

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES
HELD IN THE
BOURGES & VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH
ON 16 MARCH 2015**

Present: Councillors Stokes (Chairman), Brown, Sanders, Harrington, Murphy, Okonkowski and J Fox.

Also Present:	Councillor Peter Hiller	Cabinet Member for Planning & Housing Services
	Joe Dobson	Independent Co-opted Member
	Keith Lievesley	Independent Co-opted Member
	Henry Clarke	Independent Co-opted Member
	Phillip Nuttall	Independent Co-opted Member
	Paula Cuthbertson	East Coast Main Line Deputy Project Manager
	Philip Clark	East Coast Main Line Local Engineering Manager

Officers in Attendance:	Cate Harding	Community Capacity Manager
	Belinda Child	Head of Housing and Health Improvement
	Adrian Chapman	Assistant Director for Communities and Targeted Services
	Robin Sissons	Head of Community and Safety Services
	Richard Godfrey	Assistant Director, Digital Peterborough
	Theresa Nicholl	Development Manager
	Dania Castagliuolo	Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 January 2015

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2015, were approved as an accurate record.

4. East Coast Main Line (ECML) Level Crossing Closure Programme

The Development Manager introduced this report which was presented at the request of the Commission to provide an update on the East Coast Main Line (ECML) Level Crossing Closure Programme. The report had previously been presented to the Planning and Environmental Protection Committee on 3 March 2015. The Planning and Environmental Protection Committee had resolved that the contents of the reports and comments were noted. The following comments had been made:

- The Committee commented that the traffic modelling would be vital to ensure that any diverted traffic would not cause congestion in the surrounding villages. It was suggested that consideration should be given to the access Lolham Bridges, to ensure that the site did not become a 'dumping ground'.

The closure of the following level crossings was proposed:

- Woodcroft (Woodcroft Road to the Southeast of Helpston)

- Helpston
- Maxey
- Lolham Bridges and Helpston Footpath (north of B1443 and NE of Bainton)

The Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities were asked to note the report as an item of information only and were advised that responsibility for commenting on the item was with the Planning and Environmental Protection Committee.

Observations and Questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members queried what the total investment was for this whole project. *The ECML Deputy Project Manager advised Members that the exact cost of the bridges and the cost plan was still working progress and the costs could not be finalised until the end of the consultation.*
- Members queried whether Peterborough City Council could put measures in place to tackle the issue of the lack of footpaths and safe walkways over railway crossings. *The Development Manager advised the Commission that measures may be put in place as part of the mitigation for the proposals. What villages' desired in terms of planning would need to be linked to the impact of the proposals.*
- Members requested that footpaths and cycle routes were linked up in a way which would encourage members of the public to use them. *The ECML Deputy Project Manager advised members that ECML had tried to engage with cyclists and members of the public and taken in to account their views.*
- Members commented that they supported the project because the majority of residents were happy with the plans. This project would also prevent future delay of emergency service vehicles due to level crossings.
- Members commented that there were advantages of the proposals although, they could potentially block certain roads and through routes.
- Members requested reassurance that Network Rail would still be available after the project was established in case of any future issues. *The ECML Deputy Project Manager advised Members that Network Rail would mitigate and predict as much as possible in advance to avoid any future issues. This was the reason behind the traffic modelling as this tool would give very good representation of future outcomes.*
- Members commented that villages affected by the reallocations had no objections to the project and suggested that it would be useful to obtain data projections of where developments would take place. *Members were informed that this information was published on the website for people to view.*
- Members queried whether the traffic modelling took in to account the increase in traffic using alternative routes once the level crossings have been removed. *Members were advised that the traffic modelling simulated the delay of proposed road users. It was represented accurately and showed traffic rearranging.*
- Members asked who was going to pay for the project. *Members were advised that Network Rail would pay for the project unless Peterborough City Council or Parish Councils had further ideas, which they would have to pay for themselves. Impacts on villages' mitigation should be paid for by Network Rail.*
- Members commented that Network Rail had been extremely supportive of Parish Councils and had been out to deliver presentations, therefore Parish Councils felt that Network Rail had nothing to hide and all of the proposals would be open to Scrutiny. There was confidence in the outcome of the projects being the best possible solutions.

At this point the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Services gave his apologies and left the meeting to attend another meeting.

ACTION AGREED

The Commission noted the report as an item of information only.

5. Update on Superfast Broadband

The Assistant Director of Digital Peterborough introduced the report, at the request of the Commission, which provided the Commission with an update on Superfast Broadband in Rural Areas.

The Commission was asked to endorse the work undertaken as part of Connecting Cambridgeshire to deliver Superfast Broadband and to acknowledge the investment made by Gigaclear in providing a number of villages with fibre broadband connectivity.

Observations and Questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members commented that the Great North Road to Haddon only had 1MB available even though fibre optic cables had been installed and queried when Haddon was going to receive superfast broadband. *The Assistant Director for Digital responded that general broadband speeds were based on the distance to the cabinet.*
- Members queried whether timescales had been published. *Members were advised that the timescales could be found on the Connecting Cambridgeshire website.*
- Members queried whether any support would be offered to communities to help them make use of the new superfast broadband. *Members were advised that this was currently being worked on as part of the Digital Programme and there would be support available for communities.*

ACTION AGREED

The Commission noted the report and agreed for the Assistant Director of Digital Peterborough to provide information on the current broadband situation of Haddon.

6. Keeping Rural Communities Safe

The Head of Community and Safety Services introduced the report which contained various recommendations for progressing a small number of initiatives that would contribute to rural community safety and confidence. This report followed on from a report presented to the Commission in January 2015.

The Commission were asked to scrutinise the content of the report and agree the recommendations for progressing the individual projects which were contained throughout the report.

Observations and Questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members were concerned that some of the proposed schemes would need to be resourced and queried where these resources would come from. *The Head of community and safety services responded that on 1 December 2014 the Police and Crime Commissioner stated that he wanted 300 Special Constables in Peterborough that number had now risen to 350. The police and Crime Commissioner was happy to support Special Constables.*
- Members commented that it was a very good idea to engage with local businesses for the Employers Special Scheme.
- Members queried whether the proposed recommendations were already contained within the policing plan or was it something that the Commission needed to encourage. *Members were advised that the policing plan did not go in to this type of detail therefore, it was not necessary to encourage it to go in to the Policing Plan.*
- Members expressed their support for each of the proposed initiatives.
- Members commented that they were very happy to have received a letter in response to their past recommendation to advise them that from April 2015 Special Constables were entitled to a Council Tax rebate.

- Members commented that Neighbourhood Watch was a very good scheme although, they expressed concern that the coordinators were not known within communities and suggested that all coordinators of the schemes were known by Councillors and Parishes. *Members were advised that the Scheme coordinators were volunteers who all worked differently and membership was optional.*
- Members commented that the use of volunteers was not necessarily beneficial as people could be afraid of being seen doing the jobs. *Members were advised that this depended on the person. They would be different to Community Wardens as they would possess powers.*
- Members commented that rural communities previously lost Police Community Support Offices due to lack of resources and expressed concern that this would happen with the proposed schemes if they were to be implemented in rural areas. *Members were advised that the advantage of these schemes was that they were led by volunteers who could choose the areas in which they wish to work. The Employers Special Scheme was an informal contract with companies therefore, Officers should be allowed to work in rural communities.*

ACTION AGREED

The Commission noted the report and agreed for the Head of Community and Safety Services to provide details on the cost of each of the proposed projects.

The Commission requested that the Head of Community and Safety Services:

- Approached the Head of Cambridgeshire Specials Constabulary to on their behalf to emphasise the Commission's support for the Employers Special Scheme.
- Asked the Safer Peterborough Partnership to encourage other agencies to increase staff awareness of the Rural Watch Patrols Scheme through scheduled training days and the electronic interactive training package.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission recommended that the Safer Peterborough Partnership considered holding its Board meetings in public.

The commission recommended that the following projects were implemented within rural areas:

- Employers Special Scheme (ESP)
- Rural Watch Patrols
- Neighbourhood Watch

7. Developing a Rural Vision and Parish Charter for Peterborough

The report was introduced by Independent Co-opted Member, Joseph Dobson following the agreement from the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities to support the refresh of the Rural Vision and Strategy Document which was originally prepared in 2008. The refreshed document had been prepared with a supporting action plan and Parish Charter, working in partnership with the Parish Council Liaison.

The Commission was recommended to:

1. Approve, in principal, the final draft of the Rural Vision and Parish Charter.
2. Support a Cabinet Members decision Notice be issued to authorise wider consultation with the Parish Council Liaison, in line with the principals of the working partnership outlined in the Parish Charter and to put forward the final recommendations to Cabinet.

3. To support a detailed action plan alongside the Rural vision and use this to inform and shape the work programme for the next municipal year.

Observations and Questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members congratulated Co-opted Member Joseph Dobson on his presentation of the report and commented they were delighted to have Parish Councillors as part of the Commission.
- Members suggested that LEADER could be developed in to the action plan. *The Community Capacity Manager responded that there had been no outcome from the LEADER bid to date.*
- Members welcomed the Rural Vision and Parish Charter although, they thought a strategy still needed to be developed for rural communities. *Members were advised that the Parish Council Liaison and the associated working group fully owned and had been major contributors to the document.*
- Members suggested that the recent Farms Estate Strategy could feed in to the Rural Strategy. *Members were advised that it was suggested by the Parish Council Liaison Working Group to have a simplified version of a strategy for rural areas along with a supporting action plan, which would be kept up to date.*
- Members queried if urban parishes were separate to rural parishes. *Members were informed that the Parish Council Liaison meetings were open to all Parish Councils. With regard to the Rural Vision and Parish Charter, there were two different parts to the document the Rural Vision which included the 24 rural Parish Councils and the Parish Charter which included all 27 Parish Councils.*

ACTION AGREED

The Commission noted the report and requested that the Rural Vision and Parish Charter be supported by a detailed action plan which would be used to inform and shape the work programme for the next municipal year. The Commission also requested that the action plan be presented at the first meeting of the new municipal year.

RECOMMENDATION

The commission endorsed the Draft Rural Vision and Parish Charter and recommended that before being presented to Cabinet for approval a wider consultation was undertaken.

8. Forward Plan of Executive Decisions

The Commission received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Executive Decisions, which contained key decisions that the Leader of the Council anticipated the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the forthcoming month. Members were invited to comment on the Plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Commission's work programme.

ACTION AGREED

The Commission noted the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decision and requested further information on the following decisions:

- Fit to Rent Scheme
- Extra Care Housing
- Parks, Trees and Open Spaces

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 8.45pm

CHAIRMAN