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Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities held at the The Hall
- Bedford Hall
on 5 October 2009

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors D Over (Chairman), M Collins, R Dobbs, D Harrington and B Rush

OFFICERS PRESENT:

Ruth Lea, Lawyer - Growth Team
Alex Daynes, Senior Governance Officer
Mike Heath, Commercial Services Director
Nick Goodman, Environment Capital Officer
Matthew Hogan, Acting Housing Strategy and Enabling Officer
Peter Tebb, Traffic Manager
Teresa Wood, Group Manager - Accessibility and Travel
Cathy Summers, Team Manager - Passenger Transport Contracts and Planning

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr Nawaz and Cllr Trueman.

2. **Declaration of Interest**

None.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2009 were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. **Responses to Recommendations made by the Commission**

The responses to the recommendations from the meeting held on 27 July 2009 were noted and accepted.

5. **Signposting**

The commission received a report informing it of the issues relating to the use of traditional style direction signs (finger posts) in the rural areas of Peterborough rather than the current 'aluminium plate' type signs. The commission was requested to recommend that the use of traditional signs is implemented where supported and where appropriate.

The commission was advised that following government regulations, the traditional signs (black with white lettering) could not be used for directions on A or B class road junctions.

Questions were asked and responses given including:

- Signs advertising village amenities must be on reflective backed signs if placed on A or B class roads.
- It is technically very difficult to make the traditional signs effectively reflective.
- Signs with blue borders are no longer being used and will eventually be removed.
- A conventional sign would cost around £200-300 to replace. A traditional sign would cost maybe 50% more.
- Old signs could be replaced with traditional signs where they are in need of replacing through wear and tear.

The representative from the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) advised the commission on the general approach the CPRE took to signs in rural areas. The CPRE considered signing as a whole should be reviewed as in many places there were too many signs.

ACTIONS

The commission recommended that traditional signs were used where appropriate and where necessary in the rural areas of Peterborough.

6. Traffic Mitigation

The commission received a report concerning speed limits on rural roads, outside schools and also casualty data for rural areas. The commission was requested to wait for the release of the Government's new 10 year Road Safety Strategy and guidance for future Road Safety Strategy at a local level before making recommendations for reduction in speed limits as the national consultation may yield to a blanket reduction on rural roads from 60mph – 50mph; not pursue further speed limit reductions outside primary schools as this is currently not a priority in terms of casualty reduction; recommend that officers continue to review casualty data and investigate requests received for casualty reduction measures in rural areas; and to recommend officers continue to implement appropriate measures which may include reduction in speed limits as and when required and resources be directed to areas which will have the greatest impact in achieving target NI47 - reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured on Peterborough roads.

The commission was advised that due to the replacements of signs and road marking any change to the speed limits would be costly. The commission were further advised that the large majority of accidents occur in the urban areas of Peterborough and rural car accidents were only a small percentage of Peterborough's total. No figures were available for accidents caused at 50 mph as speed limits were currently applied at 60mph on rural roads. Further to this, some roads were unsuitable for traffic calming measures due to being narrow and winding or are used by farm vehicles and other heavy loads.

Questions were asked and responses given including:

- 17-25 year old males have been predominantly targeted in campaigns to reduce accidents.
- Additional campaign funds are available from the Highways Agency and we do bid for this.
- It would cost up to £90 to affix a new sign to an existing sign post.
- There is little justification for a reduction to 20mph outside schools.
- The number of children taken to school by car also needs to be addressed.
- Problem areas needed to be tackled to reduce accidents not just favoured sites.

The representative from the CPRE advised that the CPRE had provided its own response to the government consultation. The CPRE felt that more work should be done to encourage

other means of travel in order to reduce car journeys and raised the issue of a Road Hierarchy i.e. Main Roads for larger vehicles, Village Roads for smaller vehicles and Small or Quiet Lanes.

The committee discussed the issues raised and agreed the following:

ACTIONS:

1. To receive a report in one year's time on the outcome of the government's Road Safety Strategy and guidance for future Road Safety Strategy at a local level.
2. Recommends that the Traffic Manager implement a 20mph speed limit outside every rural Primary School.
3. Recommend that the Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee considers recommending a reduction in speed limit outside urban schools.
4. Recommend officers continue to review casualty data and investigate requests received for casualty reduction measures in rural areas.
5. Recommends officers continue to implement appropriate measures which may include reduction in speed limits as and when required.

7. Bus Routes - Review for Rural Communities

The commission received a report about the proposed Bus Service Review and its affects on bus services for rural areas in order to consult and provide comments on the proposals.

Written questions by members of the public would be responded to after the meeting by the lead officer.

Questions were raised and responses given including:

- The dial-a-ride scheme would be trialled in one area and therefore, only one vehicle was needed.
- The dial-a-ride would initially be provided from 7am to 7pm.
- In some rural areas there is currently no late evening bus service to measure demand that dial-a-ride would cover.
- The call centre in Lincolnshire would be used for the initial trials.
- The review could realise a saving of £130,000 a year.
- Disabled parking criteria could be used to measure the need for the Call Connect Plus service.
- Further information on cost savings relating to loss of drivers can be provided.

ACTIONS

1. A report be submitted to the commission following the roll out of the scheme.
2. The report author considers a third option of "Peterborough Only" in paragraph 5.2 of the report.
3. The Commission supports the principles of the review.

8. Rural Housing Strategy

The commission received a report outlining the scope, purpose and objectives of the emerging Rural Housing Strategy. The commission was requested to give comment and feedback, support the principles and consider how it could support the strategy.

The Rural Housing Strategy sought to address three main priorities; Affordable Housing, Renewable Energy and Fuel Poverty and In Keeping Design. The commission was advised that some of this work had already started.

Questions were asked and responses given including:

- The Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 would stop shared ownership houses being sold into the private sector market.
- Villages cannot 'make demands', but if a need for affordable housing is proven then it may be possible to develop land within the locality for the purposes of affordable housing, subject to planning consent.
- A new officer in Opportunity Peterborough was taking up a position to economic development in Peterborough that could include rural areas.

ACTION AGREED:

1. The commission supports the principles of the Rural Housing Strategy.
2. Receive a future report on progress of the strategy.

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.

No items were identified for further scrutiny.

10. Work Program

The commission reviewed the current work programme. The commission requested that the introduction and initial success of the Bus Service Review be scrutinised at a future meeting.

11. Date of the next Meeting

The date of the next meeting to be 23 November 2009.

CHAIRMAN
7.00 - 9.00 pm