

**ENVIRONMENT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**10 January 2006
10.00am – 3.40pm

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

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

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**06/ENV/01 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

06/ENV/02 Apologies For Absence

Apologies had been received from Councillors Adey and Herbert. Councillor Baker apologised for arriving late.

06/ENV/03 Declarations Of Interest

06/ENV/15 Cllr Baker as a member of the Wildlife Trust.

06/ENV/15 Cllr Reid as her husband is a Trustee of Cambridge Preservation Society.

06/ENV/16 Cllr Coleman as a resident of Vinery Road.

06/ENV/04 Public Question Time

No members of the public wished to address the committee.

06/ENV/05 Service Plans and Revenue and Capital Budgets - Revised 2005/06, Proposed 2006/07 and Forecast 2007/08: Executive Councillor for Environmental Services

(see also record of decision 06/ENV/01)

Service Plans

The Committee considered the Service Plans of each service in turn.

Street Services

The officers introduced the Plan saying that it was building on past success and seeking to address in part the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.

Councillor Bradnack used PPF bid 683 (one year project to improve Helpdesk customer satisfaction) to raise the general issue of how members were kept informed of whether or not services were achieving their targets. Apart from the Performance Reviews in November each year there was no mechanism and he thought it would be important to identify a means for members being able to monitor performance at least every 6 months.

Councillor Ward agreed that there was a problem of visibility for members of the outcome of projects such as this but that there had to be a trade off between officers writing reports and getting on with the job.

The Director of Environment & Planning said that officer Performance Appraisal targets were linked to service PIs and that was how the services monitored performance. He said that the members' comments would be used to improve the Service Plan process next year.

Environmental Health

The Head of Environmental Services highlighted the service objectives for the coming year some of which were due to changes in legislation such as the Licensing Act 2003 and Gambling Act 2005.

Councillor Bradnack asked about two matters:

- PI 166 (score against an enforcement best practice checklist for Environmental Health) and how the score of 7 related to the performance of other local authorities.
- About the way the data for LP14 (deaths from accidents) had been presented as a series of ***** rather than figures.

The Head of Environmental Services explained that for PI166, a score of 9 was in the top quartile and that Cambridge failed to reach that level because of a lack of adequate health promotion work.

With regard to LP14, while his section had an input into the prevention of accidents it was difficult to measure the outcome.

Waste Management

The Head of Environmental Services highlighted key objectives in the coming year - the consolidation of the alternate weekly collections; planning for the growth agenda which would require increased capacity in vehicles; implementing changes in legislation.

Members saved their questions until the discussion of the two reports concerning this service later in the agenda.

Cemeteries and Crematorium

The Executive Councillor for Environmental Services introduced the Plan. The main work in the coming year was to put the service on a more sound financial footing.

Councillor Durrant asked about the income shortfall due to the falling death rate and whether there were any ideas about why the fall was occurring.

The Executive Councillor said that estimates were based on figures produced by the County Council and, while people were living longer, there would be a few years now where the impact of World War II would be experienced; because of the war, there were fewer people in the relevant age group.

Councillor Bradnack asked for an explanation of the fact that there was both a saving and a bid in relation to the crematorium service.

The Executive Councillor said that the bid was because of an unavoidable increase in gas prices and the saving was due to passing on that increase to the public. He thought it was helpful to separate out these two aspects of the situation.

In response to a question from Councillor Baker, the Executive Councillor assured the committee that the aesthetics of the cemetery at the crematorium which had been raised at the meeting in November were included in Service Objective 7.

The Scrutiny Committee then considered the budget recommendations in turn.

Budget Recommendations

There were no comments on the Review of Charges.

Revenue Savings and Bids

In reply to a question from Councillor Durrant about S668, a saving in electricity in public toilets, the Head of Streetscene said this was due to some facilities being closed for periods due to the refurbishment scheme which was being considered later in the agenda.

The following additional PPF bid was tabled at the meeting and the Chair ruled under 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 that the item be considered despite not being publicly available five clear days before the meeting:

PPF682 Increase service provided by City Rangers – to respond to increasing expectations placed on the service and ensure more robust service across Cambridge during periods of staff holidays – for £56,800.

A paper with a preferred order of priority for the PPF bids was also tabled.

Councillors Holland, Baker and Durrant raised questions and concerns about the bid to purchase peepods rather than to continue to hire them as their use was to be a short term one to the problems they were supplied to address.

The Head of Streetscene acknowledged that the solution was intended to be short term and that other alternatives were being worked on. He suggested that the peepods could also be diverted for use at the Council's outdoor public events but that hire could be more expensive after year one.

Councillor Ward pointed out that the cost of hiring for the period in question was £14,000 and the cost of purchase was £14,800.

The Executive Councillor pointed out that staffed toilet facilities were very expensive to provide especially late at night and that the people who needed to use them late at night would not walk further than a few metres. The advantage of the peepods was to provide toilet facilities near to the taxi ranks and other key points as a short term measure to help to overcome problems of illegal street urination.

Councillors Baker and Durrant pressed for consideration of the importance of the availability of permanent facilities.

Capital Bids

In reply to questions from Councillor Durrant about the capital bids for waste management and whether those were additional to what had been expected from the alternate weekly collections, the Executive Councillor said that a new aspect was the provision of a receptacle for those residents using white bags to deal with Environmental Health issues.

The Head of Environmental Services also said that larger vehicles would be needed to take into account the anticipated expansion of the city.

The Committee then voted on the order of priority of the PPF bids and agreed by 5 votes to 0 on the following order (highest priority first):

PPF656 Crew for extra dry recycling
PPF843 Support for mobile urinals
PPF675 R&R provision for Crematorium
PPF681 Streetscene Response Team
PPF654 Waste/Recycling Outreach Officer
PPF682 Increase service provided by City Rangers (one ranger rather than two)

The Committee approved the recommendations for the Executive Councillor including the order of priority of the PPF bids by 5 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Environmental Services approved the recommendations including the order of the PPF bids as given above.

06/ENV/06 Domestic Refuse Service - Impact on Enforcement relating to Waste Receptacles left on Street beyond Collection Days

(see also record of decision 06/ENV/02)

Councillor Bradnack welcomed the report and the progress towards addressing the issue. As a ward councillor he knew that residents were quite angry about the issue. He asked that other solutions than white sacks be considered such as providing recycling facilities within 50 metres of the problem streets.

Councillor Ward asked for a definition of "suitable storage" and the officer said that individual assessments would be made for each property.

Councillor C Rosenstiel spoke as Ward Councillor for Market. He also welcomed the progress made. He was surprised that Market was not one of the wards listed as problematic as bins left on streets was the second most frequent complaint residents mentioned. He wondered whether the Council's information system would be able to cope with such tailoring of individual solutions. Brown sacks were quite often just left out in the street and he did not know why.

The Executive Councillor stressed that bins being left out in the street was a long standing problem and not a consequence of fortnightly collections. He said he was

not against providing more local re-cycling facilities but the experience of other local authorities was that residents did not like them as they found them unsightly and intrusive. He emphasised that the programme was intended for all parts of the city.

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

The Executive Councillor for Environmental Services approved the recommendations.

06/ENV/07 Public Conveniences *(see also record of decision 06/ENV/03)*

In response to a question from Councillor Bradnack, the Head of Streetscene clarified that the programme omitted one facility that was in a Recreation Ground, namely Jesus Green, as this would be considered as part of a wider review of facilities on this important open space.

Councillor Durrant requested that Barnwell Road be given higher priority as it was the only facility that did not have access for the disabled and where there was no other suitable facility nearby.

The Executive Councillor said he wished to keep the priority already established as there was some flexibility within it.

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

The Executive Councillor for Environmental Services approved the recommendations.

06/ENV/08 Recycling Investment & Recycling Performance (referred by the Labour members of the Scrutiny Committee)
(see also record of decision 06/ENV/04)

The Head of Environmental Services introduced the report.

The Committee noted the report and requested that a similar report on the plastic bottle recycling come to committee once the scheme has been in place for a suitable period.

The Executive Councillor agreed to this request.

06/ENV/09 Service Plans and Revenue and Capital Budgets - Revised 2005/06, Proposed 2006/07 and Forecast 2007/08: Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport
(see also record of decision 06/ENV/05)

Service Plans

Members considered each Service Plan in turn.

Development Services

Councillor Bradnack welcomed the improvement in the service and asked whether any cost had been incurred to achieve this. He also commented that some of the objectives seemed rather “soft” eg the work with Residents Associations on actions to address the key issues and concerns raised by the BMG report of March 2004.

Councillor Stuart added to this latter point by referring back to the minutes of the previous meeting when 2 members of Residents Associations (RAs) had asked questions relating to this very issue. She noted that the target date now said March 07 rather than March 06 and she wondered if this were the case as March 06 had been mentioned in November.

The Head of Development Services addressed the issue of cost of improvement. He highlighted that there was more consultation work at the pre-application stage and less at the application stage than in the past. This meant that developers had had to change their approach to making applications. The improvement had been due to a number of factors - the Planning Delivery Grant had been important, review of procedures, significant investment in IT systems and the improvement in legal support over the past 18 months had also contributed significantly.

With regard to the Residents Associations he said that there had been a meeting with them in November 05 which had resulted in a Joint Consultative Group to address the issues raised in the BMG report. This was a small group comprising lead officers, some RA representatives and lead members.

The Director of Environment & Planning added that the change in the deadline to March 07 was linked to the issues raised in the overview report to the Service Plans written by himself and the Directory of City Services. Customer focus and new technology, especially Planning On-Line, were linked to the very specific issues raised by the RAs.

In response to a question from the Chair about the new Joint Consultative Group (would it be open to others to attend) and the Development Control Users Forum and whether both were needed, the officers explained that the latter had a broader membership, had been in existence for 6-7 years and met every 6 months. The former would be reviewed after 18 months of work and would focus on operational rather than policy issues. There was no intention to exclude interested parties from attending the Joint Consultative Group’s meetings.

Councillor Durrant asked about the shortfall of £250,000 in the income for the section in 2005/06 and the bid for £150,000 for a shortfall in the coming 2 years.

The officers explained that the £250,000 was the best estimate based on a 10% reduction in applications in 2005/06 (which was also reflected nationally) although December had been better. The £150,000 was the best estimate based on the experience of the previous 2 years off set by the anticipated increase in applications due to the growth agenda of the city.

Economic Development & Tourism

The Head of Economic Development & Tourism highlighted the focus on change, including the growth agenda and the importance of cross-departmental working such as the links to the Customer Access Strategy.

Councillor Bradnack flagged up the importance of not having “on-going” or absence of any target date for completion of projects. He also repeated the importance of members’ needs to monitor progress which were different than officers’ needs.

Parking Services

The Head of Parking Services highlighted 4 main objectives and 2 key actions in the Plan:

1. Improving Community Safety
2. Improving the quality of customer service
3. Getting a better understanding of the medium and longer term demand for car parking in the city, and developing an appropriate investment plan in line with that understanding, that is consistent with the Council’s plans to support the economic success of the Council’s city center partners.
4. Using IT more effectively

The key actions are:

- The successful reopening of the new car park at Lion Yard
- Trials of ‘real time’ technology to improve the effectiveness of parking enforcement and to extend the range of payment options to parking customers.

Councillor Ward asked whether the electronic signposts indicating the number of places available in the city’s car parks had had any impact on queuing or the use of parking.

The officer said that while people seemed to be resistant to using anywhere other than Lion Yard, there had not been massive problems due to the reduced capacity there.

The Committee noted that anecdotal evidence suggested there were few incidences of queuing and that the notices probably had had an impact.

Councillor Durrant asked where the money received from the Grand Arcade project to offset the loss of income was located in the budget papers.

The Head of Parking Services said that the income figures include this sum.

Policy & Projects

The Head of Policy & Projects said that the overriding aim of the Plan was to contribute effectively to the planning and delivery of the growth agenda. The 15 detailed objectives could be summarised under 5 broad objectives:

- Guiding development through robust policy and design frameworks that are prepared with the community and evidence based;

- Conserving the existing natural and built environments embracing all areas of the City;
- Promoting sustainable development, especially through sustainable construction;
- Promoting and supporting sustainable transport, directly and through essential working with the County Council;
- Developing the electronic delivery of services and the internal use of ICT.

Members had no comments on the Plan.

Customer & Support Services

The Director of Environment & Planning introduced the Plan saying it was the first time that this service had reported to Committee. It provided reception services and personnel services for selection of staff to all the other services in the department. A key element in the previous year had been the 24% turnover in staff and it was a main objective to reduce this in the coming year.

Members had no comments on the Plan.

Budget Recommendations

There were no charges for approval.

Revenue Savings and Bids

Councillor Stuart asked if there were any additional funds, which additional bid the Executive Councillor would like to make.

The Executive Councillor opted for PPF590 Monitoring Officer Planning Investigation Team.

The Committee also noted that External Bid, PPFX550 Landscape Architect, ought to be a high rather than medium priority bid.

In reply to questions from Councillor Durrant and from the Chair, the Director of Environment & Planning indicated that the external bids were crucial to the growth agenda. The funds requested from Cambridgeshire Horizons had been negotiated to a figure that was realistic in terms of that organisation's resources.

The Committee asked for clarification of the policy basis for the allocation of Environmental Improvement funds to each of the four area committees as the figures in the budget were different for each.

The Head of Policy & Projects agreed to circulate this to members.

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

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

06/ENV/10 Approval of Contractor - Static and Mobile Security Services to Cambridge City Council Car Parks *(see also record of decision 05/ENV/06)*

The Chair ruled that under 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 the late agenda item from the Head of Parking Services on the Approval of Contractor – Static and Mobile Security Services to Cambridge City Council Car Parks despatched to members by email on 7 January and placed on deposit on Monday 9 January be considered despite not being made publicly available five clear days prior to the meeting.

The reason was that the information was not available at the time of agenda despatch.

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

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport approved the recommendations.

06/ENV/11 Concessionary Bus Travel from 1 April 2006 *(see also record of decision 05/ENV/07)*

The Senior Transport Planner tabled an additional sheet outlining the intentions of other Cambridgeshire district councils which would not be confirmed until later in the month following their relevant decision making meetings. She summarised the position with the two nearest councils to the city and said it was likely that South Cambridgeshire District Council would choose the statutory minimum with no extras and that East Cambridgeshire District Council would choose no peak hour concession, would continue half fare concession on dial a ride services and would possibly fund cross boundary journeys.

The bus operators were not able to give accurate figures with regard to late night concessionary bus users but estimated that the numbers were very low.

The Senior Transport Planner thought that the cost of extending the concessionary scheme beyond 2300 would be minimal.

The Committee agreed an amendment proposed by Councillor Ward to recommendation 1 to insert the phrase - 0400 after 0930 so that the amended recommendations read (amendment in bold):

1. To agree that, for the interim period 1 April 2006 to 1 April 2007, the City Council will provide within its district only a statutory minimum free concessionary fares scheme, i.e. free travel only after 0930 – **0400** Monday to Friday and all day at weekends, with no concession at other times.
2. To agree that the City Council will continue to fund cross boundary journeys for the interim period
3. To review, along with other districts in the Cambridgeshire scheme, whether experience from the interim period indicates that a different scheme should be introduced from 1 April 2007, depending on funding and need.

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

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

06/ENV/12 Project Initiation - City Centre Strategy *(see also record of decision 05/ENV/08)*

The Head of Economic Development & Tourism introduced the report highlighting the long term nature of the project.

Councillor Durrant raised concerns about whether the City Centre Management Section had sufficient resources and potential partners to carry out the work proposed.

The Head of Economic Development & Tourism and The Director of Environment & Planning emphasised that the project was focused on developing a framework to tap into possible funding sources. The project would involve not only the City Council which would have a leadership role, but also representatives from the business community, the universities, the County Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Councillor Bradnack proposed an additional objective to the seven in the report with which the Committee agreed namely "To review the boundaries that identify the city centre eg so as to include Mill Road and Cambridge Leisure."

The Executive Councillor agreed with the addition of this eighth objective.

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

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport approved the amended recommendation.

06/ENV/13 Cambridge Southern Fringe - Proposed Area Development Framework *(see also record of decision 05/ENV/09)*

The Urban Design Manager introduced the report and mentioned some minor amendments to the text of the Framework. On page 8, bullet points 4,5 and 6 needed to be amended and on page 9 regarding Glebe Farm, the text should say 9.79 hectares rather than 6.88 hectares.

He drew members' attention to key aspects – Transport including the access road to the new development and the proposed Addenbrookes' Access Road; Community Uses including sites for schools (5 options for where to locate the secondary school); Waste Recycling (a controversial issue with the decision to be taken by the County Council); Community Facilities – the City Council's Community Development section would explore the use of the existing development centre; Landscape and Open Space preserving the need for a green corridor; Urban Design; Planning

Implementation including an initial list of planning obligations that would be expected from developers.

Members raised the following issues and concerns:

Councillor Bradnack regretted that he had not been a member of the Member Reference Group and referred to paragraph 3.13 of the officer report which made it clear that the transport issues were still not resolved which was a continuing cause for concern.

The Urban Design Manager said in reply that there were several aspects to the transport issues – the Inspector’s decision in favour of the guided bus; the need for transport assessments with each planning application.

Councillor Stuart raised 3 issues that concerned the ward councillors for Trumpington

1. the location of the secondary school which they thought was to be on the west side of the proposed road rather than the east side as indicated on Map 15; they thought there was a more appropriate location near the Fawcett School playing fields (see Map 16) which would allow a campus effect as well as being close to the doctor’s surgery;
2. With regard to commuted sums for open space provision, they would prefer lots of small open spaces;
3. A request to put the proposed allotments where there is good soil.

The Urban Design Manager said that the County Council was responsible for outdoor playing facilities and that it was planned to locate the school beside these proposed facilities. The plan was for the open spaces to be close to residential areas. He had had discussions with the Allotment Group and he would ensure that the needs of the group were fully understood.

The Head of Policy & Projects tabled a letter from South Cambridgeshire District Council about the Addenbrookes’ Access Road which requested that “planning permission for development at Trumpington West is not granted until the Addenbrookes Access Road has been opened to traffic in its entirety as it will only be when it is fully open that there will be any traffic relief on Hauxton Road, Shelford Road, Trumpington High Street, Trumpington Road and Long Road and any prospect that traffic queues within and beyond the built up area will see any benefit”.

The officer urged the members to stay with the proposals in the Local Plan and not pre-judge the traffic assessments. Using the Development Control process in this regard was consistent with the Local Plan. He also pointed out that South Cambridgeshire had not made representation on this matter to the Local Plan Inquiry. He proposed that members not agree to this request and suggested an additional recommendation be added for the Executive Councillor to agree as follows:

“The Executive Councillor is therefore recommended: Not to support the request by South Cambridgeshire District Council to delay granting planning consent for development at Trumpington West until the Addenbrookes’ Access road is open.”

Councillor Durrant said that some of the concerns raised to do with commuter traffic and overcapacity on the routes mentioned had merit and should be included in the recommendation for the Executive Councillor.

Councillor Bradnack proposed that the following text be added to the end of the additional recommendation: "and the City Council will respond at the point at which the transport impact assessment is received".

On a show of hands, the proposed additional text was lost by 2 votes to 0.

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

Councillor Ward proposed that the points Councillor Durrant was making could be included in the reply sent to South Cambridgeshire and this was agreed by the Committee and the Executive Councillor.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport affirmed the importance of the Member Reference Groups that looked at the large new developments for the city and said that the membership needed to reflect the political balance of the council and have representatives who would take a strategic as well as a local perspective. She said that the issues of the Addenbrookes Access Road would be considered at the Joint Strategic Forum and the Addenbrookes/City Council/South Cambridgeshire DC Joint Working Group on both of which the Labour Group had representation. She was committed to encouraging people to live near where they worked to reduce commuting. The best aspects of the Guided Bus would contribute to this.

The Committee approved the amended recommendations for the Executive Councillor by 5 votes to 0.

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

06/ENV/14 Review of the Public Art Action Plan *(see also record of decision 05/ENV/10)*

The Committee approved the recommendation for the Executive Councillor by 3 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport approved the recommendation.

06/ENV/15 Sustainable City Grants to Environmental Organisations 2006/07 *(see also record of decision 05/ENV/11)*

Councillors Bradnack and Durrant asked how these grants were going to fit in to the Council's overall grants strategy, whether they would be rooted in Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and whether agreements could be made over a period of 3 years to save organisations applying for small sums annually.

The Environment Co-ordinator affirmed that she was working closely with the Council's Grants Manager to align the practices for these grants with the overall strategy. The current report indicated work in progress.

The Committee approved the recommendation for the Executive Councillor by 3 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport approved the recommendation.

06/ENV/16 Pedestrian Crossing Priorities *(see also record of decision 05/ENV/12)*

The Engineering Manager introduced the report and said that the Castle Ward Councillors had asked that the crossing on Windsor Road, close to path from Richmond Road be deferred because of the impact it would have on parking problems in the area. He suggested that the crossing at Vinery Road be substituted which was welcomed by Councillor Coleman on behalf of the Ward Councillors for Romsey Ward as it would help children crossing from the Vinery Recreation Ground to the school.

Members clarified issues relating to those crossings not selected this year and also agreed that the criteria and weightings allocated to each crossing were linked to technical assessments which were not easy to understand; they wished for a more open and transparent system.

The Committee approved the amended recommendation (amendments in bold) for the Executive Councillor by 4 votes to 0:

- Histon Road/Gilbert Road, pedestrian stage in existing signals
- ~~Windsor Road, close to path from Richmond Road~~
- Cherry Hinton Road/Coleridge Road, pedestrian stage in existing signals
- High Street Chesterton by Haymakers
- Wulfstan Way
- **Vinery Road outside the Recreation Ground**

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport approved the amended recommendation.

06/ENV/17 Lime Kiln Road East Pit

(see also record of decision 05/ENV/13)

The Head of Policy & Projects introduced the report which provided an update. There had been discussions with Gonville & Caius College who owned the land but the cost of purchase were such that the matter was not pursued.

Councillor Durrant who had requested the report welcomed it especially the fact that part of the recommendation was to give further consideration to the matter in 2007/08. He suggested that more research be done on possible costs and possible external sources of funding.

The Committee approved the recommendations for the Executive Councillor by 3 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport approved the recommendations.

06/ENV/18 Joint Area Action Plan for North West Cambridge (*see also record of decision 05/ENV/14*)

The Committee approved the recommendation for the Executive Councillor by 3 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport approved the recommendation.

06/ENV/19 Forward Plan

The Scrutiny Committee requested scrutiny of the only item on the Forward Plan - Closure of Regent Street Taxi Rank.

CHAIR