

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT CAPITAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM - TOWN HALL ON 14 JANUARY 2010**

Present: Councillors D Day (Vice-Chairman), J A Fox, N North and N Sandford

Also Present: Councillor Harrington
Councillor Fletcher
Councillor Todd
Councillor Lee, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment
Capital & Culture
Councillor S Dalton, Cabinet Advisor for Environment Capital and
Culture

Officers Present: John Harrison, Executive Director of Strategic Resources
Paul Phillipson, Executive Director of Operations
Mike Heath, Commercial Services Director
Andrew Edwards, Head of Shared Transactional Services
Steven Pilsworth, Head of Corporate Services
Mark Speed, Transport Planning Team Manager
Michael Stevenson, Project Engineer
Amy Brown, Solicitor
Louise Tyers, Scrutiny Manager

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Burton, Dobbs, Goodwin and Wilkinson.

Apologies were also received from Councillors JR Fox, Goldspink, Kreling, Over and Councillor Seaton, Cabinet Member for Resources.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 November 2009

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 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. Scrutiny of the Budget 2010/11 and Medium Term Financial Plan to 2014/15

Further to the meeting held on 6 January 2010, the Committee continued to scrutinise the proposed budget 2010/11 and Medium Term Financial Plan to 2014/15. The meeting tonight would examine the budget as it related to:

- Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities
- Sustainable Growth Scrutiny Committee

- Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee
- Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee (Operational Issues)

Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities

The Executive Director of Strategic Resources was asked whether the budget had any specific impacts on the rural communities. He advised that there was nothing specific for the rural communities but he would be presenting the budget to the Parish Liaison Meeting next week which may highlight specific issues.

Sustainable Growth Scrutiny Committee

Observations and questions were asked around the following areas:

- Why were some offices within Council buildings being used as storage? *It was a difficult balancing act between what and when items were needed. A project was looking at storage in a different way, including placing storage where it was needed and ideally looking at electronic storage. There was a need to maximise office space within buildings.*
- What was cheapest, using office space or using a warehouse? *A warehouse would be cheapest but at the current time the Council was tied into existing leases for office space.*
- Some staff were starting to work from home, for example the Revenue and Benefits team and we were also looking at out of city centre offices.
- The budget papers showed the savings which had been made and were expected to be made by the Business Transformation Team. If they were doing such a good job why were we still required to keep increasing the level of Council Tax? Were the savings the Business Transformation programme making going on consultants? *The Business Transformation Programme had saved £24m. The need to raise Council Tax was due to a number of factors including the impact of the credit crunch and recession, leases of council properties and low interest rates which kept the investment income down. The use of consultants was good value for money and covered consultancy work and interim appointments. All consultants were procured properly.*
- We were currently paying around £8-9m per year on consultants, why did we not have the staff with the required the skills to undertake the work. *The last Freedom of Information request was around that figure. We often needed specialist expertise and it sometimes was best to employ people as and when they were needed. We did look to see if we could use the expertise of people internally.*
- It was clear that the Council was continuing to employ consultants at the same level even though we had been given a commitment that the Council was working hard to reduce its reliance on them. It seems that some consultants appeared to be employed on a permanent basis.
- Were there any records which showed the number of consultants employed for more than six months? *There was not a central database kept but within Strategic Resources no consultants were employed for five days a week.*
- The Deputy Chief Executive has been employed on an interim basis for a long time. *The salary of the Deputy Chief Executive had already been raised at a meeting of full Council and a written answer had been given. We looked to engage the best people at the most affordable rates for the benefit of the City.*
- If a consultant is used for a six month contract, are they paid for the full six months or only the days they work within that period? *They were paid on a daily rate. All of the Business Transformation programmes must have a business case approved including the value of any consultants, once agreed any variations had be approved by the Executive Director of Strategic Resources.*

- Why did the Council employ contractors on a long term basis? *It was common practice to employ consultants in areas such as engineering and architectural services, such as our contract with Atkins. Through the Business Transformation programme a business model has been introduced in the Council which is very effective and an exemplar to other authorities. This is shown in our good use of resources scores.*
- An in-depth inquiry should be held into the circumstances of the Deputy Chief Executive post as some members did not feel that the published figures were correct. *The arrangements for the Deputy Chief Executive post would be ending by 31 March 2010 and the Chief Executive was proposing that the post would be vacant for three years. If members wished to undertake an inquiry into the Council's overall use of consultants then the Executive Director would put together clear terms of reference for the remit of any inquiry.*
- A review on the use of consultants had been undertaken by a previous scrutiny committee a number of years ago and it would be useful to see whether the recommendations from that were implemented.
- There were a number of typing errors within the document which needed to be updated prior to going back to the Cabinet.
- Some savings had been made by moving employees to Manor Drive but how committed were the Council to sustainable transport? *A shuttle bus was available for staff at the start and the end of the day and for some members of staff it meant that they had to travel less miles to work.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) That the Sustainable Growth Scrutiny Committee is recommended to undertake an in-depth inquiry into the cost and effectiveness of the Council's use of consultants and to make recommendations on the future use of consultants by the Council to inform the development of budgets in future years.
- (ii) That the Cabinet be requested to note the Committee's continuing concerns regarding the cost and effectiveness of the Council's use of consultants and its request to the Sustainable Growth Scrutiny Committee to undertake an in-depth inquiry into this issue and to make recommendations on the future use of consultants by the Council to inform the development of budgets in future years.

Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee

Observations and questions were asked around the following areas:

- How would the establishment of a Culture and Leisure Trust affect the budget for the coming year and in future years? *There would be implications as there would be an element of efficiency savings that the Trust would have to sign up to. However, the Trust would be entitled to discretionary rate relief on its buildings which would mean savings to the Council. A key benefit would be the agility of the new Trust because as a smaller organisation it would be able to quickly change to different circumstances. Even though the Council would be the main financial contributor, private companies would be able to donate money.*
- One of the outcomes of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) was around improving health outcomes. How would an above inflation increase in fees and charges encourage people to take up sport? *The increase in charges related to areas not going into the Trust. The fees did need to rise and there had been no indication that usage would reduce. Costs such as fuel and salaries had risen so there was a need to balance the budget. If the public wanted to use the facilities then they should pay and the burden should not be put on all Council Tax payers.*

Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee – Operational Matters

Observations and questions were asked around the following areas:

- What was being done about lobbying the government for extra money to fund the Concessionary Fares Scheme? *This was a national issue and the Local Government Association (LGA) were leading the lobbying. The government had agreed to put more money in and this was currently out for consultation but this would not reimburse the actual costs of the Scheme. We would be introducing smart cards which would enable us to get accurate figures on usage. Travel on public transport was much easier in Peterborough than in some cities due to the sustainable travel town initiative.*
- In Peterborough concessionary fares were only able to be used after 9.30am, however in smaller councils, such as South Kesteven, they would be taking off the restriction. *We currently used the national scheme. South Kesteven, as a district council, did not have the pressures that we had. It was a balancing act as we could remove the restriction but something else would have to give.*
- Where were the unattended toilets which it was proposed to close? *In 2009 the Council agreed that City Services had to find £1.8m in savings, the options put forward in the budget papers showed how those savings would be achieved. The savings would be achieved from low use, low take up services. The toilets it was proposed to close were in Dogsthorpe (near the Bluebell pub), Eastfield Cemetery, Alma Road, Nene Park at Orton Mere and the Embankment. The Embankment toilets would be replaced with a facility to provide water for boat users.*
- A lot of large events were held on the Embankment, were these toilets not used and where would visitors to those events go? *These toilets did not have a high use. At the Alma Road toilets syringes were found on a daily basis.*
- Will there be a notice at the closed toilets telling people where the nearest facilities are? *We would look to put notices up.*
- How would the new charge for replacement bins be enforced and could this lead to an increase in fly tipping if people did not pay to replace their bins? *We would replace bins which had been damaged during collection. There was currently a big problem with bins being left out on the highway after collection and fires in bins. We needed to encourage people to look after their bins and it was hoped that introducing the charge would help with this. We did repair bins when were able to, for example, by replacing lids and wheels.*
- This proposal had been suggested before and would hit the people who did not have any options as to where they placed their bins. It may also lead to green waste being placed in the black bins to save on the charge. *People needed to take responsibility for their bins and the best way to do this was to mark their bin with their house number. Again, it was a balancing act as the majority of people looked after their bins responsibly. Leaving bins out after collection caused problems with footpaths being blocked and other neighbourhood problems.*
- Will you write into the policy that if the loss of the bin was not their fault, for example theft, residents would not have to pay the charge for a replacement? *Everybody would have to pay in all circumstance unless the Council damaged the bin during collection. There would be no appeals process and if a bin was stolen householders should report it to the police.*
- It was accepted that someone, whether householders or the Council, had to pay for the bin, people should be encouraged to get together with neighbours to help bring in bins when people were not there.
- Was the bulky waste and white goods collection charge an increase in the charges for second and subsequent collections or would all collections be charged? *All collections would be charged at a flat rate of £20 for each collection.*

- Would the removal of the subsidy from school meals impact on the viability of the school catering service? Would you be expecting any schools to look for an alternative provider? *Each school would make their own decisions.*
- £600,000 had been allocated for water taxis but this was not one of the priorities in the Local Transport Plan (LTP). *We would look to incorporate this in the next LTP as it was a good mode of environmental travel.*
- Would the realignment of bus services lead to a reduction in public transport? *We were continually looking at the bus services which were provided. The Committee should look at the proposals when they are brought forward and review them in the proper way.*
- In last year's budget there was a proposed saving due to ceasing staff parking permits but nothing has happened? *The proposal was still in the budget and we were currently engaged with the unions at the moment so we could understand the concerns of staff. It was not a straight forward issue as there were a number of variances in the different buildings where staff worked. We needed to consider the impact on staff and we would be working to try and persuade staff to use public transport.*
- The Independent Members Allowances Panel had also recommended that members' permits should stop and members' should be seen to lead the way. *We were actively considering all of the options.*
- The budget had a number of significant borrowing requirements, including an Energy from Waste facility, but where were the specific capital costs of the facility in the budget documents? *There was a clear line in the budget for the waste programme and was shown in the Capital Programme. Officers would be happy to give a breakdown of the individual elements of the programme. £53m had been included for an Energy from Waste facility and the procurement exercise had commenced.*
- The £53m does not include the revenue costs for the facility. The money borrowed had to be repaid so would be a burden on the budget. *Nothing had been hidden and the slides that the Deputy Leader had used to show the costs could be made available. Nothing was being deliberately withheld but we were currently in commercial negotiations so we were restricted in what we could say at this time.*
- Would we be required to take in waste from other areas to protect the sustainability of the facility? *The size proposed for the facility would accommodate the waste needs for the city. There would be a small gap at the start and we may need to take in some external waste for that period.*
- Richard Olive of Friends of the Earth addressed the Committee on the proposed costs of the Energy from Waste facility.
- There were a number of figures in the report from Friends of the Earth which needed to be examined. *If it did not compromise the position of the Council officers would be happy to publish the figures at a public meeting of the Committee so that everyone understood the full picture.*
- It had previously been agreed to hold trials for food waste collections but this was not now in the budget. *This initiative has been delayed for a year to enable more work to be undertaken before it was brought in.*
- Could composters be used as an alternative option to food waste collections? The composters could be expensive but the Council could use its buying power to buy in bulk and then sell on to residents. *The Deputy Leader was happy for councillors to trial new systems for waste collections and would write to all councillors making that offer.*

Summary of Recommendations

- (i) That the Sustainable Growth Scrutiny Committee is recommended to undertake an in-depth inquiry into the cost and effectiveness of the Council's use of consultants and to make recommendations on the future use of consultants by the Council to inform the development of budgets in future years.

- (ii) That the Cabinet be requested to note the Committee's continuing concerns regarding the cost and effectiveness of the Council's use of consultants and its request to the Sustainable Growth Scrutiny Committee to undertake an in-depth inquiry into this issue and to make recommendations on the future use of consultants by the Council to inform the development of budgets in future years.

ACTION AGREED

The detailed figures for the Waste 2020 programme to be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

6. Draft Local Transport Plan Capital Programme

Each financial year, through the Planning Guideline process, the Council was awarded an allocation of funding from central Government to spend on transportation schemes and maintenance of the road network. To ensure that this money was spent effectively the second Peterborough Local Transport Plan (2006–2011) was developed, in consultation with a wide range of key stakeholders and was approved by full Council. The Council considered a range of transport solutions to best address local problems, meet the growth aspirations of the City and integrate the Government's 'shared transport priorities' agreed nationally by the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Department for Transport (DfT).

The Council has allocated a total of £10.406m for 2010/11 from the funding awarded from central Government (Table 1 refers) and the allocations for Integrated Transport and Capital Maintenance were awarded on the basis of a formulaic calculation that took into account a number of parameters for example passenger numbers, road lengths, Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) etc. Primary Route Network funding (PRN) was an allocation which was specifically ring fenced for the maintenance of structures on strategically important transport corridors. This allocation was set following the determination of an evidence based bid submitted to Government in August 2007. A further sum of £0.390m of transport resource funding was also awarded, the details of which are shown in Table 2. In addition to the external funding Corporate Capital funding has been allocated to areas detailed in Table 3.

Table 1 – LTP capital allocation

	2010/11	2009/10
Integrated transport (block)	£1.939m*	£2.289m
Capital maintenance (block)	£2.085m*	£2.407m
Road Safety Grant	£0.072m	£0.073m
Primary route network (ring fenced)	£6.310m*	£6.310m
Total	£10.406m	£11.079m

* The figures shown in Table 1 did not include funds carried forward from 2009/10 financial year.

Table 2 – Transport Resource Funding

	2010/11	2009/10
Specific Road Safety Grant (Resource)	£0.300m**	£0.305m
Detrunked Roads Maintenance (Resource)	£0.061m**	£0.060m
Total	£0.361m	£0.365m

** Both the Specific Road Safety Grant and the Detrunked Roads Maintenance Grant were classified as Area Based Grants and a bid had been submitted to Strategic Finance for the sums indicated.

Table 3 – Corporate Capital Funding

	2010/11	2009/10
Highways Capital Maintenance	£0.542m	£0.765m
Roads and Bridges	£0.122m	£0.250m
Street Column Replacement	£0.200m	£0.245m
Off Street Car Park Structural work + resurfacing	£0.100m	£0.117m
Total	£0.964m	£1.377m

Observations and questions were asked around the following areas:

- Was LTP funding being used to progress the suggestions of water taxis and cable cars? *That work would be using different funding as they were not in the LTP. The proposals were being looked into as the river had great potential to help with the LTP. Officers were waiting for the Environment Agency Water Strategy to be completed to inform the water taxi options and a report would be brought to the Committee when it was completed.*
- A number of faults with street lighting at Gresley Way had been raised as the lights had been out for 18 months. Will the money proposed in the programme be sufficient to deal major faults or do we need additional money? *Officers undertook to look at the issues and report to members outside of the meeting.*
- Electric vehicles were becoming more common but there was not any where in the city centre to charge them up. *This had been identified for the Long Term Transport Strategy (LTTS) and officers would bring this Strategy to a future meeting.*
- Councillor Sandford advised that he had tried for a long time to get a bus shelter by the Brotherhoods Retail Park but had not been successful; could funding be used to address this? *The cycle network went through where any bus stop would go so we would have to buy an area of land adjacent to the network for a shelter; however the owners had refused to sell the land.*
- The maintenance budget for bus shelters had been reduced last year, was LTP funding being used to compensate for that reduction? *There was a reduction in the budget as replacement costs were high. New shelters lasted longer and were harder to vandalise. We would look at provision as part of new developments through S106 agreements and other sources.*
- The real time information displays at bus stops on Lincoln Road outside the Paul Pry had not been replaced, was there a plan to replace them? *Officers undertook to look at the issue and report to members outside of the meeting.*
- Could additional train stations be looked at as trains could be considered as a future way to help with park and ride? *The LTTS was looking at park and ride and rail could be included within the solutions.*
- When would the Welland Road roundabout be opened? *A Road Safety Audit was due to be undertaken next week and the road may be able to be opened. Work has been affected by the weather as road markings could not be put down.*
- Members were encouraged that options for park and ride were being looked at and they would like to see a report at a future meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee recommends the Draft Local Transport Plan Capital Programme 2010/11 to the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Community Development.

ACTION AGREED

That reports on the following be brought to future meetings when available:

- Options for Park and Ride
- Water Taxi Options

- Long Term Transport Strategy

7. 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.

8. Work Programme

We considered the Work Programme for 2009/10.

With the recent adverse weather conditions, members felt that it was important to review the actions taken since we had considered this item earlier in the year.

ACTION AGREED

To add the following items to the work programme:

- Cost for the Waste 2020 Programme – date to be confirmed
- Options for Park and Ride – date to be confirmed
- Water Taxi Options – date to be confirmed
- Long Term Transport Strategy – date to be confirmed
- Adverse weather conditions – review of actions – date to be confirmed

9. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 2 February 2010

CHAIRMAN
6.30 - 9.08 pm