

At a meeting of the ENVIRONMENTAL AND PLANNING REVIEW COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on MONDAY, 10th NOVEMBER, 2008 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Kelly in the Chair

Councillors Ball, I. Cuthbert, E. Gibson, D. Richardson, Wakefield, Whalen, Wood, A. Wright

Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Miller, Scaplehorn and Tye.

Also Present

Councillor Tate

Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th October, 2008

Councillor Wakefield explained that the point he had made regarding the impact of development was that, in the view of developers, if there was development at Fence Houses then there would need to be a development of facilities which would detract from the city centre and would be subject to cross border use with County Durham. If there was development of facilities at Easington Lane this would be an advantage to the city and there was no mention of cross border use with County Durham despite both areas being near the border.

Burney Johnson, Head of Transport and Engineering, advised Members that the vacant Travel Plan Officer post had been filled by Diane Vicary.

With regards to consultancy costs for wind turbines and wood processing, Jim Gillon, Sustainability Co-ordinator, advised that the costs would be £30,000 rather than the recorded £650,000.

Councillor I. Cuthbert advised that since the previous meeting there had been an agreement between Nexus and Go North East to continue running route 73 through Teal Farm.

Mr Johnson expanded on the information given previously, and explained that the design life for tarmac was 40 years and that with normal use roads were resurfaced after 20 years. In practice roads were resurfaced according to condition rather than age.

Mr Johnson advised that footpaths were included in the inspections of reinstatement works.

David Giblin, Planning Implementation Manager, advised that the consultancy on the Design Supplementary Planning Documents had cost £1567 in staff time.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

Item 4 – Climate Change Action Plan for Sunderland and Associated Strategic investment Plan Projects

Councillor Kelly declared a personal interest in the item as he was employed in the industry.

Item 6 – Parking Services Annual Report 2007/2008

Councillor D. Richardson declared a personal interest in the item as a Blue Badge holder.

Item 8 – Castletown Masterplan

Councillor I. Cuthbert declared a personal interest in the item as an employee of one of the consultees.

Item 9 – Request for Inclusion of an Item on the Agenda – Kerb It Recycling Scheme

Councillor I. Cuthbert declared a personal interest in the item as his wife and a colleague had been mentioned in the report.

Climate Change Action Plan for Sunderland and Associated Strategic Investment Plan Projects

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which allowed Members to consider the report to Cabinet from the Director of Development and Regeneration and to consider the proposed citywide Climate Change Action Plan.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Jim Gillon, Sustainability Coordinator, presented the report and welcomed questions and comments from Members.

Councillor Wakefield asked where the 17 percent reduction in methane emissions from landfill domestic waste came from as the majority of recycled waste did not generate methane. Mr Gillon advised that the proportion of biological matter was about 68 percent and landfill emissions were being captured to generate electricity.

Councillor Wakefield noted that his understanding was that the landfill engines were not operating fully. Mr Gillon advised that he had been told that part of the site had been capped and was collecting methane. Keith Lowes, Head of Planning and Environment, agreed to investigate this issue and respond in writing.

Councillor I. Cuthbert congratulated Jack White on being named the North East Climate Change Champion. He also commented that, while no-one would oppose the idea of renewable energy schemes, once a location had been decided there would be the possibility of complaints.

The Chairman advised that sites were being investigated but that the information was commercially sensitive and it was therefore difficult to comment.

In response to a question from Councillor I. Cuthbert regarding the replacement of domestic boilers, Mr Gillon advised that the Building Regulations required that, as and when boilers were replaced they were replaced with modern, efficient condensing boilers.

Councillor I. Cuthbert asked about the progress being made in obtaining support from the commercial sector to reduce carbon emissions. Mr Gillon noted that a lot of work was required in order to secure the commitment of the sector. It was important to make people fully aware of our commitments to reduce carbon emissions. Mr Gillon advised that the aim of the campaign would be to see a reduction of 10 percent in 5 years. Nissan had achieved the targets, while Lloyds TSB had set targets of reducing emissions by 30 percent in 15 years.

In response to Councillor I. Cuthbert, Mr Gillon advised that Biofuel sources were being reviewed and that there were caps on the amount of Biofuel that

could be grown on land used for food. Councillor A. Wright advised that there were also problems associated with the storage of biofuels.

Councillor I. Cuthbert then advised that he was glad to see the EUROCITIES Declaration on Climate Change provided guidelines rather than rules and that he hoped the authority would implement the guidelines in an appropriate way. He also advised that the Top Up grants for businesses seemed small and suggested that it may be better to give fewer organisations more cash. Mr Gillon advised that the level of grant was advised by the Business Centre managing the scheme. However, the scheme was a pilot and its effect would be monitored.

Regarding the Tyne and Wear Local Transport Plan, Councillor I. Cuthbert expressed surprise that Trains and the Metro had not been mentioned, commenting that cycling was not always easy especially for travelling to work as few firms provided changing and showering facilities. Mr Gillon advised that the trains and the Metro should have been included and the Plan would be amended to reflect this. The general impact and benefits of cycling had been looked at.

The Chairman asked whether the effectiveness of the Top-Up grants was being analysed. Mr Gillon advised that this was the case and information was received from the businesses involved.

In response to a request from the Chairman, Mr Gillon agreed to provide annual feedback reports to the Committee.

In response to a query from the Chairman regarding engagement with private landlords, Mr Gillon advised that he was aware that it could be difficult to engage with private landlords and that schemes, including tax breaks, were in place; he also advised that home owners were being targeted.

2. RESOLVED that the report be considered and noted and the Committee receive annual feedback reports on the progress being made on the Climate Change Action Plan.

Sunderland Parking Enforcement Consultancy Review

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which allowed Members to consider a report to Cabinet from the Chief Executive (Acting) and feedback on the outcome of the Sunderland Parking Enforcement Consultancy Review.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

In response to a question from Councillor Wakefield; Mr Rayner, City Solicitor, advised that there had been an application for a Judicial Review of Sunderland's Parking Enforcement although the grounds for the Review were not covered by this report and, subject to any issues raised by Members there

would be no prejudice to the potential hearing caused by Members receiving the report. He would keep the position under review during consideration of the item.

Burney Johnson, Head of Transport and Engineering, presented the report.

Councillor Wood commented that he welcomed the report and the message that the service was now fit for purpose. It had taken a lot of work to get to the position as previously the standard of service was not as expected. Councillor Wood referred to the considerable cost involved in rectifying the system in terms of employing consultants, rewriting TPOs, new signs and the cost of other work that had been delayed. Councillor Wood asked how long it would be before the service was fully staffed as enforcement was essential.

Mr Johnson advised that the full complement of Officers was 15 and that there had recently been recruitment of additional officers so there was a full complement of staff. However the new staff would take up to three months to start while Criminal Records Bureau checks being carried out. He also advised that staff turnover was a problem and measures were being put in place to combat this.

Councillor Wood then asked when the additional evening and Sunday patrols would be deployed. Mr Johnson advised that there was the issue of having enough officers and the Terms and Conditions of employment included a requirement to work unsocial hours.

Councillor Wood queried when the Council CCTV cameras would be linked to the Police control room. Earl Belshaw, Parking Services Team Leader, advised that the Police were reluctant to link the cameras to their control room but that there was a link between the Police and Council control rooms.

In response to a query from Councillor Wood regarding the fines imposed, the Chairman advised that the Council had decided on the lower level of fines to allow people 'breathing space'. Mr Johnson added that he was not aware of any plans to change the fines to the higher band.

Mr Johnson, in response to Councillor Wood, advised that the current Business Process Re-engineering work would be completed by October 2009.

Councillor Wakefield asked whether refunded Penalty Charge Notices were included in the 11,603 issued in 2007/08. Mr Johnson advised that the figure did include refunded tickets and added that sometimes the machines issue tickets with incorrect details. In this situation the Officer would withdraw the ticket and issue a replacement. The committee requested clarification of the figures provided for the number of PCNs issued in each Beat and Earl Belshaw agreed to circulate a revised table.

Councillor I. Cuthbert advised that maintenance of lines and signs was important however there was a requirement to ensure that maintenance elsewhere was not neglected. In response, Mr Johnson stated that there was

support for integrating the maintenance of roads and of parking enforcement signs and lines.

In response to a question from the Chairman, Mr Johnson advised that the targets for the maintenance budget shown in the report were suggestions made by the author based on experience from other authorities.

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Parking Services Annual Report 2007-2008

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which allowed Members to consider the report to Cabinet of the Director of Development and Regeneration.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Earl Belshaw, Parking Services Team Leader, presented the report and welcomed questions and comments from Members.

In response to Councillor Wood, Mr Belshaw advised that this was the first annual report and as such there was no trend information available. He also advised that the figures for the Sunnyside Multi-storey car park looked low as they excluded visitors to the Limelight development; who received free parking; and also the car park was open overnight where occupancy was lower.

In response to a further question from Councillor Wood, Mr Belshaw advised that it was hoped that the overspend on car park operating costs would be reduced and more Civil Enforcement Officers had been employed. He also advised that the 69 percent of payments being received in Sunderland was higher than the national average of 60 - 65 percent. While the figure might appear low, this was because of appeals, discretion being used and the DVLA not having accurate information on all vehicles.

Councillor E. Gibson requested further information on the use of the mobile operator around schools. Mr Belshaw advised that the operator was sent to areas where there had been complaints and that there were rarely tickets issued; however the service was effective as the streets would quickly clear of parked cars. He added that anyone could request the mobile operator to visit an area however it was normally head teachers who made the requests.

In response to a question from Councillor I. Cuthbert regarding the occupancy of car parks Mr Belshaw advised that it was worked out using the chargeable hours and that if the car park was full for all of those hours then the occupancy would be 100 percent. Following further questioning from Councillor I. Cuthbert, Mr Belshaw advised that there were no figures available yet for the period April to September 2008. In response to a query, Mr Belshaw advised that Blue Badge holders would not receive Penalty

Charge Notices as long as the badge and clock were displayed correctly. There was a 15 minute grace period over the three hour time limit. Motorists relied on a wide range of mitigating circumstances. All appeals are considered on their own merits and the time taken investigating mitigating circumstances could range from 20 minutes for a standard letter up to 3 to 4 hours.

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and given consideration.

Civil Parking Enforcement – Options for Service Delivery

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which allowed Members to consider the report to Cabinet of the Director of Development and Regeneration.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Burney Johnson, Head of Transport and Engineering, presented the report and welcomed comments from Members.

Councillor I. Cuthbert commented that the change to in-house parking enforcement was welcome and that it should have taken place last year. He also stated that he hoped the problems with staff would be resolved. Mr Johnson advised that the Council had worked closely with NCP to ensure that the issues would be resolved.

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Castletown Masterplan

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) which advised Members of the responses received following public consultation and sought Members views on the amended Masterplan.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

David Giblin, Planning Implementation Manager, presented the report.

6. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Request for Inclusion of an Item on the Agenda – Kerb It Recycling Scheme

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) for Members to consider a request by Councillor I. Cuthbert for the inclusion of an item on the agenda of a future meeting.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor I. Cuthbert presented the report and requested that Peter High, Head of Environmental Services, present a report to a future meeting of the committee.

Following discussions it was:-

7. RESOLVED that the Committee receive a report on the matter at a future meeting of the Committee.

Work Programme 2008/2009

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided members with the current Committee Work Programme.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Rhiannon Hood, Assistant City Solicitor, presented the report.

8. RESOLVED that the work programme be received and noted and consideration be given to further proposals to be included on the Work programme.

(Signed) J. KELLY,
Chairman.