

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES HELD AT THE BOURGES / VIERSEN ROOM, TOWN HALL ON 19 SEPTEMBER 2011

Present: Councillors D Over (Chairman), G Nawaz (Vice Chairman), A Shaheed, N Shabbir

Officers Present: Leonie McCarthy , Social Inclusion Manager
Pete Garnham, Highway Maintenance Manager
Steve Horner, Public Rights of Way Officer
Amy Bowles, Transport Planning Officer
Charlotte Palmer, Climate Change Manager
Paulina Ford, Senior Governance Officer
Karen Dunleavy, Governance Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Murphy. Councillor Shabbir attended as substitute.

2. Declaration of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2011 were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. Footpaths and Cycle routes in Rural Areas

Members received a presentation from the Transport Planning Officer on the improvement and maintenance plans for public footpaths, byways, bridleways, and cycle ways in rural areas. Members were advised that the improvements were included and evaluated using the appropriate transport programmes and schemes as follows:

- Capital budget, integrated into the transport programme;
- Capital maintenance programme;
- Long Term Transport Strategy up to 2026;
- Local Transport Plan Three;
- Community Action Plans;
- Delivering a sustainable transport system goals;
- Rights of Way Plan; and
- Highways Management Plan.

Members were advised that the plans and programmes highlighted in the presentation had been subject to public, Member and Scrutiny consultation and where appropriate had been approved by a Cabinet Member Decision Notice.

The Transport Planning Officer provided an update to Members on the Local Transport Plan and the three capital budgets, which was used to set out the spending across project areas for improvements for the next five years.

Members also received an update from the Highway Maintenance Manager, on the work being conducted on Rights of Way improvements by the Highway Maintenance Team, once the budgets had been agreed. Members were advised that the Rights of Way scheme had been included in the Local Transport Plan Two document and would continue to be delivered until 2016.

Key points highlighted were:

- Public rights of way scheme;
- Statements of action;
- Adequate sign posting;
- Maintenance work; and
- Values within the rights of way improvement plan capital budget.

Members were advised that the Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP) detailed how the Highways Team would deal with asset management and that it would be used as a gap analysis to identify the work needed for the plan, and identified priorities.

Questions and observations were made around the following areas:

- Members commented about the improvement plans that the Transport and Engineering Team had set out within their policy documents and that consideration was required for the deepest rural areas in order to provide adequate footpaths, improve existing pathways and make provision to inform villagers where footpaths were available between villages.
- Members commented that existing footpaths within the City were not being maintained to an adequate standard and that the Local Transport Plan funding was ring fenced for new projects. Members added that the money received from the Local Transport Plan could be spent more wisely on improving the existing footpaths.
- Members also commented that the River Nene was being poorly maintained by the Environment Agency. It was thought that the maintenance problems were due to funding issues and that the Council may wish to consider contacting the appropriate Government Department to raise the issue with them.
- Members sought clarification over what improvements had been made for cycling over the last year within the rural areas? *The Climate Change Team Manager advised Members that villagers had been consulted recently about what cycle improvements, they would like to see. A good response had been received from Glinton and had resulted in a cycle park being installed. Unfortunately there had been a poor response from all other villages.*
- Members sought clarification over what had happened to the electric bike purchased by Peterborough City Council and whether villages had received a demonstration? *The Climate Change Manager advised Members that the electric bike would be delivered to Councillor Over in order for it to be demonstrated to the rural communities for a trial period.*
- Members enquired whether consideration had been given to provide a mini park and ride site for rural areas. *The Transport Planning Manger advised that there*

were no firm plans to provide a park and ride site and that an update would be provided to Members on future development plans.

- Members sought clarification on whether a park and ride site would be introduced in Werrington and Glinton and whether there would be dedicated bus lane travelling into the City Centre of Peterborough? *The Transport Planning Manger advised Members that if park and ride was to be introduced for the Werrington and Glinton areas, then the appropriate measures would be introduced to complement the service.*
- Members sought clarification over whether there were plans to introduce a permanent park and ride site to run throughout the year or whether a scheme would only be adopted over the Christmas period? *The Transport Planning Manager advised Members that the vision was to introduce a permanent site to run throughout the year, but there needed to be buy in for the scheme from other organisations other than the Council.*

ACTIONS

1. The Climate Change Manager to arrange for the electric bike to be delivered to Councillor David Over.
2. The Transport Planning Manger to provide a briefing note on proposed developments for a park and ride site for rural areas.

5. Making Villages Energy Sustainable

Members received a presentation from the Climate Change Team Manager on making villages energy sustainable. Members were informed that there was a need for community action and community involvement to make the scheme work. Emissions for Peterborough were going down each year with this year's results showing a drop from 7.8 to 7.1 tons per capita, which brought the city below the national average for carbon emissions. Members were also advised that there were various programmes currently underway in Glinton and Peakirk. The team were working closely to engage with villagers to demonstrate different sources of energy saving initiatives.

Members were informed that the following projects and challenges were currently being conducted:

- Fifteen properties receiving solar panel installations;
- Thermal camera investigations;
- Community Energy Challenges;
- Community Energy saving awards; and
- Library Energy Monitor schemes.

Questions and observations were made around the following areas:

- Members sought clarification over whether wood burners had a significant impact in causing pollution? *The Climate Change Team Manager advised Members that currently pollution levels had not been the same compared to years ago and Peterborough now had good air quality. Modern equipment was designed to capture the emissions produced, which lessened the environmental impact.*
- Members sought guidance over whether the Council could introduce a policy that would instruct all new builds, where appropriate, to install energy saving devices? *The Climate Change Team Manager advised Members that there was a national policy for sustainable homes which was being encouraged. Members were also advised that the Planning Team would be joining the Climate Change Team and*

that this would enable them to work closely on introducing sustainability and energy saving devices for new properties. Members were also advised that ideas would include changing user behaviour to save energy and to use renewable energy sources.

- The Chair proposed that the following recommendation be put forward that: where appropriate the Council should insist that on all new builds, there would be provision for wind turbines, solar panels and renewable energy methods. Councillor Sanders was not in agreement with the use of the word 'insist' and proposed the use of the word 'encourage' but not insist on them.
- Cllr Over moved the proposal to: where appropriate, all new buildings would implement renewable energy or any other type of renewable method. Cllr Sanders suggested that it might be more appropriate for the wording to state that the Council 'encourages' the installation of renewable energy or any type of renewable method and not 'implement'.
- Councillor Over agreed with Councillor Sanders and suggested that the proposed recommendation should state that the Council would seriously encourage.
- Cllr Sanders seconded the recommendation, on the proviso, that the recommendation would state that installation of energy saving devices on new builds would be encouraged and that the Council would never change to obligatory.
- The Climate Change Manager advised Members that moving forward, the Government would be introducing enforcement for renewable energy on new builds within the next couple of years. However, a feasibility test was to be conducted for domestic and commercial development on the cost over carbon emission viability.
- Members commented that development was becoming less in rural areas and that living in a village was never cost effective. Members also commented that if the Government was to impose the renewable energy sanctions, it would make things harder for people living in villages.
- Members agreed that if Government was to introduce the sanction, then the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities would reconsider the proposed recommendation.
- The proposed recommendation was withdrawn to be discussed at a later date.
- Members sought clarification on how the Council provide insulation grants for elderly constituents and how the applications were being dealt with, as there had been an outstanding application known within a ward area? *The Climate Change Manger would contact Councillor Shabbir directly to provide information on how the elderly could apply for insulation. Members were advised that the Climate Change Team could provide a broad brush approach of facilities available to the elderly and that the team would work with constituents to access the money available through the Energy Challenge initiative. The Neighbourhoods Social Inclusion Manager advised Members that the Neighbourhoods Management Team would be contacted to ensure that the issues raised at this meeting would be addressed.*
- Members commented that Parish Councils were Community Leaders and that they would be the best contacts to talk to about the Energy Challenge initiative.

The Climate Change Manager requested that a list of key contacts was to be provided so that information on the Energy Challenge initiative could be circulated.

It was agreed that:

- A contact list would be provided to the Climate Change Manger for Community Leaders, Parish Councils and any key contact groups; and
- The Neighbourhoods Social Inclusion Manager would contact the Head of Neighbourhood Services and highlight the issue raised regarding energy saving grants for the elderly.

6. 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.

Members sought further information to be provided on the consultation for transport provided for children aged four to sixteen years of age in education. The Senior Governance Officer would request the briefing paper for the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities.

7. Work Programme

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2011/12 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

ACTION AGREED

To confirm the work programme for 2011/12 and the Governance Officer to include any additional items as requested during the meeting.

8. Date of next meeting

Monday, 21 November 2011.

CHAIRMAN
7.00pm - 8.04 pm

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