

At a meeting of the ENVIRONMENTAL AND PLANNING REVIEW COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on MONDAY, 19TH JANUARY, 2009 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Miller in the Chair

Councillors Ball, E. Gibson, Kelly, D. Richardson, Tye, Wakefield, Whalen, Wood and A. Wright

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors I. Cuthbert and Scaplehorn.

Also Present

Councillor Tate – Chairman of Policy and Co-ordination Review Committee.

Minutes of the Meeting held on 8th December, 2008

In relation to the Item on Feasibility Study in the Re-opening of the Leamside Line, Councillor Wood asked for the Committee to consider what else could be done to present as strong a case as possible to bring forward investment.

The Chairman proposed that the issue be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration.

In relation to the Item on Study into Public Transport, Members' request for a breakdown of bus patronage figures from Nexus was still outstanding.

Jim Diamond agreed to chase up Nexus for the figures.

All references to Go Ahead Group should read Go North East.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 8th December, 2008 be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of the above amendments.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Performance Report – April to September 2008 (Progress in Implementing the Local Area Agreement and New National Indicator Set)

The Chief Executive (Designate), Director of Community and Cultural Services and Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a joint report (copy circulated) to provide Members with a Position Statement in relation to the first six months of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and implementation of the new National Indicator set during 2008/09 for Environment and Planning related services.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members raised the following queries:-

- In relation to NIS Ref. 195 in Appendix 1, can you expand on how the 4% figure was obtained?

Peter High, Head of Environmental Services, advised that the results came from a survey carried out in relation to improved street and environmental cleanliness which showed that 4% of sites were unsatisfactory.

- How were the figures obtained for NI 168 in Appendix 2?

Burney Johnson, Head of Transport and Engineering, advised Members that the principal roads where maintenance should be considered was calculated using a National Scanner System which measures road surfaces. 2% was the amount of network expected to be worked on.

- What will the National Indicator be for NI 189 flood and coastal erosion risk management?

Neil Cole, Planning Policy Manager, advised that the Directorate is putting together baseline targets and a strategy on adapting to climate change. The Directorate is also working closely with the Environment Agency.

The Chairman requested feedback on the issue at a future meeting of the Committee.

- Concerns were raised that the Performance Indicator Targets for repairing of street lighting were not being met.

Burney Johnson informed Members that he had informed Aurora of the results at a recent meeting and has asked for them to look into the matter.

Members' queries having been answered, Mr. Johnson introduced to the Committee Diane Vicary, Travel Plan Officer, who gave Members an outline of her duties and aims for the future.

Having thanked Ms. Vicary for her attendance it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Waste Management – Ancillary Procurements

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) to consider the report of the Director of Community and Cultural Services which was considered by Cabinet on 14th January, 2009.

The purpose of the report is to confirm revised arrangements for the ancillary contracts with the introduction of initial contracts for a term of three years from April 2010 with options for a series of one year extensions thereafter (prior to the award of contracts for the previously agreed periods); and to seek approval to subject those initial contracts to a competitive tendering exercise.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Peter High, Head of Environmental Services, presented the report and informed Members that the rationale behind the report was to look at how we might collect recyclables in the future. The potential for a one stop facility, reducing vehicles on the road and the financial implications, would also be considered.

As the three authorities all have different termination dates on their current contracts, a transitional arrangement would be put in place.

Members raised the following issues:-

- Would the new contract be put out to tender?

Mr. High advised that an opportunity for tender would be available in 2010.

- Would there be a minimum quantity requirement on landfill attached to the contract?

Mr. High advised that there would be more waste taken during the interim period and then whatever waste was left would be included under future arrangements.

- With the current downturn in recyclable goods, what impact will this have?

Mr. High advised that at this stage there was no great impact being experienced.

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Newbottle Village Conservation Area: Character Appraisal and Management Strategy

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) to advise the Committee of the responses received following consultation on the draft version of the Newbottle Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy and to seek Committee's comments on the revised document.

The Committee's comments would be reported to Cabinet at its meeting on 11th February, 2009 when approval would be sought for a recommendation to adopt the revised Newbottle Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy as formal planning guidance.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mark Taylor, Senior Conservation Officer, presented the report and was on hand to answer Members' queries:-

- Councillor Wakefield expressed his disappointment at the timing of the exhibition and informed the Committee he had received several complaints from residents.
- Councillor Wakefield enquired over the possibility of extending the consultation period as many Councillors were unaware of the exhibition.

Mr. Taylor advised that the directorate would look at better advertisement in the future. The consultation period had now expired but any comment from Members would be taken into account.

- Members expressed a desire to have a more accurate document submitted to Cabinet, including Ward Councillors' comments and asked what effect delaying the submission of the document would have?

Mr. Taylor advised that the submission of the document could be put back one month to include Ward Councillors' feedback and queries.

4. RESOLVED that the Newbottle Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy be amended to include Councillors' feedback and submitted at the next meeting of the Committee.

Sunderland City Council Local Development Framework: Annual Monitoring Report 2007/08 – Update Report

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) to update the Committee on the completed version of the Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report for 2007/08 which has now been submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Neil Cole, Manager, Planning Policy, presented the report and informed Members that the Strategic Housing Land Assessment was currently being prepared which would consider the longer term suitability of potential sites for housing developments.

The Assessment would also include a better understanding of how the 'credit crunch' would impact on the future delivery of sites.

Members raised the following issues:-

- Members expressed concerns that the Assessment would appear to indicate the 'green light' for all Planning Permission applications.

Mr. Cole advised that the Assessment gives no indication that Planning Permission would be granted without consultation and each application would have to go through due process.

Mr. Cole also stressed that the Assessment was only a fact finding exercise at the moment.

- There appear to be inconsistencies with Annex 1 and the cover report?

Mr. Cole informed the Committee that a number of new National Indicators had been introduced, in Annex 1 the Directorate had tried to show the complete picture, as best as can possibly give. As the National Indicators are new, the recordings don't always fit in with past results.

- Concerns were raised in relation to Houghton and Farringdon Police Stations being mentioned as possible development sites and the serious impact this could have on the City.

Councillor Tye advised that any proposal would have to be approved by the Northumbria Authority.

- Does the Framework identify scope for affordable housing?

The Council was currently looking at this issue as part of the Housing Market Assessment

There are plans for 388 affordable homes per annum within the next five years, which is under half of the total. The Council need to look at the financial implications this could bring and to make sure it does not adversely affect the housing market.

- There are people who do not receive Benefits and have to pay over the odds for private housing. Will this be taken into account?

Keith Lowes, Head of Planning and Environment, advised that the process is for the identification of land for future development sites and needs. If a development of houses were to go ahead, the Council could make a requirement for a certain proportion of homes to be affordable.

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Parking Issues Task and Finish Group – Update

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) to update Members on the work of the Task and Finish Group on parking issues affecting the City.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Wakefield presented the report and informed the Committee that the focus had been on Doxford International Business Park and the City Hospital.

A recent visit with colleagues to the Doxford International Business Park had brought up a few possible solutions.

A quick and cheap resolution would be to remove some of the parking restrictions in the area.

Consideration was given to offer the local businesses some kind of reduction in their Business Rates for use of their private parking areas, but this would have to be authorised by the Government.

In relation to the City Hospital parking issues, Councillor Wakefield informed Members that the hospital was being extended with the ICU expanding, resulting in an increase of staff, but a reduction in parking spaces.

There is scope to extend the Park and Ride service from Sainsbury's for staff.

Councillor A. Wright expressed a desire to see a similar type of Park and Ride service within the north side of Sunderland.

Councillor E. Gibson noted that the advertisement of the Park and Ride service in the past had been poor, but is glad to see that this has been rectified.

Councillor Wakefield advised that the Task and Finish Group were due to meet and hopes to produce a final report.

The Chairman thanked Councillors A. Wright, E. Gibson and Wakefield for their good work and continued efforts.

6. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted with a further report due before the Committee at a future meeting.

(Signed) G. MILLER,
Chairman.