

**ENVIRONMENT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**7 November 2006
10am – 3.15pm

PRESENT: Councillors Ward (Chair), Bailey, Baker, Durrant, Herbert, Holland, Holness, Newbold and Shah.

ALSO PRESENT: Executive Councillor Reid (Planning and Transport)
Executive Councillor C Rosenstiel (Environmental Services)

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**06/ENV/56 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting on 27 June 2006 were agreed as a correct record.

06/ENV/57 Apologies For Absence

None.

06/ENV/58 Declarations Of Interest

Councillors declared the following personal interests:

Councillor Durrant in minute number 06/ENV/60 as a Director of Cambridge Community Re-Use and Re-Cycling Network (CCORRN).

Councillor Reid in minute number 06/ENV/70 as a member of "Living Streets".

Councillor Baker in minute number 06/ENV/66 as a member of the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough.

06/ENV/59 Public Questions

- a) A member of the public spoke as a member of Petersfield Area Community Trust (PACT) in relation to item 9, Open Space and Recreation Strategy. She said that 40 years ago part of St Matthew's Piece had been given to the Howard Mallett Centre and representations to government officers had been made. All undertakings that an equivalent area of public open space to that proposed to be occupied by the development would be made available in the redevelopment of the adjoining area to the east had been flouted and ignored. The land had been given to the citizens of Cambridge in 1898. She asked the Executive Councillor to make a commitment to stop the theft of this land.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport explained that such an undertaking was not part of her remit. The issue raised was about the ownership of land, ownership which had passed from the County Council to City Life. Planning permission for the new development had been given. She advised the member of the public to raise the issues with the Executive Councillor for Customer Services & Resources.

The member of the public then referred to a strip of land at the site which measured 20 metres by 70 metres which was designated as Protected Open Space and which the Local Plan Inspector had described as "breathing space". She said the Planning Officer's report had been inaccurate when referring to the dimensions of this space which she had measured and which was only 17.4

metres and not 20 metres. The member of the public also said that the ownership of the land to the south was being contested.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport said she could not give a detailed answer. She was committed to ensuring that new developments respected Protected Open Space designation and would follow up the question raised.

- b) A member of the public spoke as one of the tenant monitors of the Gas Maintenance Partnership and a tenant Decent Homes Inspector. He was concerned that vans belonging to the contractors for these two projects (City Care and Apollo) had been given parking tickets while parked on the St Matthew's Estate but that a City Services van had not. He estimated that City Care paying for parking tickets over any one year was equivalent to the cost of three new boilers at £700 each which were then not able to be installed in tenants' homes.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport explained that the parking enforcement policies were decided by the County Council and the City Council operated them. The policy was that no exceptions were made and the Head of the City Council's Parking Services had assured her that City Services vans did get tickets. She did not believe that there was unfair enforcement of the regulations but said that if the member of the public gave details of the incident referred to she would undertake that a detailed investigation would be carried out.

06/ENV/60 KEY DECISION Review of the First Twelve Months of Alternate Week Collection Service (see also record of decision 06/ENV/39)

Councillors raised the following to which officers or other members replied (A):

- Figures in the report did not tally with the Annual Review of Performance eg the target collection rate was 45% and the achieved was 40%.

A: The 45% was divided into 20% inert material and 25% green waste.

Acknowledgement that the target may have been too ambitious and there was still a good deal of work to be done.

- Referring to page 17 paragraph 4.2.7 of the report – why were more plastics not being recycled and the tetrapak packaging was problematic.

A: Ways of collecting other plastics were being researched and proposals would be in the budget papers for 2007/08. The markets for different plastics were different. That for plastic bottles had improved though most was exported. The one plant in the country dealing with Tetrapak recycling had closed in July.

- What percentage of the total recycling figures are for plastic?

A: The figure is 1% which is the same as for aluminium and steel cans. The critical items to increase in the recycling boxes are glass and paper.

- Should density rather than weight be the measure along with embedded carbon?

A: When buried, there was no difference in density as between plastic and other materials. A reliable figure is 1 ton of material equals 1 cubic metre in land fill.

- Toxicity is also important. What plans are there for battery recycling?
 - Residents need to be encouraged to use re-chargeable batteries and to be encouraged to not buy products with lots of plastic packaging.
-

- What plans are there for promoting recycling such as the magazine Cambridge Matters.

A: Because batteries are classed as hazardous waste this makes recycling arrangements complicated. Currently, a company was carrying out trials with large retailers and the hope was that they would put in place a national scheme. Battery recycling would also be part of the review of the county-wide waste strategy. Local household recycling centres around the city were also needed.

On-going promotion was essential. Cambridge Matters' funding was due to end this financial year. Alternatives were being considered right across the Cambridgeshire Partnership including use of websites and working with students at Freshers' Fairs. In addition door knocking was the most effective way to work with hard-to-reach groups.

- Are there adequate standards for the provision of recycling facilities in new developments especially flats?

A: Yes and design guidance was being produced as part of the Sustainable Development guidance.

- There had been concern that disposable nappies would cause a problem in the hot summer months. Had this been the case?

A: No. Families with more than one child using disposable nappies had been offered extra bins.

- Why was the additional vehicle for green waste required?

A: To provide the service to flats, to meet increased demand and the anticipated growth of dwellings in the city.

The Executive Councillor for Environmental Services affirmed that it was vital to reach residents in flats to increase the rate of recycling along with developing the services for trade waste. He also stressed that plastic bottle recycling was popular with the public and helped encourage other recycling.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed (by 5 votes to 0) the recommendation for the Executive Councillor.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendation.

06/ENV/61 NON KEY DECISION Service Plan Performance Review 2006-07 and Revised Budgets – Executive Councillor for Environmental Services
(see also record of decision 06/ENV/40)

The Committee considered each Service Plan Performance Review in turn and raised the following to which officers or other members replied (A):

Street Services

1. How many abandoned shopping trolleys are collected currently?
2. A request for figures about how many enforcement actions had been taken in relation to bins left out on the street.
3. There seemed to be 3 types of litter bins. Some of the blue plastic ones seemed to be failing half way through their 12-year life expectancy. Seemed wise to use the metal type used in the City Centre.

As the officer was unable to be present, agreed that the information would be sent to members after the meeting.

Note: The following answers were emailed to members after the meeting:

1. City Services reported that they were currently collecting in the region of 30 abandoned shopping trolleys each month.
2. The campaign started in June in Romsey Ward in streets either side of Mill Road.

Officers visited over 3500 properties, and found over 300 bins left on the street. A follow up visit was made to the area two weeks later where the number of bins on the streets had reduced to just 43 and the occupiers were given further advice and given access to appropriate collection arrangements to match both their personal needs and the physical needs of the property. A fortnight later the enforcement team visited the area and found just 22 bins still on the streets. As a result these, 22 residents had been served with a notice under Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 which determines the requirements for placing waste out for collection. Failure to comply with the notice could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice of £100. Enforcement officers would be visiting the area again week commencing 20th November to take any further follow up action necessary.

At the end of September the second phase of the campaign was started in Market Ward in the terraced houses behind East Road and in the Grafton area. A further 3000 properties were visited. This work was still being progressed but the initial evidence suggested the proportion of follow up action was likely to be very similar to the Romsey area.

In addition to the main campaign, the Council was responding to areas such as Hale Street, Derby Street, etc. where specific complaints had been received. The procedure for follow-ups would be the same.

3. The majority of bins were one of four styles. City Centre and conservation areas required composite black bins with ash tray to meet design criteria. In other areas black metal bins were used in order to provide better fire resistance. Older blue plastic bins were used largely within outer residential areas and replacement funding was available as these bins reach end of life. In the parks and commons a wooden clad open bin was used in line with tradition.

Consideration of the budget report led to a question about the £18,000 Repair and Servicing cost and why the figure was so high.

Answer to be supplied after the meeting as no officer was present who had the information.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed (by 5 votes to 0) the recommendations for the Executive Councillor.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

06/ENV/62 NON KEY DECISION Service Plan Performance Review 2006-07 and Revised Budgets – Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport
(see also record of decision 06/ENV/41)

An additional recommendation and revised appendices were tabled at the meeting. The Committee considered each Service Plan Performance Review in turn and raised the following to which officers or other members replied (A):

Parking Services

- Explanation asked of the difference between target usage and anticipated actual outcome.

A: More difficult this year to forecast usage because of the Grand Arcade works, the effects of the Local Authority Parking Enforcement (LAPE) and changes in retail outlets in the city centre. He pointed out that small changes in usage led to large changes in income. Costs were also rising.

- Noted that the LAPE account was in surplus and requested that the surplus be spent on parking related issues.

A: The Executive Councillor explained that usage was bound by regulations and by the agreement between the County Council and the City Council. She affirmed that she would be working to ensure that the City had an adequate share of the surplus.

- Are on-line challenges to parking tickets answered as quickly as other correspondence?

A: all are answered within the 8 working days standard.

- Clarification about the use of bailiffs to collect parking fines requested.

A: Bailiffs are only used as a last resort. The scheme had been in place for 3-4 months and had recovered 13-14% of the value of the debt which amounted to well over £100,000. While that was lower than expected, these were old debts incurred in the early months of LAPE and the expectation is that newer cases would lead to a higher return.

Planning Policy and Projects

- Further explanation requested of the large number of items with No progress.

A: A number of factors including the new planning system introduced by the government on which the Council has taken a cautious approach as other local authorities had had their documents rejected. The challenge to the Local Plan took officer time and resources and several of the activities were in collaboration with other authorities in the area and the interdependency had caused delays. All these items had been re-prioritised.

- Referring to page 71 of the report and Performance Indicator PT2 (Thursday – Saturday night time bus)– what is the definition of low patronage. Some councillors did a survey by taking the night bus and counted 25 people using it.

A: Rather than a figure, there was a judgement made relating to when the service became financially unviable.

Before the Committee discussed the budget report, the Director of Environment & Planning referred to the additional recommendation and the updated appendices tabled at the meeting. The appeal relating to the planning decision on the Station Area was likely to be heard in February 2007. The Council wished to defend its decision robustly and would be employing appropriate planning consultancy and QC advice. So a fund of £200,000 was being set aside from reserves to meet these costs.

Members of the Committee raised the following to which officers or other members replied (A):

- There seemed to be a £1m underspend on the 2006/07 capital budgets. What actions are in place to ensure the money is spent and what are the implications for budgets next year?

A: The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport explained that part of the problem was to do with cycleways and Environmental Improvements which were dependent on

the County Council for implementation and they were re-tendering the contract for highway design which had led to months of delay. One action to address this was the new contract for Minor Roadworks and Environmental Improvements (see item 12f) which would be able to undertake some of the outstanding work. The implications for next year's budget would be explored and reported back to the committee.

- In relation to Environmental Improvements projects agreed at area committees, it was likely that none of them would be implemented by the end of the financial year. A request that, next year, area committees decide on which projects to support in July rather than October.
- Referring to Capital Budget Item PRO19, why so little spent on this in the current year?

A: Mainly due to problems implementing the new chip and pin technology.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed (by 6 votes to 0) the recommendations including the additional recommendation for the Executive Councillor.

The Executive Councillor agreed all the recommendations.

06/ENV/63 KEY DECISION **Local Development Scheme** (see also record of decision 06/ENV/42)

The Planning Policy Manager informed the meeting that South Cambridgeshire District Council had just had their Core Strategy approved which was good news for the joint working with the City Council on East Cambridge and North West Cambridge Area Action Plans.

He tabled some additional information for the officer report and an additional recommendation:

"If amendments to the timetable for the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan are necessary, that these be agreed by the Executive Councillor in consultation with the Chair and Spokes before the LDS is submitted to the Government Office."

- A member challenged the validity of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of 2005 as the effects of climate change meant that such documents needed to be updated regularly.

A: Independent consultants undertook the assessment and they used a 50 year time frame so officers consider that the document is valid and will be updated as needed.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed (by 3 votes to 0) the recommendations including the additional recommendation for the Executive Councillor.

The Executive Councillor agreed all the recommendations.

06/ENV/64 KEY DECISION **Statement of Community Involvement: A Consultation Strategy for Planning in Cambridge** (see also record of decision 06/ENV/43)

Several members expressed concern about the wording of paragraph 4.17 about how to make representation on a planning application.

The Chair suggested that officers make some minor amendments to the text to clarify that the representations are to officers of the Council and that these be agreed by the Executive Councillor, Chair and Spokes.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed the recommendations for the Executive Councillor subject to the above.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations subject to the above.

06/ENV/65 NON KEY DECISION **Open Space and Recreation Strategy** (*see also record of decision 06/ENV/44*)

As a result of comments made by a member of the Scrutiny Committee, the Executive Councillor agreed that an additional paragraph about public transport accessibility to sports facilities to be agreed by the Executive Councillor, Chair and Spokes be included in the Strategy document.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed the recommendations for the Executive Councillor.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

06/ENV/66 KEY DECISION **Cambridge City Nature Conservation Strategy** (*see also record of decision 06/ENV/45*)

Several members welcomed the document. One particularly welcomed the idea of community woodland. The following points were raised:

- How would large gardens, orchards and allotments be protected from development? Was this document linked to the planning process?

A: The Open Space Strategy and the Local Plan provided the policies to guide the protection of these aspects of community life.

- When Cherry Hinton East Pit had been considered at the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 8 November 2005, the Executive Councillor had indicated that buying the land would be considered in the next budget cycle. Was there any progress on this?

A: Explorations about sources of funding were being made in collaboration with colleagues in Community Services so that the site might support a variety of uses. Safe public access was a key factor.

- Concern expressed about the implementation of the strategy (recommendation 2.3) and whether there were adequate council resources to achieve this.

A: A further report would be brought to the Committee outlining the financial and staffing implications of implementation.

The Executive Councillor affirmed the importance of the Strategy in setting down markers about the importance of Nature Conservation. A budget bid was being made in relation to resources needed for implementation.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed the recommendations for the Executive Councillor.

The Executive Councillor agreed the recommendations.

06/ENV/67 KEY DECISION **Taxi Card Review** (*see also record of decision 06/ENV/46*)

The Scrutiny Committee were in agreement that the scheme needed changing and concerns focused on detail such as the following to which officers or other members replied (A):

- The way taxis operated mitigated against the scheme. This may have contributed to a fall in demand. Had a contract with a particular company been considered?

A: This had been considered but there were problems in identifying a suitable company.

- Budget implications needed to be clearer

The Executive Councillor made comparison with the Dial a Ride service run by volunteers. There was a flat fare. She was willing to consider giving more funding to this service and asked for guidance from the committee.

It was agreed to refer the matter to the Public Transport Steering Group.

In the meantime, the Executive Councillor made the following interim decision which was supported by the Scrutiny Committee by 5 votes to 0:

- 1) in principle to review the criteria subject to further consultation with existing scheme members and disability groups.
- 2) That increasing the voucher value will be agreed in the budget cycle in January 2007.

06/ENV/68 Decisions made by Executive Councillors

The Scrutiny Committee noted the decisions made by the Executive Councillors in the period August-October 2006.

06/ENV/69 Concessionary Bus Travel Scheme

This report had been requested by the Labour members of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee noted:

1. the increase in bus passes issued and the increased costs for all the district councils involved in the new cross county scheme.
2. that the County Council had agreed to cap the contribution of the district councils including the City Council for the current year and for 2007/08.
3. that the increase over the budgeted figure would be met from temporary use of reserves pending full consideration at Strategy Scrutiny Committee on 20 November 2006
4. that the Government planned a new free scheme starting in April 2008.

Members of the Committee raised the following to which officers or other members replied (A):

- What arrangements were in place for monitoring the figures presented by Stagecoach?
- The number and length of journeys was important. Anecdotal evidence indicated that sometimes bus drivers printed the terminus destination rather than the actual destination on the ticket.

Agreed that Internal Audit be asked to advise the Executive Councillor about how a proper audit might be done in this situation.

The Executive Councillor agreed with this suggestion.

06/ENV/70 Newmarket Road Area – Traffic Generation from Development

This report had been requested by the Labour members of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Transport Planning Manager informed the committee that Cambridgeshire County Council had been successful in obtaining Government funding for a Demand Management study for Cambridge East. A report on Newmarket Road would also be presented at the January meeting of the Cambridge Traffic Management Area Joint Committee (AJC).

Members made the following comments:

- It was important to learn from past experience to try and avoid similar errors in future and to ensure the County Council involved councillors in deciding where and how S106 funding would be spent.
- In the last four and a half years at Planning Committee, only once had the Highways Authority said that a development would cause adverse impact on traffic flow. The time might have come for the Planning Committee to form their own opinion about the status they would give to this advice.
- It might be worth the City Council investing money in paying their own consultants to carry out traffic impact studies.
- At the January meeting of the AJC, a presentation is to be given on mitigation measures and this would be an opportunity for the City Council representatives on the AJC to influence the County Council.

The Executive Councillor said that she had requested the County Council officers to organise a training event about how they evaluate traffic assessments for new developments. She also expressed concern about the cumulative impact if the Government's plan that developments of less than 80 dwellings would not require a traffic impact assessment came into force. She encouraged the committee to attend the briefing about the Transport Studies on 21 November.

Agreed that the issues regarding S106 matters be considered at the Planning Obligation Steering Group.

06/ENV/71 Forward Plan

The Committee decided to scrutinise the only non-key item on the Forward Plan, the Cambridge East Transport Study.

CHAIR
