

At a meeting of the ENVIRONMENT AND ATTRACTIVE CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the WASHINGTON PRIMARY CARE CENTRE on MONDAY, 16TH JANUARY, 2012 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Miller in the Chair

Councillors Bonallie , E. Gibson, Heron, Lauchlan, Porthouse, D. Richardson, I. Richardson, Tye and A. Wright.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Scott.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee held on 12th December, 2011

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 12th December, 2011 be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Councillor Porthouse's apologies for the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Low Carbon Vehicles in the Delivery of Public Services Policy Review 2011/12: Regional Procurement of Electric Vehicles

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with the view of the North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO) on the opportunities, challenges and process for regional collaborative procurement of electric vehicles for the North East. This submission was in support of work by Sunderland to build a business case for initiatives in this area of importance for the regional economy and its environment. The report also set out the support that NEPO could provide working in close collaboration with Sunderland.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ian Taylor, NEPO presented the report and was on hand to answer Members queries.

Councillor A. Wright queried the benchmarking of procurement and how they would choose a particular method.

Mr. Taylor advised that if the particular requirement was something new, there could be other precedents around to learn from and NEPO had a good network to call upon if needed. Should a requirement be totally innovative with no precedents to look at then this is much more difficult to determine in terms of pricing etc, but we would need to have a good handle on different structures and be able to justify the prices we pay.

Councillor A. Wright commented that there were valid arguments for both centralising/decentralising local government but his worry was that we moved from one system to another without suitable benchmarking in place.

Mr. Taylor agreed and commented that it would be dependent on what you were purchasing and the Joint Committee would have a strategy to look at what should be purchased centrally or not. There would also be an opt out process available.

Councillor Porthouse commented that he was a great believer that this was the right way to go and enquired as to the progress of other Authorities on Electric Vehicles and if Sunderland was leading the way.

Mr. Taylor advised that most Authorities were interested and the challenge here was to arrive at a business case which makes it easier for other Authorities to join in on.

In response to Councillor Porthouse's query on if there were any EU restrictions on purchasing locally, Mr. Taylor advised that if you were looking at vehicles then you could not just consider local sources but there was a need to think cleverly about how to use this.

Councillor I. Richardson commented that he hoped the jobs/infrastructure that would come out of this, stayed in the area and would be a benefit to Sunderland.

Mr. Taylor commented that if this was carried out well, it would bring direct economic benefits.

Councillor Porthouse enquired if NEPO would have any input into the £117 million iconic bridge.

Mr. Taylor informed the Committee that they would not have involvement in the bridge and that they were close to awarding construction contracts but these would be on a smaller scale, which would include building Primary Schools and such like.

In response to Councillor Heron's query, Mr. Taylor advised that the procurement would be available to the whole public sector including the Voluntary Sector.

The Chairman commented that this was a real opportunity for the 12 Authorities as the NEPO framework could be a clear winner and in relation to Electric Vehicles we must work closer and better with Partners.

The Chairman informed of the recent visit to Smith Electrics and as all Authorities were using some form of Electric Vehicle a discussion would be needed further down the line to help complement each others plans.

Mr. Taylor informed of a Joint Committee meeting on 3rd February, 2012 and that Councillors Tate and Speding were invited to attend.

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Low Carbon Vehicles in the Delivery of Public Services Review 2011/12: Progress Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to inform Members of the progress on the Scrutiny Committee's Policy Review for 2011/12 into Low Carbon Vehicles – the Delivery of Public Services in Sunderland.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

In relation to paragraph 3.13, Councillor Heron commented that he had been hoping the hydrogen cells would be used for cars.

The Chairman commented that there were issues due to the size of hydrogen cells at present.

Mrs. Lancaster advised that there were a great deal of unknowns currently around the hydrogen cell.

In reference to paragraph 3.12 and the second life of batteries, Councillor I. Richardson enquired if there were uses in this country for the batteries rather than sending them to Africa.

The Chairman commented that the batteries could be used in this country but they would be of a greater benefit in Africa as the battery could be used to store energy from the large amount of energy generated from the sun.

Councillor Porthouse advised that the batteries would not deteriorate as much in the sun of Africa as they would in the cold of this country.

Councillor I. Richardson commented that he would like to see the batteries being used to feed back into our economy rather than be sent elsewhere.

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Low Carbon Vehicles in the Delivery of Public Services Policy Review 2011/12: Local Authority Low Carbon Fleets – Case Studies

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to allow Members to consider the best practice from other Local Authorities with regards to progress made in the introduction of low carbon vehicles within Council fleets.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor I. Richardson enquired if the proposed new bridge would make any accommodations for electric vehicles, such as an extra lane for example.

The Chairman commented that as far as he was aware, the bridge would include four lanes and electric cars would be dealt with the same as any other car.

The Chairman also commented that he was full of praise for the report and looked forward to seeing the Policy Review.

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Low Carbon Vehicles in the Delivery of Public Services Review 2011/12: Expenditure in Support of the Policy Review

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) for the Committee to retrospectively agree expenditure of the Scrutiny Committee's dedicated budget in support of its policy review, Low Carbon Vehicles in the Delivery of Public Services.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chairman informed the Committee that they were being asked to retrospectively agree the use of its dedicated budget to commission Cenex to undertake a detailed and expert analysis of the potential for the Council to adopt electric vehicles into its fleet.

Due to the issue being raised shortly after the last meeting of the Committee, as Chairman he felt a decision needed to be made in order to proceed and requested the Committee's endorsement of that decision.

5. RESOLVED that the Committee retrospectively agree the proposal to engage the services of Cenex in support of the policy review, to be funded from the budget of the Scrutiny Committee.

Prioritisation Framework for Traffic and Road Safety – Update on Progress

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to update the Committee on the progress being made in regard to the development of a prioritisation framework for traffic and road safety, following consultation with the Committee on 7th November, 2011. The report was supported by an up-to-date, detailed verbal update on the progress of the framework by Adam Clelland, Network Management Manager (Strategy).

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Clelland advised Members that critical decisions had been made from the information gathered from the November meeting of this Committee and there was an opportunity to refine elements.

There was a need to collect more information with the intention to issue a consultation document to a wider audience and citizens' panel. If we measured every scheme against the three determined elements, funding should be more accessible.

The Chairman commented that he believed this type of scoring process would provide greater justification and clarity in determining approval/rejection of Members funding requests and would like to see more of this process.

Mr. Clark commented that mapping this way does keep the process simple and allows for Members prioritisation on different issues and wished to congratulate Mr. Clelland on the work he was carrying out.

The Chairman agreed that this was a complex matter but keeping the scoring simple would help a great deal.

6. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Committee considered the information provided within the report and the verbal update given at the meeting, and
- (ii) the Committee agree to receive further updates as to the progression of the prioritisation framework for traffic and road safety.

Work Programme 2011-12

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which was attached for Members' information, the current Work Programme for the Committee's work during the 2011-12 Council Year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

7. RESOLVED that Members noted the information contained in the Work Programme.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1st January 2012 – 30th April 2012

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive Forward Plan for the period 1st January 2012 – 30th April 2012 which related to the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

In relation to decision 01555 of the Forward Plan, Councillor Porthouse commented that we should be looking at Bio fuels.

Mr. Clark advised that the life cycle of Bio fuels was under significant scrutiny so consideration would be given to them once that debate was carried out.

Councillor A. Wright commented that Bio fuels were the route to proceed down but only once they became sustainable.

Councillor I. Richardson enquired as to how they planned to economise the refuse routes.

Mr. Clark advised that they were carrying out an exercise at the moment using route planner software and a consultation on proposed changes would be sent to Members.

Councillor I. Richardson queried if the refuse routes were regularly looked at.

Mr. Clark advised that they had just obtained the software and a shake up of the routes had been performed when the blue bins were introduced but now there was a need for a wholesale review.

8. RESOLVED that the Committee had considered the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1st January 2012 – 30th April 2012.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

(Signed) G. MILLER,
Chairman.