

At a meeting of the ENVIRONMENTAL AND PLANNING REVIEW COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on MONDAY, 21st APRIL, 2008 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Blackburn in the Chair

Councillors I. Cuthbert, Higgins, W. Stephenson, Wakefield, Wares, Whalen and Wood

Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors E. Gibson, Paul Maddison, Richardson, Tate and Tye.

Minutes of the last Meeting

The Chairman, in relation to the Level of Serious Accidents and Fatalities report, asked whether there had been any progress on the Citywide Speed Limit review.

Allan Calvert, Traffic Manager stated that the review had now been completed.

Councillor Wood asked when the results of the review would be seen.

Mr Calvert advised that the results would be published once the information had been analysed.

The Chairman commented on the rate of pedestrian casualties and asked whether any safety programmes were being developed and whether there were any proposed dates for implementation.

Mr Calvert stated that the programme was still being developed and was being built around the information available with an expected timescale of approximately 4 to 5 weeks.

The Chairman asked whether there were any proposed schemes for the physical control of bus lanes.

Mr Calvert advised that there was nothing planned and that different schemes were being reviewed and that there was no proposed timescale.

The chairman then asked whether there had been any information found in relation to the differences in rates of second speeding offences between those fined and those who attended speed awareness training.

Mr Calvert stated that he had looked at the research on the issue; however there was no conclusive evidence available at the time.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the committee held on 17th March, 2008 be confirmed and signed as a correct record

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Performance Report 2007/2008 (3rd Quarter Position – April to December 2007) – Strategic Priority – Attractive and Accessible City

The Director of Community and Cultural Services, Director of Development and Regeneration and the Deputy Chief Executive submitted a joint report (copy circulated) which provided Members with a position statement with regards to key performance indicators and risk areas across the Council for the period April to December 2007.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor Wood commented on the Management of Household Waste and asked how the future targets compare with past targets.

Peter High, Head of Environmental Services, advised that the targets were established through the waste strategy and that by 2015 the target would be 45% with a target of 50% by 2020.

Councillor Wood then commented that there had been a comparative decline in performance, with other authorities having improved faster and asked about future progress on plastic and cardboard recycling.

Mr High replied that the figures were at the third quarter not the year end and that the total tonnage of waste for the year was less than the previous year and that plastic and cardboard recycling was accommodated in the approach.

Councillor Wood then asked whether there had been any prosecutions for graffiti.

Mr High stated that he was not aware of any prosecutions by the police and that the council was in the process of implementing a system of Fixed Penalty

Notices although for penalty notices to be issued; offenders would need to be caught in the act.

Councillor Wood then queried whether the trends for road safety in Sunderland were in line with the trends for Tyne and Wear.

Mr Calvert advised that Sunderland had been performing very well overall although the number of people seriously injured had increased.

Mike Lowe, Assistant Head of Performance Improvement, added that Sunderland was headed in a positive direction in relation to other Authorities.

Councillor I. Cuthbert commented on the statistics for fly tipping and asked what the changes to fly tipping had been.

Mr High agreed to find this information and provide it to the Members.

Councillor I. Cuthbert then commented on the number of planning appeals allowed and asked if there were any trends for why the appeals were accepted.

Keith Lowes, Head of Planning and Environment, stated that the approach to planning applications had not changed however the planning inspectorate was inconsistent with its decisions. The reasons for refusal of planning permission were required to be robust and based on National, Regional and Local Planning Policies and there were plans to get someone from the inspectorate to advise the planning department to help with improving the performance.

Councillor Wares stated that he had not been aware that black bags left next to bins for collection were counted as fly tipping and advised that there was a problem with fly tipping at the Sykes Factory at Toll Bar Road, Ryhope.

Mr High advised that new guidance had been requested from DEFRA as the previous guidelines had been ambiguous and that black bags left with bins would no longer be counted as fly tipping and as such the figures should decrease in the future. He also commented that the Sykes Factory was private land and as such the Council were not able to take action against fly tippers.

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and given consideration as part of the quarterly monitoring arrangements.

Study into Public Realm and Streetscene – Draft Report

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Members with the draft report of the study into public realm and streetscene.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor Wood asked whether all of the photographs in the report were of places in Sunderland as he did not recognise all of the locations.

Jim Diamond, Review Co-ordinator, advised that some of the images were of examples of best practice in other cities and that in the final report the pictures would be labelled.

3. RESOLVED that consideration be given to the draft report on public realm and streetscene.

Draft End of Year Report on the Operation of the Environmental and Planning Review Committee 2007/2008

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which allowed Members to review the operation and achievements of the Committee over the last year.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor I. Cuthbert commented that it was a good report and that he agreed with 99 percent of the report although he felt that scrutiny had been treated with contempt with regards to the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership Outline Business Case as the report had been submitted to DEFRA before Council and not all of the information was submitted to the Committee as the financial information was not provided to the Members.

The Chairman advised that the Committee was not meant to receive the financial information as this was discussed by the Policy and Co-ordination Review Committee.

Councillor I. Cuthbert then commented that there could have been a joint meeting of the Environmental and Planning Review and Policy and Co-ordination Review Committees to discuss the matter fully as there were reservations about how fully the matter could be scrutinised with the financial aspect being disconnected from the technological and environmental aspects.

Councillor Wood asked whether the Residents Parking Zones Proposals report would be presented to the June meetings of Cabinet and the Review Committee.

The Chairman advised that the Work Programme for the next Municipal Year had not been set however he anticipated that the report would be presented to Cabinet first.

James Diamond, Review Co-ordinator advised that it was planned that the report would be delivered as soon as possible.

Allan Calvert, Traffic Manager, stated that a feasibility report would be presented to the June Cabinet Meeting.

Councillor I. Cuthbert commented on the Leamside Line reopening feasibility study and stated that Frazer Kemp MP was also invited.

Mr Diamond advised that Frazer Kemp MP had been invited however he was unable to attend the April meeting.

The Chairman advised that Richard Thompson, the representative of Network Rail, also had difficulties with attending meetings on Mondays and as such it may be necessary to arrange an extra meeting of the Committee to enable Mr Thompson to attend the discussion of the item.

4. RESOLVED that:-

- (i). The report be received and noted;
- (ii). The operation, achievements and impact of the Committee during 2007/2008 be considered; and
- (iii). The issues raised be incorporated into the final report.

Action Plan for Scrutiny

The City Solicitor Submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with the current information monitoring the delivery of the Action Plan for Scrutiny 2007-2008.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor Wood asked what the total number of Council employees involved in scrutiny was.

Rhiannon Hood, Assistant City Solicitor, advised that 50 percent of her time was spent on scrutiny and that there was the team of Review Co-ordinators and six Democratic Services Officers as well as the administrative support.

5. RESOLVED that consideration be given to the actions taken towards meeting the objectives of the action plan

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance especially Councillors Higgins and W. Stephenson who were retiring from Council duties at the forthcoming elections.

(Signed) J. BLACKBURN,
Chairman.