



Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities held at the Cedar Centre Hall - Cedar Centre, Castor
on 23 November 2009

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors D Over (Chairman), G Nawaz (Vice-Chairman), M Collins, R Dobbs, D Harrington, B Rush and W Trueman

OFFICERS PRESENT:

Jenny Horsfield, Lawyer - Property
Alex Daynes, Senior Governance Officer
Mike Heath, Commercial Services Director
Jack Eagle, Transport Planning Officer
Nicola Francis, Acting Travelchoice Team Manager
Alison Ivatt, Team Leader - Environmental Enforcement
Barry Kirk, Transportation and Development Group Manager
Jonathan Lewis, Assistant Director - Resources
Teresa Wood, Group Manager - Transport & Sustainable Environment

GUEST PRESENT:

George Scott, Chairman – Spalding and Peterborough Transport Forum

1. Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

2. Declaration of Interest

No declarations of interest were given.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. Response to recommendations

Members received the responses to recommendations from the meeting held on 5 October 2009. Members raised concern over the response given to recommendations regarding Traffic Mitigation.

The Commission repeated the recommendation that the Traffic Manager and also the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood, Housing and Community Development implement a 20mph speed limit outside all rural Primary Schools. This was to be implemented before the government's Road Safety Strategy to 2020 was published. If this was not possible, the Commission requested that the Cabinet Member attend the meeting and explain why.

Members received additional information following the recommendations made at the meeting held on 27 July 2009 regarding support for rural businesses. The Commission

requested that more information be provided on what measures were available to support rural businesses such as vocational training for rural style jobs.

5. Fly Tipping

The commission received a report on the impact of fly tipping and the Council's actions to tackle it within the rural areas of Peterborough and to allow opportunity for these actions to be scrutinised.

The commission was requested to:

1. Scrutinise the methods the councils has adopted in tackling fly tipping
2. Recommend continuation of enforcement actions and
3. Provide recommendations for other methods or approaches which may improve the situation
4. Recommend more efficient and effective ways to ensure a greater impact is had.

The commission received fly tipping data from the previous 8 months and was advised how the changing demography of Peterborough affected the incidents of fly tipping in the authority's boundary.

Questions were raised and responses given including:

- Officers send out and give talks to many agencies about fly tipping and alternative waste sites.
- Emphasis is also on reducing waste altogether rather than directing everything to landfill. Special collections can be costly depending on the type of waste disposed of.
- The cost of covert surveillance included equipment and a full time operative over several weekends.
- Magistrates determine the costs to be recovered from prosecutions.
- A Duty of Care charge was easier to prove than the greater offence of fly tipping.
- A commercial waste site was located next to the Household site near Dogsthorpe.
- The Council will charge to remove waste from private land but the landowner must report/request this.
- Incidents of fly tipping must be reported to build up a convincing portfolio for prosecutions.
- The cost of a village skip could be born by Parish Councils although the council was trying to reduce overall waste.

The commission **AGREED** the following:

1. Recommend the continuation of enforcement actions.
2. Recommend the continuation of education for businesses.
3. Recommend liaison with and education for Parish Councils.

6. Cycle Routes

Members received a report on the Council's actions to provide cycling opportunities to rural areas including opportunities to encourage cycling between villages and to schools, improve cycleways, cycle stands and options for re-charging points for electric bikes. The commission was requested to:

1. Scrutinise the options provided by Travelchoice for cycling.
2. Recommend Travelchoice develop an action plan for rural areas.

3. Recommend Travelchoice collate ideas for larger infrastructure improvements (e.g. route enhancements etc) and provide to Transportation and Development for inclusion in Long Term Transport Strategy.
4. Receive a further report on the wider Travelchoice project results be provided in January 2010.

Members were advised that the Travel Choice scheme had originally been funded for the urban area of Peterborough but now had funding to provide sustainable travel options for the whole authority area.

Questions were asked and responses given including:

- Only the Primary Cycle Network (routes into the city centre) is maintained by Peterborough City Council, not the Green Wheel, some highways maintenance money is also used for this.
- Some sections of the Green Wheel were shared space i.e. on roads used by other vehicles.
- A Travel Choice mascot (Carloss) does visit schools and discounts for cycle lights have been negotiated with several bike shops throughout the city.
- Preference was to provide segregated routes so pedestrians and cyclists were separated but this was not always possible.
- The charge for the cycle maps includes regular printing showing updates and amendments – a rural cycle guide would be available in the Spring of 2010.
- Funding was available to install cycle parking but only in public spaces. Private organisations could apply for a business grant for this.
- There was no cycle hire option in Peterborough yet.

The commission **AGREED** the following:

1. Recommend Travelchoice develop an action plan for rural areas.
2. Recommend Travelchoice collate ideas for larger infrastructure improvements (e.g. route enhancements etc) and provide to Transportation and Development for inclusion in Long Term Transport Strategy.
3. Receive a further report on the wider Travelchoice project results be provided in January 2010 (to be received in information bulletin).

7. Rail Links

The commission received a report on Council actions and efforts to increase rail provision in rural areas. The commission was requested to scrutinise the report and recommend ways to improve and increase activity to achieve greater rail provision.

Members were advised that recent years had seen the emphasis on rail provision focused on the station in the city centre. Efforts had been made to improve access to the station including altering bus routes. However, the establishment of a suburban rail station would be considered over a rural station. The commission was advised that provision of an extra stop/station would also be dependent on rail providers supporting an extra stop.

Questions were asked and responses given including:

- A park and ride system to the station from the Werrington area had been considered.
- Improvements at Walton junction would increase stopping options for more trains.
- The Local Transport Plan 3 did not identify rail travel as a high priority

- Data on the origins of travellers could be gathered to determine where journeys are starting from.

The Chairman of the Spalding and Peterborough Transport Forum, George Scott, addressed the commission to advise members on its efforts to increase rail provision along the Spalding to Peterborough line. The commission were asked to consider the effect on Peterborough of growth from the towns outside Peterborough's area (Stamford, Spalding, Whittlesey etc) with Peterborough providing a focus for shopping and business and whether Peterborough desired their trade. Members were advised on the difficulties faced in trying to establish a new train stop at Littleworth and the time and funds needed to progress plans; ultimately, train companies needed to be convinced of the need.

The commission **AGREED** the following:

1. Support the development of increased rail connections for Peterborough
2. Recommend the Transportation and Development Group Manager develop closer links with Spalding and Peterborough Transport Forum.

8. School Admissions in rural areas

The commission received a report advising it of the Council's approach and efforts to ensure rural school places are maintained and of any successes or obstacles experienced. Members were requested to:

1. Scrutinise the report.
2. Request further information if appropriate.
3. Recommend further actions if appropriate.

The commission was assured that the Council sought to offer and provide local school places for local children. Rural schools in Peterborough were popular and therefore the national trend of closing rural schools was not experienced in Peterborough. Members were advised that national legislation prohibited the reservation of places for local children and available school places could be allocated to children outside the schools catchment area after following admission criteria to rank each child's application.

Members were further advised that the urban Peterborough schools were experiencing high applications for relatively few places and as the DCSF regarded the overall number of school places for the Authority, funding was not available to increase urban places as rural schools were not all full.

Questions were asked and responses given including:

- Any effect of a closure to the Wittering air base would be considered at the time as there was a local community attending the school.
- Applications for places can be made online and on paper.
- Acceptance of first choice school places was in line with national averages.
- Some schools have flexibility in determining the admission criteria they will apply.
- Arthur Mellows Village College's catchment (set by Council) included all rural areas even if other urban secondary school were closer.

The commission **AGREED** the following:

1. To note the report.

9. Forward Plan

The commission received the latest version of the Forward Plan and was asked to identify any items that the committee wished to consider at a future meeting.

Members identified the Older People's Accommodation Strategy, the Culture Trust and the Refreshed LAA for consideration at a future meeting.

10. Work Program

The commission reviewed the current work programme and agreed the future agenda plans.

Members raised concerns over the location of meetings outside the Town Hall and agreed that future meetings remain at the Town Hall.

11. Date of the next Meeting

The next meeting would be held on 25 January 2009.

CHAIRMAN
7.00 - 8.50 pm