

**ENVIRONMENT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**8 November 2005
10.00am – 2.50pm

PRESENT: Councillors Reid (Chair), Baker, Bradnack, Durrant, Herbert, Stuart and Ward (Vice Chair).

ALSO PRESENT: Executive Councillors Cllr Bailey (Planning and Transport), Cllr Coleman (Environmental Services)

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**05/ENV/55 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 July and the Special Meeting on 27 September were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

05/ENV/56 Apologies For Absence

Apologies had been received from Councillor Adey.

05/ENV/57 Declarations Of Interest

None.

05/ENV/58 Public Question Time**a) Re: Minute number 05/ENV/46: Fourth Annual Report on Planning Obligations 2004/05**

Mr M Bond, Secretary of the Old Chesterton Residents Association, referred to Minute number 05/ENV/46 in the July minutes: Fourth Annual Report on Planning Obligations 2005/05 Re: 4. "To approve the setting up of a Planning Obligations Members Reference Group and to agree terms of reference and membership of that Group at the Environment Scrutiny Committee's next meeting".

He asked what action had been taken.

The Director of Environment & Planning said that the terms of reference still had to be agreed and the officer had had discussions with members about these. The reasons for the delay were to do with officer workload and other priorities such as the Local Plan and the fact that the member composition of the reference group needed to be wider. It was planned to have the Reference Group in place by the end of January 2006.

Mr Bond welcomed this and said he had a particular interest in where the money had gone for community development projects.

The Director of Environment & Planning agreed this was a vital area.

b) Re: Item 10B: Performance Review of Development Services

Mr M Chisholm referred to the external review of development control mentioned in the Performance Review on page 71 of the agenda which reads "Commission a focused external review (peer group or specialist consultant) of working practices and procedures in development control (Development Control)."

He was representing a number of Residents' Associations who had met to discuss a letter received from the Head of Development Services and wanted to know the scope of the review and whether it would address the concerns raised by the BMG report of March 2005.

The Director of Environment & Planning emphasised that Development Control were committed to continuous improvement and, indeed, had initiated the idea of the review. The Performance Review on page 70 of the agenda showed that they had met all the national targets set down by the Government, had an excellent appeals record, and had gained the ISO9001 re-accreditation for its quality management system.

The external review would be carried out either by a peer group or specialist consultants and the deadline for completing this was now 31 March 2006. The Director circulated a project appraisal for the review to members and to Mr Chisholm and Mr Bond.

The Director said that how far this would address residents' concerns was difficult to say but the Service wanted to engage in constructive dialogue with residents who had an important role to play in local issues. An early meeting was planned with Mr Bond and Mr Chisholm and representatives of other Residents' Associations.

Mr Chisholm highlighted 2 issues:

1. Dialogue between Development Control and Residents' Associations about particular planning applications was problematic.
2. A general concern about the planning administrative process irrespective of the effectiveness of dialogue. BMG had identified some practical issues – planning files where papers had been inserted loose which led to papers becoming lost; no satisfactory numbering system in the files. He thought that these issues ought to be addressed by the review.

The Director of Environment & Planning referred to the bureaucratic nature of the planning process and the need to seek business efficiencies by minimising paper based systems. He referred to the ongoing need for further investment in new technology, building on the current online capacity to submit and study applications online. He acknowledged that it was vital to have a fresh look at the business processes and that it was planned to present new possibilities during the budget process in January.

The Chair allowed Councillor Bradnack to ask a question of Mr Bond and Mr Chisholm.

Councillor Bradnack asked which Residents' Associations were represented at the meeting mentioned in Mr Chisholm's original question.

Mr Chisholm agreed to make this information available to the committee.

05/ENV/59 City Council Funding for Public Transport Services and Initiatives

(see also record of decision 05/ENV/57)

The Transport Policy Manager introduced the report. The Community and Public Transport Steering Group had considered the various options outlined in the report.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport said that she was seeking opinions from the Steering Group which had met twice and had a further meeting planned before Christmas. Concessionary fares and Dial-a-Ride in particular required further consideration.

Councillor Bradnack welcomed the report and said that the proposals should be user-led rather than service-led.

The officers explained that recommendation 2.1 needed to be amended to indicate that the one off payment to Dial-a-Ride would be £10,000 which would be paid by viring funds from the S106 fund to the Transport Cost Centre.

Councillors Durrant and Bradnack raised concerns about this as there was no paper trail and, as resources were scarce, it was important that they were being used optimally. They also suggested that there ought to be separate scrutiny of the S106 funds as well as scrutiny of Service Reviews.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport said that the Planning Obligation Member Reference Group was vital to that scrutiny. She planned to bring the database showing how the S106 money had been spent to a meeting of the Reference Group once the database was up and running.

Councillors Ward and Reid agreed that the monitoring of these funds was a high priority to ensure there was an adequate audit trail and that their use was visible to members.

The Director of Environment & Planning assured the members that the use of S106 funds complied with legal requirements and agreed that this needed to be demonstrated.

The Chair suggested that officers send a briefing note to members showing which fund the £10,000 was coming from.

Members considered the various options and made the following points:

- To enter into partnerships with Cambridge Leisure and the Junction with regard to S106 funds and bus provision.
- To recognise that subsidising mainstream bus services was not a good use of resources.
- There were better use of resources than supporting the proposed Romsey/Petersfield area social car scheme.

In replying to these points the officers said

- that bus provision was the responsibility of the County Council.
- that the funding for the social car scheme was granted by central government through the Urban Bus Challenge competition three years ago and that advancing the scheme was essential to releasing funding from the Department of Transport for improving buses and service levels on bus route 114.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport alerted the Committee to the potential problems when the new concessionary fares legislation came into force in April 2006.

Councillor Bradnack mentioned that cross-boundary application of the concessionary fares with South Cambridgeshire District Council had been mentioned at the Steering Group and was to be taken forward.

Recommendation 2.1 was amended as follows (amendments shown in bold):
“To continue to work with both Dial-a-Ride and the County to establish a stronger scheme for the future, and to provide Cambridge Dial-a-Ride with a one off payment **of £10,000 in the current financial year** to help them to overcome their current financial difficulties (for details see section 5.4)”.

The Committee approved the amendment by 4 votes to 0.

Councillor Ward proposed that recommendation 2.3c be amended as follows:

~~“To target City Council funding more towards community based transport services and publicity and information, instead of subsidising mainstream bus routes (details in section 6) and to investigate direct contracts between the City Council and operators.”~~

The Committee approved the amendment by 4 votes to 0.

The Committee approved the recommendations for the Executive Councillor including amended 2.1 and 2.3c by 4 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Planning and Transport approved the amended recommendations.

05/ENV/60 Taxicard Scheme Review *(see also record of decision 05/ENV/58)*

Councillor Ward spoke as a member of the Steering Group re section 3.19 of the officer report which suggested change to eligibility criteria. The Steering Group thought the first change was acceptable (re-instate the income test for those over 80 years of age) but they saw problems with proposed changes 2-4.

Councillor Durrant asked the Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport to indicate what her views were.

The Executive Councillor agreed with the position of the Steering Group and said that Change 4 in particular needed more work. She thought that moderate adjustments could be made that would be workable but did not think further major investigation was warranted. She wanted to find criteria that would target those individuals who

really needed the services provided. She proposed that the Steering Group meeting before Christmas could do this. She was happy to move forward on Change 1 and asked the officers to do more work on the problem areas before the next meeting of the Steering Group. She asked that the Chair and Spokes as well as herself briefed the officers with their views of the best ways forward.

The Committee approved the recommendations for the Executive Councillor by 4 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Planning and Transport approved the recommendations.

05/ENV/61 Bus Shelter Provision in Cambridge: The Way Forward

(see also record of decision 05/ENV/59)

Members raised the following points:

1. Lack of clarity about what the policy was going to be – the same design of bus shelter city wide and was this expected to be Adshel if their performance improved?
2. What was the experience of other Local Authorities with regard to bus shelter design?
3. What mechanism would there be for prioritising where shelters will be replaced. Something similar to that for pedestrian crossings namely one per ward?
4. Could this be an opportunity for the City Council to take over the responsibility for bus timetables and putting them on bus shelters?

Officers replied to these points:

1. That bus shelter design themes would link City owned and Adshel shelters with high quality structures, provision of seats, lighting and other standard features such as display boards for timetable information.

2. As far as they were aware, there were no other local authorities planning to make bus shelters less graffiti prone hence the need for a pilot scheme which aimed to deter anti-social behaviour by using graffiti projects to link to local youth groups. The concept of using urban art/graffiti panels in certain areas was a positive and progressive step where Cambridge would be leading the way.

3. Priorities would be decided following consultation with members of the public at area committees as the scale of the project was very large and would need to take place over a considerable period.

Councillor Ward suggested that either Area Committees could suggest priorities that were then agreed by the Executive Councillor at Environment Scrutiny Committee or there could be budget delegation to Area Committees.

The Chair said that there would need to be very clear criteria for deciding priorities.

Councillor Bradnack asked that the minutes record that there would need to be an additional recommendation for the Executive Councillor at some point in the future with regard to how priorities were to be decided.

4. The City Council had no plans to display timetables as that was the responsibility of the operator and, where there was a high level of supported services, of the County Council.

The Transport Planning Officer explained that she was working with the County Council to provide much improved publicity at key stops and this was gradually being rolled out at key city centre locations.

The Chair referred to page 25 of the agenda and the table showing the budget bids. She was concerned that no assumption be made that those that were converted for advertising would generate revenue as this depended on gaining planning permission first.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport welcomed the Committee's comments and said that S106 money could be used in some locations as well as using the capital bids process. She planned that the list of existing shelters be put on the website which would also provide a facility for comments and fault reports.

The Committee approved the recommendations for the Executive Councillor by 4 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport approved the recommendations.

05/ENV/62 Cambridge East Area Action Plan (*see also record of decision 05/ENV/60*)

The Director of Environment & Planning tabled a supplementary note to the report which referred to leaving room for waste provision on new developments.

Councillor Bradnack referred to the chapter on Transport and the Atkins report. He asked on what grounds the report formed part of the Enquiry in Public (EiP). His understanding was that this was only used if the Local Authority invoked it as part of its own argument to the EiP. He asked that the Council make a statement about its position on the Atkins report.

The Director of Environment & Planning undertook to provide a written response for the committee. One of the issues was ensuring that the Council followed proper procedures following consultation with its legal Counsel.

The Chair said that transport was a key aspect to the Plan. The County would be undertaking consultation in December/January and the Reference Group had asked to be included in order to press the County to address transport issues.

Councillor Durrant referred to the provision of waste management and noted that the map did not include Marshall's hangars. He pointed out that, if Marshall's moved, the hangars would be part of their industrial base and a waste facility could be sited there. The engineering works and the hangars would impact on the vision of the East Area.

The Director of Environment & Planning said there were procedural issues about how to address the objection about waste put forward by the County Council in relation to

what could be allocated to the East Area Action Plan and he undertook to update members on this.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport said she wanted to ensure that the waste disposal experts were fully consulted about providing adequate facilities in the East Area by considering where local and where county sites should be located.

The Committee approved the recommendations for the Executive Councillor by 4 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport approved the recommendations.

05/ENV/63 Emission abatement – Crematorium (*see also record of decision 05/ENV/61*)

Councillor Herbert welcomed the report as mercury pollution was a serious matter. He was concerned that no real assessment had been made of the impact of mercury pollution around the crematorium which served the city but was in South Cambridgeshire. He proposed a fifth recommendation as follows:

“Before making a final decision, to undertake soil analysis on heavy metals levels in the vicinity of the crematorium to inform the council’s decision on the appropriate abatement solution, analysis details to be agreed with and undertaken in combination with South Cambridgeshire District Council’s Environmental Health department”.

The Executive Councillor for Environmental Services said that while the results of such a study would be informative, they would not affect the requirement imposed by DEFRA to participate in a mercury abatement scheme. He said that the analysis could be a desk-based project. He undertook to ask the City Council’s Environmental Health officers to consult their counterparts in South Cambridgeshire. He pointed out that even if zero levels were found the council was still required to instal the equipment. He was seeking a financial and practical way to meet this requirement. Rather than accept the amendment he would take up the issues as he had indicated.

Councillor Herbert wished the committee to vote on his recommendation including the further work being done before the March meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

The additional recommendation was lost by 4 votes to 0.

Councillor Durrant asked about recommendation 3 which referred to a Repair and Renewals fund which he thought should be more specific.

The Executive Councillor for Environmental Services responded to this by saying that how the surcharge was presented to the public needed more work and that he would seek advice about which fund the surcharge would go to.

The Committee approved the recommendations for the Executive Councillor by 4 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Environmental Services approved the recommendations.

05/ENV/64 2005/06 Service Performance Reviews and Revised Revenue and Capital Budgets for Environmental Services (The Scrutiny Committee had agreed to scrutinise all Performance Reviews)
(see also record of decision 05/ENV/62)

Councillor Bradnack referred to Appendix B which showed considerable overspends and asked for more detail of these.

The officers explained as follows:

Cost Centre and activity	Reason for overspend
Street Services – £3,800	Reduced funding for two supported places for disabled workers
Liquor Licensing - £76,860	Due to change in fee level decided by the Government and to the estimate made about the number of applications. 750 had been predicted; 500 actual
Trade Waste - £50,000	Due to a lower market share in a very competitive market. This would need careful monitoring. Acknowledged the predicted income had been too high.
Waste Strategy - £23,610	As in the note.
Cemeteries & Crematorium - £20,000	Gas costs were increasing and companies now offered guaranteed prices for only 1 year rather than for 3. Crematoria across the country were working together to optimise price deals with the energy suppliers.
Cemeteries & Crematorium - £24,000 (fewer interments) - £12,000 (fewer burial plots purchased)	Estimates were based on historical data and there was some evidence that fewer people were choosing burial and that the death rate was levelling off.

The Executive Councillor for Environmental Services referred to the trade waste issue and said that he was keen to separate out abandoned car budget issues from trade waste.

Councillor Bradnack referred to Appendix C and asked whether the alternate weekly refuse and plastics collection provided value for money.

The officers and Executive Councillor said the scheme was going well in the very short time since its inception and they wanted to wait and see more data.

The Committee then considered the Performance Review of each service in turn.

Cemeteries and Crematorium

In response to questions from Councillor Bradnack, the officers affirmed that staff vacancies had been filled and the target dates of December 05 for several actions could now be completed by March 06.

Councillor Baker commented on the total lack of landscaping at the cemetery at the Crematorium.

The officers explained that this was due to a number of factors - the fact that responsibility for landscaping had been transferred to them from Parks and Recreation, the impact of the update of the A14 and the purchase of an additional plot to the south of the cemetery. The landscaping would be addressed in the coming year taking into account these factors.

Environmental Health

The Chair and the Executive Councillor thanked the staff involved in the new Licensing 2003 Act for achieving all applications to target with only one appeal lodged to date.

Street Services

Members suggested that a note be added in future to BV199 to indicate that a lower figure was the mark of achievement.

Waste Management

An updated report which had previously been circulated to members was tabled.

Councillor Herbert commented on the increase of £6.94 in the cost per household for waste collection from £43 to £49.94. The figure anticipated in April 2005 had been £39.54 so what was the new target?

The officers said that the figure was a result of timing in that it did not include a bid of £244,000 for plastic bottle collection and that the new target cost per household would be set in January.

The Executive Councillor for Environmental Services said that according to current budget projections the cost per household would be more expensive in 05/06 than in 04/05 and that in future years it would be less expensive than in 04/05.

Councillor Bradnack asked how many households were missing out on the full service. For example some areas did not receive green bins at all. He requested information about which initiatives had been introduced at what times over the past 5 years to gain a better sense of the whole process. He also asked whether there was any data about how far these initiatives had been tested against results.

The Executive Councillor for Environmental Services said that there were 2 different issues:

1. Some properties had not been provided with the full service because that was not practicable yet
2. Some properties should have had the service but had been omitted due to oversight.

The Head of Environmental Services said that more than 2000 extra containers had been delivered in the previous 2 weeks and that participation in the scheme was running at 90%. He said that the green bin scheme had begun during the Labour administration and that there had been 3 rounds of issuing black boxes over a two year period. It was crucial to obtain maximum participation in the scheme in order to get the return on the investment. Student houses were a particular challenge. A workshop was planned for early December with the Executive Councillor, councillors and officers to address issues arising from the new scheme.

Councillor Bradnack had obtained some figures that showed that there had been no significant increase in dry recycling since January 2003 and yet the Council had gone ahead with the new scheme. He requested that a report come to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee presenting statistical information which would compare investment in recycling with the outcome illustrated through increases in the recycling rate.

The Committee approved the recommendations for the Executive Councillor by 4 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Environmental Services approved the recommendations.

05/ENV/65 2005/06 Service Performance Reviews and Revised Revenue and Capital Budgets for Planning & Transport (The Scrutiny Committee had agreed to scrutinise all Performance Reviews)
(see also record of decision 05/ENV/63)

Councillor Bradnack asked about the £50,000 shortfall in the Tourism section and what the long-term strategy was to address this.

The officer explained that there was a growing national trend away from using agencies for booking and using the internet to go direct to suppliers. This would have to be taken into account in the next year's budget planning. The Service Plan would outline the long term strategy.

Members then considered each Performance Review in turn.

Development Services

Members noted the significant improvements with the service meeting all the targets without sacrificing quality for quantity.

Economic Development & Tourism

Members noted the achievements of the section.

Parking Services

Councillor Bradnack commented on the anticipated versus the actual usage in the two sorts of car parks with the multi-storey ones achieving slightly less and the

surface ones considerably more and asked whether the council was making money as a result.

The officers indicated that the overall effect was neutral.

Policy & Projects

Councillor Baker, as Chair of Planning Committee, questioned the figure for the Local Performance Indicator (LPI) 'Number of new homes built' as he thought it seemed rather low.

The officer explained that the figure was based on completion dates and as there was a delay between the planning approval and the completion date, the figure would seem low.

Councillors Bradnack and Ward had doubts about the figures presented for PT1-PT4 (bus subsidies) and Councillor Bradnack asked what had happened to the £22,000 set aside for PT4.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport agreed that the bus subsidies information could be presented in a better format and she asked for that to be done and circulated to members.

The Committee approved the recommendations for the Executive Councillor by 4 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport approved the recommendations.

05/ENV/66 Local Development Scheme - Update (referred by the Labour members of the Scrutiny Committee) (*see also record of decision 05/ENV/64*)

The Head of Policy & Projects explained that the Local Development Scheme was part of the new statutory planning process.

The Chair raised the matter of Member Reference groups such as the ones for the Southern Fringe and the planned one for North West Cambridge and referred to page 126 of the agenda where the decision making structure was outlined in Figure 2. She thought that the Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport should appoint members to these reference groups. She suggested that an evaluation be done of the two existing ones to obtain some best practice principles. She had identified 4 aspects that needed addressing in relation to best practice:

1. Committee servicing
2. Chairing arrangements
3. Balance of councillors as between local and Cambridge-wide
4. Presence of opposition members (none on the Southern Fringe group)

Councillor Durrant also referred to figure 2 and said that he thought the Development Plan Steering Group and not the Joint Strategic Forum was the appropriate body in that part of the table.

The Head of Policy & Projects said that the Member Reference Groups were subgroups of the Joint Strategic Forum. However, he suggested that the terms of reference of the subgroups could be reviewed along with membership, appointment of chair and committee servicing and other resources.

Members pointed out that the subgroups needed to take a strategic view and that the budget implications had to be taken into account.

The Head of Policy & Projects agreed and said that the need for administrative support for the growth agenda had to be established and funded and that it was also important to distinguish between publicly accountable bodies and internal working groups.

The Committee approved the recommendations for the Executive Councillor by 4 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport approved the recommendations.

05/ENV/67 Environment Action Programme for 2006/07 - Suggested Priority Areas (as above) (*see also record of decision 05/ENV/65*)

The Head of Policy & Projects introduced the report and said that the appendix about council energy use had not been available in time for the meeting.

In response to an issue raised by the Chair, the officer said that Service Plans would be the means of tracking and monitoring the priority areas.

Councillor Durrant asked that the priority relating to building environmental considerations into decision-making be considered in its own right separate from service plans.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport expressed her commitment to starting with baseline figures and demonstrating reductions in a measurable way.

The Committee approved the recommendations for the Executive Councillor by 4 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport approved the recommendations.

05/ENV/68 East Pit on Lime Kiln Road

Councillor Durrant spoke to the item and corrected the agenda title. He wanted to consider the current status of East Pit on Lime Kiln Road, not the traffic issue as indicated. In the past the council had considered purchasing the land but Environment Committee had decided it was too costly. Recently there had been 2 accidents because quad bikers were using the site. He requested that the Scrutiny Committee consider previous actions in relation to the site and its possible future use as a nature reserve.

The Committee agreed to the request that the officers prepare a one page scoping report for the January meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

05/ENV/69 Forward Plan

The Labour members of the Scrutiny Committee requested scrutiny of all the items listed on the current edition of the Forward Plan:

- Sustainable City Grants to Environmental Organisations 2006/07
- Public Art Action Plan Review

CHAIR