming environment including the development of automated information systems.
- Guaranteed access for freight operators with extra freight capacity.
- Further development at Stratford to meet the increasing demands of commuter traffic to and from Docklands.
- Continue to investigate the problems associated with foliage on the tracks.

In response to the concerns of Members, the representatives from First Great Eastern agreed to look at improvements in the following areas during peak hours:

- Provide more trains which stop at Stratford
- Provide trains with more coaches
- Provide passengers with more information during unscheduled stops.
- Aim to stop in stations when problems do arise, to enable passengers to alight wherever possible during difficulties.

**565 REVIEW OF HOCKLEY, HULLBRIDGE AND ROCHFORD CENTRE
IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES**

The Chairman welcomed County Cllr Williams and representatives of the Parish Councils to the meeting. The Committee considered the report of the Area Manager, County Highways, on the progress made with the town centre improvement schemes and the expenditure to date.

During Member debate, the following was noted/agreed:-

- disappointment that the scheme costs had proved to be much higher than originally estimated.
- a commitment to ensure that these schemes are completed as originally agreed by the Town Centre Working Groups.
- a reallocation of County Council funding would be necessary.
- the need to ensure that all snagging work is carried out.

A Member requested an update relating to a proposed meeting with the County Council regarding Websters Way. The County Councillor agreed to look at the situation and advise the Member accordingly.

County Councillor Williams expressed admiration at the financial contributions which had been received for these schemes from Parish Councils, Residents' Associations, local traders and local residents, but requested that he be kept informed should further difficulties be encountered with any of these enhancement schemes. He agreed to advise Members once a meeting date had been agreed to hear a presentation from Alfred McAlpine Asset Management Limited, the

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South Essex Highway works contractor. He thanked Members for inviting him to attend the meeting.

On a Motion moved by Cllr P F A Webster and seconded by Cllr M S Vince and a subsequent Motion moved by Cllr Mrs Brown and seconded by Cllr P F A Webster it was:-

Resolved

That detailed proposals relating to any new phases in the town centre enhancement schemes be reported to this Committee.

Recommended to Environmental Services Committee

That an officer from the County Council be designated as Clerk of Works to oversee the District's town centre enhancement schemes.
(County Highways)

566 RESIDENTIAL ZONES AND THE ASSESSMENT AND RANKING

The Committee considered the report of the Area Manager, County Highways which outlined the Residential Zone Strategy for Rochford and presented to Members the assessment system for prioritising the four zones identified in the Locally Determined Programme and the prioritised list of Residential Zones to enable the consultation to commence.

Appended to the report was a brief overview of what can be achieved as part of the Home Zone project, which would be tailored to suit the selected "Residential Zone" for Rochford District.

Members noted that discussion meetings had been held with Ward Councillors to agree items that needed to be taken into consideration in developing the assessment procedure. A copy of the assessment form with explanatory notes had also been appended to the report, together with examples of questionnaires that residents and other interested parties in the selected Residential Zone would be asked to complete at key stages of the scheme development

Members noted that a sum of £7000 had been set aside from the Locally Determined Budget for the appointment of a consultant to undertake the consultation process and possible scheme design, but that for the scheme to achieve maximum success, further joint funding would be required.

Members were concerned that as part of the consultation process, residents were made aware of any measures that would be immediately outside their property.

Recommended to Environmental Services Committee

- (1) That the assessment scoring sheet be used as the basis for prioritising all future requests for Residential Zones.

- (2) That the first zone to be initiated by Pooles Lane, Hullbridge, as determined using the assessment scoring sheet.
- (3) That the procedure for progressing successful schemes, including the method of public consultation, be as detailed in Section 4 of the report. (County Highways)

567 PROPOSED FOOTWAY IMPROVEMENT WEBSTERS WAY, RAYLEIGH

The Committee considered the report of the Area Manager, County Highways which provided Members with details of the future plans for land acquired by Essex County Council from the owners of plots 8-12 Websters Way, Rayleigh.

Members noted that if the available land fronting plot numbers 8-12 were used for a footway improvement, a further 40 metres of footway would be added to the network. However, it was considered that as the addition of this section of footway would not be of any immediate benefit to pedestrians, it should not be ranked as a high priority in requests for footways.

Members requested that the outcome of the pilot traffic scheme which had been carried out in Rayleigh prior to the enhancement of the town centre be reported to this Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That this scheme be assessed using the Highway Authority's Footway Scoring System and be added to the ranked list for footway requests, to be considered as part of the Locally Determined Programme.
- (2) That a report be brought to this Committee detailing the results of the County Council's pilot traffic scheme in Rayleigh. (County Highways)

568 REVIEW OF THE PLANNING ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM – CONSULTATION PAPER

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services which sought Members' views on a Government consultation paper which outlined options for alterations to the Planning Enforcement system.

Members noted that the Planning Green Paper published in December 2001 had announced the Government's intention to carry out a review of current enforcement arrangements and recognised that effective enforcement is central to ensuring that public confidence in the planning system is not undermined.

At the request of Members, the Head of Service agreed to organise a training session dealing with enforcement issues.

Resolved

That this report form the basis of the Council's response to the consultation paper on the Review of the Planning Enforcement System. (HPS)

**569 REGIONAL PLANNING GUIDANCE (RPG 14) FOR THE EAST OF ENGLAND –
CONSULTATION ON OPTIONS**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services which sought Members' views on a document published by the East of England Local Government Conference (EELGC) on options for Regional Planning Guidance in the East of England.

Members noted that the creation of the East of England region means that the current planning guidance for East Anglia needs to be married to that portion of the South East planning guidance covering Essex, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire to produce new planning guidance for the Eastern Region. The options document is the beginning of the consultation process. Appended to this report were the list of questions included in the consultation document. Also appended to the report was a table comparing the four spatial scenarios set by the EELGC and their proposed objectives.

During Member debate around the suggested responses to the consultation document's questions which had been included in the report, the following was agreed:-

- This Council should support the option entitled 'Continuation of Existing Policy' with the comment that tourism should be included.
- A rail link from Benfleet to Chelmsford via Wickford would be a desirable outcome for this District.

Resolved

That, subject to the inclusion of the above comments, this report forms the basis of the Council's response to the option consultation paper on Regional Planning Guidance for the East of England. (HPS)

570 ASSESSMENT OF PLAYING PITCHES IN ROCHFORD DISTRICT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services which proposed that Members adopt a study into playing pitch provision in the District as Local Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance (LPSPG).

Members noted that the purpose of assessing the provision of playing pitches in the District is to ensure that there is adequate availability to fulfil demand now and in the foreseeable future.

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A detailed assessment of pitch provision in the District had now been prepared using methodology endorsed by Sport England. A copy of the study had been made available for Members.

Members were concerned at the accuracy of some of the details and noted that Hawkwell was not mentioned at all. The Head of Service agreed to check the details.

Recommended to Environmental Services Committee

That, subject to clarification of the accuracy, the Playing Pitch Assessment document be adopted as Local Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance and that arrangements be made to incorporate the following points into the replacement Local Plan:-

- Disaggregating the required standards for the provision of sports pitches from those for the provision of open space.
- Adopting specific standards for provision in individual sub-areas of the District (Rayleigh, Hockley, Hullbridge, Canewdon, Rochford and Great Wakering).
- Policy protection for existing pitches to prevent alternative use and to maintain provision.
- That consideration be given to using developer contributions to assist with the improvement of existing sports pitches and ancillary facilities. (HPS)

571 RECYCLING INITIATIVES – FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL INFORMATION

The Committee received and noted the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which provided Members with information about the current recycling scheme and details on addressing the common public complaints received on the kerbside scheme that had been previously been outlined to this Committee.

In particular, Members noted that:-

- Following the expansion of the kerbside scheme, there had been a significant increase in the recycling credits received from October 2001.
- There had been a significant increase in the Council's recycling rate and this was set to continue, with an estimate of between 9.5% and 10.5% for 2002/03.
- If 3,500 tons of waste are recycled this year, the Council will have diverted from landfill twice as much as in 2000/01.
- The contamination levels within this District's collection are very low which means that the majority of the collected material does get recycled.

Members requested that Officers continue to emphasise in publicity material what types of materials can be deposited in the form of dry recyclables in the blue boxes and that extra bags for dry recyclables placed by the blue box will also be collected

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The Committee reaffirmed this Council's commitment to a recycling policy as demonstrated by the Motion submitted to Full Council on 25 April 2002.

572 AUDIT REPORT

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

The Head of Planning Services confirmed that a small internal working group had been set up to look at ways of streamlining the system of recording planning applications and objections to them on the CAPS Planning System. The outcome of this would be reported to Members.

Resolved

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

The meeting closed at 9.35 pm

Chairman

Date

