

**At a meeting of the ENVIRONMENTAL AND PLANNING REVIEW COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on MONDAY, 15<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2008 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor Miller in the Chair

Councillors I. Cuthbert, E. Gibson, Kelly, D. Richardson, Scaplehorn, Wakefield, Wood and A. Wright

**Chairman's Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Ball, Tye and Whalen

**Minutes of the last Meeting**

Councillor Wood asked Burney Johnson when the report on the Speed Limit Review would be completed.

Mr Johnson, Head of Transport and Engineering, advised that the report would not be produced until there was an agreed set of recommendations and it was anticipated to be December when there was a programme of proposed schemes.

Councillor I. Cuthbert asked when the item on the Leamside Line would be coming to the committee.

Jim Diamond, Review Co-ordinator, advised that Bernard Garner, NEXUS Director General, had indicated that he was meeting the Minister and Frazer Kemp MP in October and therefore it may be appropriate for the item to be deferred until after this meeting. Unfortunately Mr Garner was unavailable for the November meeting but was available for the meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> December.

Councillor Wood asked whether Network Rail and Frazer Kemp MP would be attending the December meeting.

Mr Diamond advised that they were both unavailable however Network Rail had undertaken to forward a written report.

The Chairman commented that he was not happy with Network Rail providing a written report as he felt it showed the committee a lack of respect.

The Committee agreed that in the circumstances it was appropriate to consider the item at the meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2008.

Councillor Wood advised that in relation to the Quality of Local Bus Services item he had stated that costs had been rising in relation to industry.

Councillor D. Richardson advised that he had not received a response from Mr Hills or from Mr Hughes in relation to the Link Up Bus Services. Mr Diamond agreed to follow this up.

Councillor A. Wright advised that he had stated that passenger carrying had increased by 12 percent.

With regards to the working group on parking issues Mr Diamond advised that the first meeting had been held and that the next meeting would be held on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> September.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of the amendments detailed by Councillors Wood and A. Wright.

### **Declarations of Interest**

#### **Item 8 – Quality of Local Bus Services**

Councillor Wood declared a personal interest as a member of the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Authority.

Councillor A. Wright declared a personal interest as an employee of the Go Ahead Group.

### **Reference from Cabinet – 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2008**

#### **Sunderland City Council Local Development Framework: Housing Allocations Development Plan Document (HADPD) Issues and Options: Report on Public Consultation**

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which sought advice and consideration from Members on the report to cabinet of the Director of Development and Regeneration.

(For copy report – See original minutes)

Neil Cole, Planning Policy Manager, presented the report and welcomed questions and comments from Members.

Councillor Wakefield stated that the comments for Fence Houses and Easington Lane appeared to contradict each other in relation to Cross Border and Periphery development.

Mr Cole advised that the report reflected the suggestions made by respondents during consultation.

Councillor I. Cuthbert commented that there were plenty of Brownfield sites in the city and that Greenfield sites should only be used for development as an absolute last resort. He also commented that there needed to be flexibility over development in back gardens rather than a blanket restriction. He was happy to see consultation on the City Centre area although there was an overreliance on development of apartments. He also asked how additional housing in Washington would be at the expense of housing in Fence Houses and commented that he was pleased to see Washington as a potential location for executive housing.

Mr Cole advised that developers viewed the Shiney Row and Fence Houses areas as being an overspill of Washington and indeed that promotional information showed Fence Houses as being part of Washington.

The Chairman echoed Councillor I. Cuthbert's view in relation to the development of apartments in the City Centre. He also advised that he was delighted to see in writing that there was a need for a rail link to Washington. Additionally he raised concerns that if employment land was used for housing then there would be no way of using the land for employment purposes in the future.

Mr Cole agreed with the Chair's concerns and advised that developers had been asked to come forward with their sites and that consultation had taken place with a citywide employment review looking at possible improvements to employment sites and relocation of sites if necessary.

2. RESOLVED that the comments made be passed to Council for consideration.

#### **Reference from Cabinet – 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2008**

#### **Sunderland City Council Local Development Framework: Development Plan Document (DPD) Preferred Options: Report of Public Consultation**

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)

Neil Cole, Planning Policy Manager, presented the report and welcomed comments from members.

Mr Cole advised that the independent inspector was the Planning Inspectorate in response to a question from the Chairman.

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

### **Performance Report and Value for Money Assessment 2007/2008**

The Chief Executive (Acting), City Treasurer, Director of Development and Regeneration and Director of Cultural and Community Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided members with an overview of the Value for Money Self Assessment.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Mike Lowe, Assistant Head of Performance Improvement, presented the report and welcomed questions and comments from members.

Councillor Wood stated that he hoped to see an improvement in the satisfaction levels for cycle routes in the future.

Councillor I. Cuthbert added that there was a perception that the City Centre and the area around the end of the Coast to Coast route got more attention than the cycle paths in other areas and that around the borders of the city the cycle paths were atrocious. He also asked whether the Local Transport Plan was going to come to the Review Committee.

Peter High, Head of Environmental Services, advised that SIP maintain cycle ways and there are clean-up operations throughout the City not just in the centre. With regards to the Local Transport Plan he advised that it had been agreed by Cabinet and that it was not envisaged that it would come to the Committee.

Councillor Wood asked whether all back streets in the City had been illuminated in the Back Street Lighting Programme.

Burney Johnson, Head of Transport and Engineering, advised that the programme had been completed however he could not promise that all back streets had been illuminated.

Councillor I. Cuthbert advised that he was aware of problems with Aurora regarding maintenance.

Mr Johnson stated that reinstatement works and maintenance were being investigated and that there was a seven day target for responding to lighting failure and that the average time taken was 6.7 days. He also reassured the Members that when the targets were not met he was personally following up the issues.

The Chairman considered that this was an issue of major concern with residents.

Councillor Wood asked Mr Johnson to define “Traffic Sensitive Roads”.

Mr Johnson stated that they were crucial bridging points where there were no alternate routes and that measures were taken to ensure that no work was carried out during the peak hours on these roads.

Councillor I. Cuthbert commented on the improvements made in improving the planning service and the additional resources that had been directed to the function. He queried whether there would be a reduction of costs in the future.

Keith Lowes, Head of Planning and Environment, advised that it was important that the efforts in improving the service continued. There had been a reduction in planning applications as a result of the "credit crunch".

Councillor I. Cuthbert then commented that the satisfaction levels for the price of car parks was low.

Mr Johnson advised that Sunderland benchmarked favourably compared with other authorities and that the benchmarks continue to be monitored.

The Chairman noted that the overall improving trend was more important than the low satisfaction level.

Councillor I. Cuthbert then stated that it was good to see an increase in recycling and suggested that recycling centres would be better village based rather than central. He also advised that the time taken to clean graffiti was pleasing however there was only a small proportion of graffiti which was on property controlled by the Council. Residents were frustrated due to the time taken to remove graffiti from private property.

The Chairman agreed with Councillor I. Cuthbert's concerns over graffiti and stated that he had waited weeks for graffiti to be removed from an electricity substation.

Councillor I. Cuthbert commended the reduction in the numbers of Killed and Seriously Injured in road accidents. However, the current method of allocating resources to improve road safety failed to take account of the potential for accidents to occur.

Mr Johnson advised that the forecast for the year was for the number to be half that of last year. Officers were currently working on a draft policy that would review the prioritisation approach currently used.

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

## **South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership Evaluation Methodology and PFI Update**

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

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Peter High, Head of Environmental Services, presented the report and welcomed comments from Members.

Councillor I. Cuthbert asked for assurance that there would not be a commitment to an expensive long term PFI without considering the other options available. He also advised that there was a lot of new technology emerging and if there was a long term contract in place it could cause problems if better technology emerged. He also stated that there needed to be consultation on the potential locations before the planning stage.

Mr High advised that the PFI would be technology neutral and would provide a £5.5million rebate towards the cost each year. He stated that in the short to medium term there was a commitment to increasing recycling to 50 percent but that there was a need to look to the long term and that elsewhere authorities were engaging in long term contracts. With regards to the potential sites he advised that work was still ongoing and that there was an expectation that there would be a solution ready in early 2009.

The Chairman advised that he had visited a Mechanical Reclamation Centre which collected the waste from East London and that residual waste was the biggest problem with over 9000 tons on the site. However it was stored in a controlled manner. He also advised that there were multiple alternative technologies available.

5. RESOLVED that the report be given consideration and that the progress of the strategy be monitored.

### **Change in the order of business**

It was agreed that Item 8 – Quality of Local Bus Services and Item 9 – Transport Policy: Steps to Improve Bus Services – Feedback from Seminar be read as one item.

## **Quality of Local Bus Services**

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided members with the proposed remit of the study and the report of the Director of Development and Regeneration on infrastructure work being undertaken in relation to bus services. The report also provided feedback from a recent Transport Policy seminar held in London.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Jim Diamond, Review Co-ordinator and Burney Johnson, Head of Transport and Engineering, presented the reports and welcomed comments and questions.

Councillor Wood expressed concerns that it was originally agreed that public transport would be studied however the report only looked at bus services.

The Chairman advised that it had been agreed that buses were the main problem which was why the focus was on bus services.

Councillor A. Wright advised that recently ten services had been cut due to falling passenger numbers.

Councillor I. Cuthbert commented on the introduction of bus stop clearways in terms of infrastructure work, and stated that while he supported them they could cause problems for residents who have nowhere else to park. He also asked what action would be taken against people who parked in the clearways.

Mr Johnson advised that it was accepted that they could cause a problem for residents and that if a petition was received then there would be investigations to try and find a suitable compromise. He also advised that it was difficult to get funding to provide parking and that Sunderland is one of the few Councils to consult over clearways. With regards to enforcement action he advised that there were 16 Civil Enforcement Officers who would respond to problem areas.

Councillor Scaplehorn asked whether the Washington Galleries Bus Station would be completed in the next month.

Mr Johnson advised that it was expected that this would be the case.

6. RESOLVED that the report of the Director of Development and Regeneration and the Feedback Report be received and noted and the Proposed Remit be given consideration and finalised.

## **Publication of the Regional Spatial Strategy**

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

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Keith Lowes, Head of Planning and Environment, presented the report.

Councillor D. Richardson asked whether the downturn in the housing market would be reflected in the proposals.

Mr Lowes advised that there were restrictions on borrowing and that the housing targets had been stretched. He also stated that house building was higher than average last year and that where there was already planning permission schemes would be completed.

Councillor D. Richardson then asked whether traffic problems had been considered with regards to the development at Rainton Bridge.

Mr Lowes advised that the original planning permission had stipulated that improvements would be required at the A19/A690 junction.

Councillor Wakefield asked if Houghton and Hetton were not part of Tyne and Wear as implied by the report, where were they. He also asked whether the pitches for Gypsies and Travellers were one caravan per pitch or multiple caravans per pitch.

Mr Lowes advised that Houghton and Hetton had been classed as part of the Durham Coalfields even although they were clearly part of the Sunderland Metropolitan area and he thought that in time they would still attract investment. With regards to the Gypsies and Travellers pitches he advised that each pitch was for several caravans with the RSS advising 19 caravans per pitch.

Councillor E. Gibson asked what size “small wind farms” would be.

Mr Lowes advised that they would be on a scale suitable for the local area and that they would be examined on a case by case basis.

Councillor Kelly commented that B&Q sold bolt on wind turbines and that many people in Washington had been told that it was unlikely they would get planning permission.

Mr Lowes stated that there were new regulations to be implemented in October 2008 which would show what could and could not be done and that restrictions on solar panels were being relaxed. However wind turbines were exempt from the relaxations due to the increased noise from the turbines.



Councillor Kelly then suggested that much of the energy needed for areas such as Fence Houses and Washington could be supplied by wind turbines.

Mr Lowes replied that there were targets to meet and that with the power produced at Nissan these targets were close to being met. He also advised that the strategic sites were few and far between.

The Chairman asked, with regards to the climate change policy what was meant by 'real progress by 2020' when referring to carbon dioxide emissions and asked what the council hoped to achieve.

Mr Lowes advised that this was government terminology and that the Council was originally looking to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 20% but now the targets were far more ambitious.

The Chairman also expressed his pleasure at seeing the targets for recycling being increased. He also commented on the house demolition exceeding the house building and asked what the net movement in level of housing stock was.

Mr Lowes advised that 6,000 houses had been demolished and that there was 20,000 new builds required.

7. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

(Signed) G. MILLER,  
Chairman.