PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT CAPITAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN THE BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM - TOWN HALL ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2009

Present: Councillors C Burton (Chairman), D Day (Vice-Chairman), R Dobbs, J A Fox and P Kreling

Also Present: Councillor N Sandford – Liberal Democrat Group Leader
Councillor J R Fox – Representing the Leader of the Peterborough Independent Forum

Officers Present: Paul Phillipson – Executive Director of Operations
Teresa Wood – Group Manager, Transport and Sustainable Environment
Cathy Summers – Team Manager, Passenger Transport Contracts and Planning
Brian Armstrong – Wildlife Officer
David Denson – Head of Operations
Trevor Gibson – Director of Environment Capital, Opportunity Peterborough
Claire Boyd – Senior Lawyer
Louise Tyers – Scrutiny Manager

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fazal and Wilkinson.

Apologies were also received from Councillors Benton, S Dalton and Hiller.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

No declarations of interest were made.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 July 2009

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2009 were approved as an accurate record.

4. Call In of any Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Key Officer Decisions

There were no requests for call-in to consider.

5. Response to Recommendations Made by the Committee

The Committee considered the responses made by the Executive to our recommendations from the last meeting.

The recommendations related to:

- Floods and Water Management Bill
- Environmental Enforcement and Education
- Response to Adverse Weather Conditions – Footpaths
- Biodiversity Strategy – Progress Report

The Executive Director of Operations confirmed that enforcement officers had discretion as to whether to issue enforcement notices for accidentally dropped litter.

ACTION AGREED

To note the responses to the recommendations made.

6. Review of Subsidised Bus Services

The Committee considered a report on the outcome of a review of subsidised bus services as part of the consultation process.

A review of Council subsidised bus services had been undertaken as a result of improvements to commercially operated bus services which had reduced the need for some Local Link journeys. Subsequently, the number of passengers on these journeys had reduced. In addition, a different way of delivering bus services to rural areas, providing either the same or better period of operation, had been identified. This allowed the vehicle to operate only at times when the service was needed rather than adhering to a rigid timetable and the bus operating with no passengers on board; wasting resources and emitting needless CO2 emissions. Some Local Link services had also seen an increase in patronage.

All subsidised bus service contracts were incorporated into an initial overview assessment. From this assessment, the Local Link rural, morning and evening bus journeys warranted further assessment due to the low numbers of passengers carried and relatively high subsidy per passenger journeys. Patronage data from on-bus ticket machines and physical on-bus monitoring was analysed and used to assess the number of people impacted by the proposed changes.

The review highlighted journeys carrying on average no more than ten passengers per journey. Better value could be achieved by withdrawing those journeys and offering an alternative community transport service. Officers had visited the Lincolnshire Call Connect centre and established that a service could be provided. A further option was to provide a dial-a-ride service on one or more days per week between the hours of 9.30 am and 2.30 pm. However, this would provide a significant drop in service to the residents of several rural villages. With both options passengers would be required to pre-book their journey. Other journeys highlighted carried more passengers and warranted a more substantial service. It was recommended that those journeys were retendered.

A consultation event will be held for councillors and parish councillors on 1 October and a petition was presented by Councillor Lamb in relation to the provision of bus services.

With the permission of the Chairman, Mr Rohan Wilson addressed the Committee on the Sunday service.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- How did the outcomes of the review meet the aspirations of the Local Transport Plan (LTP), particularly in relation to evening bus services? *As some villages only received a bus service three times a week this would be an improvement as Call Connect would be available 6 days a week.*
- Some members were not convinced that the public would want to book a bus service but would wait to see the outcome of the consultation. *The service would have excellent publicity and the Team would talk to people, the fact that services had to be pre-booked had not been seen as a barrier in Lincolnshire.*

- As a number of evening services were proposed to be withdrawn, was this moving away from the LTP? *Officers did not believe it was contrary to the LTP as the availability of Call Connect from 7am – 7pm went beyond what was contained within the LTP.*
- Some journeys on the 410 service had very low passenger numbers but it was being proposed to retain those services. *For the 410 service, evening service numbers were constantly low and there was also an alternative of a commercial service. The 410 was a service that fluctuated and we would be looking to retender the service.*
- Councillor Sandford advised that he had travelled on the 410 service three times this week and there was between 12-14 passengers. The alternative No. 3 service was already overcrowded and there was the potential for further overcrowding. *We were looking at the provision of bus services holistically and perhaps look to further work with Stagecoach.*
- What was the motivation for the review? *There were a number of national indicators which we needed to meet. There was also an environmental motivation as it was not effective to run services with only a few passengers.*
- What would be the impact on concessionary fares? *The concessionary fares budget was currently coming in on target. A positive step had been to come to an agreement with bus operators about the use of day tickets. We continued to lobby the Government about funding and negotiations were ongoing for the scheme for next year.*
- Had any further discussions been held on the possibility of introducing Companion Passes as operators had indicated that they were not keen to introduce them? *The issue of Companion Passes had been raised again with the operators and it now needed to be raised at an Operators Meeting. We had also been asked to speak to operators about a Youth Card.*
- How many trials were being proposed? *It would be for one service only at this time as past experience showed that increasing the number of services only led to the same number of passengers being spread over more journeys*.
- What would the impact on staff be of the proposals? *City Services were currently consulting with staff and the trade unions and there may be some redundancies. There may be the potential for TUPE arrangements with the new providers and services could also be used for school runs so there was a lot of potential for the future.*
- Is the review all about making savings? *There would be an element of savings but there would also be opportunities to redivert funding into other transport provision.*
- A dial-a-ride service had been tried in the urban areas in the past and had been withdrawn. What makes you think that this time it would be successful? *Dial-a-Ride was not on this scale and would not be marketed in the same way.*
- Credit should be given to Teresa and her team for the increase in patronage figures.
- We would fully support getting urban residents visiting the countryside.
- The Sunday service would be retendered in the future. Staff had been working with the new Destination Centre to promote public transport.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing & Community Development and the Lead Officer be recommended that:

i) all ward councillors be fully consulted on the proposals; and

ii) the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Issues be specifically consulted on the proposals.

The above recommendations are liked to NIs 175 (Access to services by public transport, walking and cycling), 177 (Local bus passenger journeys), 185 (CO_2 reduction from local authority operations) and 198 (Children travelling to school – mode of travel usually used)

which are in the Local Area Agreement under the priority of creating the UK's environment capital

Councillor C Burton left the meeting and the Chair was taken by Councillor D Day.

7. City Council's Biodiversity Strategy: Update of Strategy to Take Account of Legislative Changes

The Committee considered the revised Biodiversity Strategy which had been updated by a working group of councillors and officers in respect of the new biodiversity duty brought in by S40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

The existing Biodiversity Strategy had been endorsed by Cabinet in October 2004. The Vision Statement which formed part of the Strategy was subsequently considered and adopted by full Council at its November 2004 meeting.

The incorporation of biodiversity into many of the Council's functions and services could be achieved within existing resources, providing that this level was maintained. This was supported by the experience of the implementation of the 2004 Strategy. However the updating of the Strategy had identified that some additional resources would be required. In some cases additional resource requirements could also be offset by seeking external funding for restoration of degraded habitats, however routine management could not generally be funded in this way.

A summary of the additional financial resource implications was summarised in the table below:

Element	**Annual Costs**	**Single/One off Costs**	**Responsible**
Changes in Management Practices to road verges to enhance County Wildlife Sites, reflect designation of new sites and create habitat links	£8798	N/A	Highways/ Peterborough City Services
Secure management of the Boardwalks Local Nature Reserve by a body such as the Wildlife Trust, Froglife or Nene Park Trust.	£4000	N/A	Peterborough City Services
Chemical Treatment of Japanese Knotweed at the Boardwalks Local Nature Reserve	N/A	£600	Peterborough City Services
Match funding to make 3 bids for up to £98,000 of external funding. This is for works to Local Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.	N/A	£12000	Peterborough City Services
Signage for County Wildlife Site Road Verges including new sites and extensions	N/A	£3410	Highways/ Peterborough City Services
Totals	**£12,798**	**£16,010**	**£28,808**

Owing to the success of the 2004 Strategy and the maintenance of existing resources in support of it, the degree of additional funding required to comply with the Biodiversity duty was greatly reduced.

Consultation had been undertaken with the Officers, Groups and organisations which had been consulted with respect to the original Biodiversity Strategy along with additional relevant organisations that had become known in the Peterborough area during the intervening time.

Councillor Sandford, as a member of the working group updating the strategy, had indicated agreement with all of the recommendations in the report with the exception of the following:

- Appendix B, point 21 (pesticides). Councillor Sandford had indicated that this should go further by requiring a commitment to reducing usage of herbicide progressively over time, and felt that a commitment to review usage was not useful if it did not state any intention to do anything as a result. Councillor Sandford had indicated that previously there had been a commitment to reduce herbicide usage in the Council's Environmental Strategy and for example organisations signing up to Forest Stewardship Council certification on sustainable tree/woodland management were required to make such a commitment.

- Appendix E (nesting birds policy) in its entirety. Councillor Sandford had expressed concern with respect to the length and complexity of the document as well as a concern that it would weaken current policy/practice. The current policy/practice implemented by City Services was understood by Councillor Sandford to be to avoid works on trees, shrubs and hedges during the bird nesting season unless there were clear health and safety concerns. It was felt by Councillor Sandford that this was a simple, straightforward and easily understood policy which complies with best conservation practice.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- This was a good strategy and the issues around finance had come about due to the neglect of a lot of areas. How practical was it to have a strategy in place which could not be developed due to lack of resources? *We would be looking to draw in a significant amount of external funding.*
- The original strategy had a lot of foresight but the Council needed to fundamentally change in its management of open space and look to take biodiversity into account. Due to the threat of climate change there was a need to look at all landscapes and to reduce the intensification of how open space was managed. *We would look to identify the areas we could influence and also work with others. We could do more work on larger areas and we were working with the Westwood and Ravensthorpe Residents Association on a project. This would be an ideal way to work with community groups who could look to obtain funding on council land e.g. lottery funding.*
- The reference to trials had been included within the original strategy and it was also included in this one. There should be concern about repeating it if it had not happened already over the last few years.
- Members sought assurances from City Services that they took the strategy seriously specifically as it related to the management of open space. *City Services fully supported the strategy.*
- There needed to be a commitment to progressively reduce the amount of herbicides used. *Herbicides were used following a number of claims to property after using strimmers. We used the minimum amount possible and that had reduced over recent years. New legislation coming through in the future would reduce the use even more.*
- We currently did not work on shrubs during the bird nesting season but the new policy included within the strategy was long and complex. The policy needed to be simple and not over complicated. *City Services did not see that there would be a need to change their normal working operations; however the new policy was there if needed. A measured approach to hedge cutting was used but why should we constrain ourselves when it was clear that no birds were nesting.*

- It was good that schools had wildlife areas in their sites.

We thanked Brian and the working group for producing a good report.

ACTION AGREED

Officers to provide details of the reduction of herbicides over the last few years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet is recommended to:

(i) endorse the Biodiversity Strategy prior to its consideration by Council as part of the major policy framework; and

(ii) consider the requirement for additional resources during the development of the Council Budget for 2010/11 alongside other budget pressures.

The above recommendations are linked to NI197 (Improved biodiversity active management of local sites) which is in the Local Area Agreement under the priority of creating the UK's environment capital.

8. Progress on Delivery of the Local Area Agreement Priority and Environment Capital Work Programme 2009/10

The Committee received an update on the performance as at June 2009 of the Environment Capital outcomes contained within the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and the draft Environment Capital Work Programme.

Peterborough's LAA contained four priorities: Creating Strong and Supportive Communities; Creating the UK's Environment Capital; Creating Opportunities, Tackling Inequalities; Substantial and Truly Sustainable Growth. Each of those priorities had four specific outcomes, beneath which sat a diverse range of actions and interventions to deliver lasting positive change for Peterborough.

The Environment Capital priority was measured by four specific outcomes: Overall Consumption of Natural Resources, Increasing the Use of Sustainable Transport, Growing our Environment Business Sector and Making Peterborough Cleaner and Greener. A Red/Amber/Green flagging system was used to indicate overall performance against each of the outcomes – red indicated that the outcome was significantly behind target, amber indicated that the outcome was experiencing difficulties, and green indicated that the outcome was on target or had achieved its objectives.

The Environment Capital Work Programme was comprised of strategic projects which were aimed at maintaining momentum behind this important priority and to ensure that Peterborough could claim to be the UK's Environment Capital.

Overall the Environment Capital priority was reported at Amber for this period. The "Use of Natural Resources" outcome had slipped from Green to Red status in June. This was due to a reduction in the overall amount of waste being collected coupled with an increased level of contamination of recycled materials. A detailed analysis of areas where such problems were most prevalent coupled with a focussed education campaign were aimed at improving overall recycling performance. It was probable that these actions would result in an improvement to Amber status over the coming months. Further work was required to ascertain what more could be done to achieve the LAA target for 2009/10. The "Cleaner and Greener" outcome had slipped from Green to Amber in June due to an increase in fly tipping reports and enforcement activity. The combined impact was a rating of "not effective" in relation to

National Indicator 196. It was hoped that this would improve to "effective" at least by the end of 2009/10 thanks to a range of specific measures including awareness raising campaigns, increased enforcement activity and training of neighbourhood wardens to increase investigation and enforcement capacity.

The draft Environment Capital Work Programme comprised a number of strategic level outcomes aimed at ensuring that Peterborough achieved its ambition to become the UK's Environment Capital. All outcomes were adequately resourced by the lead organisation or partnership. Officers had picked out the key activities which were likely to help us to achieve Environment Capital status, including the Sustainability Masterclass.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Why has contamination of recycling become more of a problem? *There was a big issue around food and textiles. With regards to textiles we were looking at a number or alternatives including working with charities.*
- Why was the Sustainable Travel Officer post still unfilled? *The work was still being delivered but officers would provide an explanation as to why that particular post had not been filled.*
- When would the food waste trial start? *We were looking to introduce the trial in April 2010. We had already undertaken some detailed work on contamination in certain streets. We would be looking to do some education work before we began to issue fixed penalty notices.*
- There was concern that only the activity for the Council to set targets for CO2 reductions was measurable and quantifiable. External organisations should be brought in to audit us.
- At meetings, such as tonight, milk in individual pots was not good for the environment. *Food hygiene regulations prevented us being able to provide milk in jugs.*
- We had again been awarded the Silver Gilt, for the third year running, in the Anglia in Bloom awards. We received the highest award for the environmental element.

ACTION AGREED

To note the current progress of the Environmental Capital priority and the Environmental Capital Work Programme.

9. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The latest version of the Forward Plan, showing details of the key decisions that the Leader of the Council believed the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would be making over the next four months, was received.

ACTION AGREED

To note the latest version of the Forward Plan.

10. Work Programme

We considered the Work Programme for 2009/10.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- The revenue budget which was agreed in February 2009 made a commitment to withdraw parking permits but nothing had happened to date. *This was a very complicated issue and we were progressing with negotiations with the recognised trade unions. It was due to bring in savings of £100,000 during this year and*

£200,000 during next year but this was now unlikely to happen. We would be encouraging staff to use sustainable modes of transport and Members' parking passes would be considered by the Independent Members Allowances Panel.

ACTION AGREED

To confirm the work programme 2009/10.

11. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 12 November 2009 at 7pm.

CHAIRMAN
7.00 - 9.12 pm