



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT CAPITAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT THE BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM - TOWN HALL ON 20 JANUARY 2011

Present: Councillors D Day (Chairman), N Arculus (Vice-Chairman), J A Fox, D Morley, B Rush and N Sandford

Also Present: Paul Phillipson, Executive Director of Operations
Mike Heath, Commercial Services Director
Cathy Summers, Team Manager Passenger Transport
Peter Garnham, Highway Maintenance Team Manager
Robert Beaumont, Lawyer
Louise Tyers, Scrutiny Manager

1. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor North.

An apology for absence was also received from Councillor Sam Dalton, Cabinet Member for Environment Capital.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

Item 6 – Trees and Woodland Strategy

Councillor Sandford declared a personal interest as he was employed by the Woodland Trust.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 November 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2010 were approved as a correct 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 response made by the Executive to the recommendation made in relation to the development of an Open Spaces Strategy.

ACTION AGREED

- (i) To note the response made to the recommendation; and
- (ii) To seek clarification of the timescale for production of an Open Spaces Strategy.

6. Trees and Woodland Strategy

Further to the last meeting of the Committee, the report provided an updated draft of the Trees and Woodland Strategy for consideration.

Following the last meeting of the Committee where a draft of the Trees and Woodland Strategy was considered, a separate meeting which involved interested members was held to enable them to compare the 2006 version of the Strategy with the submitted draft and to ensure that any new initiatives were included. The informal meeting had been held in early December 2010 and was attended by Councillor Sandford, Executive Director of Operations, Head of Operations (City Services) and the Trees & Landscape Management Officer.

Questions and observations were raised around the following areas:

- Councillor Sandford advised that he had also had a good meeting with the Cabinet Member for Environment Capital and had gone through a number of issues with her. The majority of the references to expansionism had now been included within the Strategy and he was quite happy with the revised draft on the basis of the changes made.

ACTION AGREED

To endorse the draft Trees and Woodland Strategy for wider consultation

7. Bus Service Review

The report provided an update on the changes made to the subsidised bus network that had been approved by Cabinet in February 2010.

A review of Council subsidised bus journeys had been undertaken as a result of improvements to commercially operated bus services which had reduced the need for some Local Link journeys. A different way of delivering bus services to rural areas which provided either the same or better period of operation had also been identified. This service 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 which wasted resources and emitted needless CO₂ emissions. Some Local Link services had seen an increase in patronage and therefore it was suggested that a trial of improved frequency was undertaken to assess if this further increased passenger journeys or whether the same number of passenger journeys were undertaken but simply split over the more frequent departures.

One of main changes had been the withdrawal of a number of journeys operating in the rural area which had been replaced with the Call Connect service. As part of that change a number of children who were eligible for free school transport had needed to transfer from the withdrawn services to contracted home to school transport. Also a number of passengers had been using the subsidised services even though a comparable commercial bus service was available. Assessment of the impact of this change had included looking at the number of passengers who had used the previous service compared to the number of passengers who used the Call Connect service. The number of passengers using the previous service had varied from day to day and after removing the number of school children and passengers who had a comparable commercial service available less than 10 passenger journeys per day would have had no alternative means of transport other than the Call Connect service. By comparison on the Call Connect service, an average of 25 passenger journeys per day had been made in October 2010 and an average of 30 passenger journeys per day in November 2010.

The other main change had been the trial of increased frequency of the Local Link 406 service from hourly to half hourly. After assessing the impact of the change, the number of passenger journeys had increased between 13% and 74% and as a result the half hourly frequency would continue.

There has also been a number of other changes including the withdrawal of the evening journeys to the Showcase cinema, some evening journeys on the Local Link 406 and a

number of Local Link journeys around Dogsthorpe. A small number of complaints had been received from residents affected by the changes of which the majority had been concerning the withdrawal of the Local Link journeys around Dogsthorpe. Dogsthorpe was well served by commercial services operating on a 10 minute frequency during the daytime and as such, there were no plans to reintroduce any of the withdrawn bus journeys.

Questions and observations were raised around the following areas:

- A number of complaints had been received about the Citi1 service as some people had to wait for long periods for the buses to arrive. *Stagecoach had been given details of those complaints but no response had yet been received.*
- Had there been any developments with the possible introduction of a companion pass? *The main issue was how to fund any scheme within the current economic climate but the idea could be raised again when funding was better.*
- Some figures on the Call Connect service had been sent out following the Group Representatives meeting but not all of them were understandable. Whilst the figures looked impressive what were the refusals of service?
- Councillor Sandford asked why these extra details on the Call Connect service had not been included within the report so they were open to scrutiny. The report should be deferred so all information could be included as it was based on opinions without the evidence to back them up. *There was a lot of information which could have been included and it was felt that it was better to highlight the key points within the report. Officers did not want swamp members with lots of paper but it was a difficult balance.*
- The figures on the Call Connect service should be sent to all Committee members for information and if there was still an issue to bring it back to a future meeting.
- Had the previous decision actually increased the number of passengers on the services as one of the PCC drivers had advised that he had seen information that said that Call Connect had dropped 60%? *All of the previous data had been included in the report to Cabinet in February 2010. Previously less than 10 people were using the rural services and the data was now showing 23-30 people a day using the Call Connect service.*
- Had any complaints been received that an evening service no longer went to the Showcase Cinema? *We had received no complaints but we had been working with Travel Plan colleagues as there was a need to acknowledge that the Showcase also had a responsibility as there was currently no Travel Plan in place and colleagues would look to encourage the development of such a plan.*

ACTION AGREED

- (i) To note the report; and
- (ii) That figures for the Call Connect service be sent to all Committee members

8. Criteria for Resurfacing Footpaths

The report gave details of the criteria for deciding which footpaths were resurfaced.

Highway maintenance was a wide ranging service that included the following activities: -

- Reactive maintenance
- Routine maintenance (Cyclic)
- Programmed maintenance (Planned)
- Regulatory maintenance
- Winter Service
- Emergency response

Area Highway Inspectors carried out a basic assessment of the condition of footways during routine safety inspections within their geographic areas and this was complemented by ad-hoc inspections triggered by reports from the public, Councillors or other parties. Where an Inspector believed that it was not economically viable to restore a section of the network to a satisfactory condition with limited routine maintenance work they would complete an assessment which identified the location and type of treatment they felt was appropriate. The Highway Maintenance Team Senior Engineer would then complete a desk top audit of the information before adding the site to the Highway Maintenance Scheme proposal database to be surveyed and rated accordingly. Throughout the year the Senior Engineer surveyed sites on the database and applied three other factors - condition, hierarchy and cost to complete the assessment process and the sites would then be ranked against each other. A final judgement was then used to decide on which schemes should go forward for inclusion in the Highway Maintenance Programme each year. The programme for 2011/12 was currently being developed and would be considered at the Joint Scrutiny meeting which was proposed for late February. When assembling maintenance schemes it was important to consider other programmes of work which affected the network including improvement and street lighting schemes and major works proposed by utilities and developers and in some cases opportunities to co-ordinate works could be achieved.

Budgets were under increasing pressure and this had impacted upon the Council's ability to maintain current service levels and standards and it may be more prudent to move towards a 'holding strategy' with larger portions of available budgets being targeted towards preventative maintenance measures that were cost effective and not only provided an engineering solution but also a real visual improvement to the street scene.

Third party insurance claims received in Peterborough in 2008/09 and 2009/10 for incidents on footway and cycle ways, whilst being on average four times less frequent as carriageway claims, were in fact more costly to the authority. Consideration needed to be given as to whether the current emphasis towards carriageway schemes should be reconsidered with the view that the overall proportion of funding directed to footpaths and cycle ways should be increased. The table below showed the budgetary split (shown as a percentage) between carriageway, footway and other assets in respect of the 2008/09 to 2010/11 LTP, Capital and Revenue scheme allocations and the proposals for 2011/12.

	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12
Carriageway	75%	71%	59%	69%
Footway	13%	18%	25%	13%
Other	12%	11%	16%	18%

The evidence supported a steady increase in footway funding as a proportion of the available budget since 2008/09 however this has not been able to be sustained as we moved into the 2011/12 financial year. This was predominantly as a result of the harsh winter of 2009/10 that had caused widespread damage to Peterborough's road network with footways being less affected by winter damage. It was expected that the current severe winter would result in similar problems on the network and where the Government had provided emergency funding in 2010/11 but this could not be guaranteed in future. There was a danger that as budgets came under more pressure it could be easier to reduce footway budgets in an effort to maintain carriageway schemes however more rigorous selection of carriageway schemes and extended holding treatments could be maintained without the need to reduce footway expenditure. The setting and agreement of a virtual proportion of carriageway and footway major maintenance budgets would be useful in order to ensure consistency, promote sustainability and engender ownership across the wider community and authority.

Footway Hierarchy's were applied to Peterborough's footway network and were broken down into appropriate classifications relevant to what use a particular section of the network was put to. This classification impacted directly on how a particular section of the network should be maintained and was identified as follows: -

Cat	Name	Description
1 (a)	Prestige Walking Zone	Very busy areas of towns and cities with high public space and street scene contribution
1	Primary Walking Zone	Busy urban shopping and business areas and main pedestrian routes
2	Secondary Walking Zone	Medium usage routes through local areas feeding into primary routes, local shopping centres etc.
3	Link Footways	Linking local access footways through urban areas, busy rural routes
4	Local Access Footways	Footways associated with low usage, short estate road to main routes and cul-de-sacs

Peterborough's Category 1(a), 1 and 2 footways accounted for only approximately 13km of Peterborough's total 1,157km footway and cycleway network. Whilst much work had been done during the life of LTP2 to reassess carriageway hierarchies and whilst we were able to apply those hierarchies to our carriageway scheme assessment process with confidence, the same could not be said for our footway network at the current time. There may be similar footways across the greater Peterborough area that were not classified with the same hierarchy and this would suggest the need for a review not only of the current routes but all of Peterborough's footways. Given the scale of this task it was recommended to focus on a review of only Cat 1(a), 1 and 2 footways as these were likely to be high usage, high amenity routes that would impact not only on scheme selection but other maintenance functions such as potential winter service footway reactive snow and ice clearance programmes.

Questions and observations were raised around the following areas:

- It was felt that this was an area where the budgets could be delegated to Neighbourhood Councils as ward councillors, in conjunction with local people, were best placed to make those decisions in their areas.
- Defining a minimum proportion of LTP, Capital and Revenue scheme allocations to the footway and cycleway network was supported, as long as it was not to the detriment of road maintenance. The LTP transport user hierarchy put pedestrians at the top but there were always complaints that pavements are neglected.
- Was there any evidence to support the assumption that the public wanted paving slabs replaced with bituminous footways? It was important to check with local people that that was what they wanted. *The assumption was based on the Best Value Review which had been undertaken during 1999 but perhaps it was now time for it to be reviewed. The approach was positive on the whole and had immense benefits especially from a safety point of view, however some people might prefer a slabbed look in their area.*
- There were issues in some areas where there was a mix of slabs and tarmac which did not look pleasant, so could an effort be made to replace all slabs rather than in piecemeal? *We would prefer to see whole sections replaced but the priority was to ensure that the footpath was safe and fit for use.*
- What was being done to repair potholes following the recent bad weather? *There was currently a vast amount of potholes on the road network which we were forced to repair as soon as possible usually with a temporary repair to remove the hazard. Following that a revisit of the site would take place and the pothole marked ready for a proper repair.*
- In some areas HGV's were parking half on the path and half on the road which would cause damage to the path. *That was a traffic management issue which could be addressed with loading restrictions.*
- A review of footway hierarchy was supported as it was not representative of routes across the city which needed to be included for maintenance and could also help with future snow clearance.

- Would councillors be able to submit pathways which they believed should be included in the review? *When the review was completed it would be sent out to all councillors for them to consider and comment.*

ACTION AGREED

- (i) To support the proposal to increase by up to 50% the current programme of footway micro-asphalt surface treatments in future years in order to provide a significant preventative maintenance benefit to Peterborough's residents and visitors at minimal additional cost.
- (ii) To support the proposal to work more closely with Neighbourhood Teams to capture and understand the needs of the communities from the local perspective and apply these findings to programmes as and where appropriate.
- (iii) To support the proposal to undertake a review of the current Hierarchy 1a, 1 and 2 footways in order to establish whether the existing network is representative of Peterborough's high use footways within the current available budget.
- (iv) To support that a defined minimum proportion of up to 25% of LTP, Capital and Revenue scheme allocations should be applied to Peterborough's footway and cycleway network to safeguard against the potential for carriageway schemes to take precedent as the wider network takes the strain in the coming years.

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 2010/11.

Clarification would be sought as to the current position of the costs of the Waste 2020 Programme following the figures submitted by Friends of the Earth.

ACTION AGREED

To confirm the work programme for 2010/11.

11. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 10 March 2011 at 7pm

CHAIRMAN
7.00 - 8.00 pm