

Environmental Services Committee – 6 September 2005

Minutes of the meeting of the **Environmental Services Committee** held on **6 September 2005** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr M G B Starke
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs L Hungate

Cllr R A Amner
Cllr T G Cutmore
Cllr K J Gordon
Cllr C J Lumley

Cllr Mrs J A Mockford
Cllr P R Robinson
Cllr C G Seagers
Cllr Mrs M J Webster

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs R Brown, Mrs T J Capon and Mrs M S Vince.

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Scrutton	- Head of Planning Services
S Blake	- Environmental Protection Manager
J Crawford	- Transportation Manager
M Rickard	- Contaminated Land Research Assistant
J Read	- Hackney Carriage Officer
S Worthington	- Committee Administrator

324 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

325 REPORT OF THE TAXI LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the report of the Taxi Licensing Sub-Committee relating to a number of recommendations made at its meeting on 7 July 2005 with respect to regulating the issue of hackney carriage vehicle licences.

Officers advised that the third condition proposed related to all new hackney carriage proprietors.

Officers confirmed that a reasonable timescale for introducing any proposed changes would be 4 weeks from the date of the Committee decision. The proposals had been known to taxi drivers since July when a meeting of the Taxi Licensing Sub-Committee had taken place.

Responding to a Member enquiry relating to potential long term problems with respect to the issue of hackney carriage vehicle licences, officers confirmed that the recommendations would not preclude further vehicle licences being issued, but would limit them.

In response to a further query relating to whether it would be commercially viable for an increased number of vehicles to be licensed within the District, officers advised that the recommendations would limit further licences being issued, as wheelchair accessible vehicles were more expensive to purchase and maintain. There was also a general consensus that the market was self regulating.

Responding to a Member enquiry relating to geographical tests, officers confirmed that hackney carriage drivers had to take a knowledge test which related to the Rochford District.

In response to a Member concern relating to the proposal to reduce the age limit of wheelchair accessible vehicles when first licensed, officers advised that this was consistent with age restrictions on all saloon vehicles, which had to be less than 6 years old when first licensed.

Officers advised, in response to a further Member concern expressed relating to the unsuitability of wheelchair accessible vehicles for people with, for example, hip problems, that the majority of the District's licensed vehicles were saloons; the requirement that only wheelchair accessible vehicles would be licensed in future related only to new, additional hackney carriage vehicle licences.

Resolved

- (1) That there be no re-introduction of a three year probation period relating to the issue of hackney carriage vehicle licences.
- (2) That there be no requirement for all new hackney carriage proprietors to live within a three mile radius of the District.
- (3) That all new hackney carriage proprietors must hold a hackney carriage driver's licence.
- (4) That all new hackney carriage vehicle licences issued be to purpose built wheelchair accessible vehicles only.
- (5) That the age limit for purpose built wheelchair accessible vehicles be reduced to no more than 6 years old when first licensed, with an upper age limit of 12 years.
- (6) That the above conditions be implemented 4 weeks from today.
(HRHM)

(Note: Cllr P R Robinson wished it to be recorded that he had abstained from voting on this decision).

326 CONTAMINATED LAND – UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care updating Members on current progress in implementing the Council's Contaminated Land Strategy, the joint countywide initiative of the Essex Contaminated Land Consortium and the new Best Value Performance Indicator for Contaminated Land.

Officers confirmed that the contaminated land strategy did not result in any underlying, additional costs for the Authority.

Responding to a Member enquiry relating to the two sites in the District on which further information was being gathered before it was determined whether the sites constituted contaminated land or not, officers advised that no further information could be given on the sites at this stage as the information had not yet been made public, but that officers would report back findings to the Committee as soon as practicable.

Resolved

That progress with implementation of the contaminated land strategy be noted and that a further progress report be made in two years. (HHHCC)

327 BASILDON LOCAL PLAN SECOND DEPOSIT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services asking Members to agree that representations made by officers with respect to the Basildon District Council's Local Plan Second Deposit should constitute this Authority's consultation response.

It was noted that Basildon District Council had refused officers' request that more time be given in order for Members to give proper consideration to the consultation. Officers had therefore made the submission within the deadline, on the basis that, if necessary, it could be withdrawn.

During debate, Members, while totally supporting the submission made by officers, were concerned that in future the Leader of the Council should, in the future, be consulted on any such consultation documents with similar tight deadlines.

There was a general consensus that if Basildon District Council did not make appropriate amendments to the Local Plan as a result of the consultation, officers should pursue the matter through the normal planning process, while bringing forward to the Committee any new developments.

Resolved

- (1) That the representations made by officers be agreed as an appropriate response on behalf of Rochford District.

- (2) That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning Services to make full representations on behalf of Rochford District Council with regard to Gypsy/Traveller provision as contained within the Basildon District Replacement Local Plan Redeposit and through the remainder of the Basildon Local Plan replacement process, reporting back any new developments to this Committee. (HPS)

328 PLANNING FOR HOUSING PROVISION

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services outlining the Government's proposed new policy approach to making the planning system more responsive to the housing market.

Members all perceived that the findings of the Barker Review of Housing Supply were fundamentally flawed. They further concurred that the proposals were undemocratic and would diminish Local Plans and would lead to a reduction in Local Government control of local planning. The Committee were of the view that the proposals would lead to an erosion of the Green Belt and that it would be inadvisable to provide new housing without the proper infrastructure in place to support it.

Officers confirmed that they would establish what responses had been made to the consultation by neighbouring Authorities.

During debate, there was a general consensus that Full Council should be given an opportunity to express its opposition to the Government proposals.

Cllr T G Cutmore moved a Motion, seconded by Cllr C G Seagers that the officer recommendation should be re-worded to reflect the full weight of the Committee's opposition to the proposals and that a press release should be issued highlighting the Authority's lack of support for the proposals.

On a requisition pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 16.4, a recorded vote was taken on the Motion as follows:-

For (10) Cllrs R A Amner, T G Cutmore, K J Gordon, Mrs L Hungate, C J Lumley, Mrs J A Mockford, P R Robinson, C G Seagers, M G B Starke, Mrs M J Webster

Against (0)

Abstentions (0)

Resolved

- (1) That, subject to the following comments from Members, ODPM be informed that this Council fundamentally objects in the strongest possible terms to the proposed methodology for housing provision, in

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line with the concerns outlined in the officer's report and by those elected to plan for the District:

- The findings of the Barker Review of Housing Supply are flawed.
 - The proposals will lead to a diminution of Local Government control, despite residents' rejection of regional government.
 - It would be ill advised to provide new housing without proper infrastructure.
 - This would make it easy for builders to erect new housing in the Green Belt.
- (2) That a press release be issued outlining this Authority's response to the Consultation paper. (HPS)

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm.

Chairman

Date