

**At an Extraordinary Meeting of the ENVIRONMENT AND ATTRACTIVE CITY
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on MONDAY, 7TH
NOVEMBER, 2011 at 5.30 p.m.**

Present:-

Councillor Miller in the Chair

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

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Lauchlan, I. Richardson, Scott and Tye.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest.

Prioritisation Framework for Traffic and Road Safety

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report and powerpoint presentation (copies circulated) informing Members that due to the current financial circumstances in which the Council and other Local Authorities operate, there was a greater imperative than ever for the Council to target the reduced resources available for Traffic and Road Safety on those initiatives that have the most positive impacts. The meeting was arranged to discuss the development of a prioritisation framework to assist in the allocation of resources and managing project delivery.

(For copy report/presentation – see original minutes).

Les Clark, Head of Street Scene provided the introduction to the report, advising that the purpose was to get the Committee's involvement in the development of the framework in respect of changes to the Road Network and where resources would need to be directed.

Mr. Clark commented that due to cuts and a 40% reduction in budget, there was a need to focus on the best possible schemes that would make the most difference. It was also important to obtain Members opinions to feed into the process for a balanced approach within the framework.

Mr. Clark also commented on the need for unequivocal decision making in a timely manner and to provide the reasoning behind decisions. There was also a need to demonstrate how the schemes would fit under each priority.

Councillor Porthouse enquired if the LTP was funded on population and if it should correlate to the length of roads.

James Newell, Assistant Head of Service advised that the LTP was funded on population and that the revenue budget was allocated through the length of roads.

Councillor Porthouse commented that he was unsure if that was the most balanced way to allocate funds. Mr. Clark advised that he would look into providing an unequivocal answer.

The Chairman then introduced Adam Clelland, Network Management Manager (Strategy) who wished for the Committee's consideration over some of the projects the Authority delivers from the Integrated Transport Funds.

There was a short break so that Members could place the projects against the priorities that they believed were the best fit.

Mr. Clelland referred to the Potential Attributes in the powerpoint presentation and requested Members to rank the Top 5 and give any thoughts on possible omissions from the list.

Councillor Porthouse referred to the attribute of Speed Reduction and commented that he found it strange, Highways Engineers always wanted to reduce speed when there were instances where increases in speed would help the flow of traffic.

Mr. Clelland advised that the general perception was that reducing speed increased safety but Councillor Porthouse was correct in that there were occasions when an increase in speed was warranted.

Councillor Porthouse commented that he believed the A690 and other such areas needed to be looked at and reviewed so that alternative speed management could be implemented.

Mr. Clelland referred to the List of Potential Attributes which included Congestion Relief/Public Transport and there was a need to find the best point of equilibrium, so Members ranking the attributes would help Officers in addressing some elements of the issues.

Councillor A. Wright agreed that there was a problem with the A690, which resulted in consequences for the surrounding roads and this needed to be included in the list of attributes.

The Chairman commented that Network Management and Road Quality/ Maintenance of existing roads should be included on the list of Potential Attributes and that it should be altered to include Speed Management rather than Speed Reduction as Councillor Porthouse had a valid point that there may be instances where increasing speeds could be applicable.

Mr. Clelland commented that based on Members views of ranking the attributes, the clear winner had been Traffic Flow/Speed Management with no mention of safety, which was usually high up in the rankings. Mr. Clelland then briefed the Members on the scoring mechanisms and how they might commence the process.

Councillor A. Wright referred to the Simple Scoring Mechanism and enquired as to what set the standards as it appeared rather subjective and could differ from each Authority depending on their measurement of criteria.

Mr. Clelland agreed that the standards were subjective due to different political areas changing and it was difficult to have a national standard.

Councillor Porthouse referred to the fact the safety issue had not been highly ranked by Members and commented that he did not see the point of having the safest roads in the world if there were no jobs at the end of them and as far as he was concerned, employment was the main priority.

Mr. Clelland commented that he would take the point and that the safety record in Sunderland was fairly good but there was still the need to be mindful.

Councillor D. Richardson disagreed and commented that the roads had other uses at the end of them other than employment, such as travelling to holiday destinations and that they needed to be kept safe.

Councillor Porthouse clarified that his point had been, that without jobs, you wouldn't be able to afford holidays and have to use the roads.

Mr. Clelland advised that you could not bring on the economy without a decent road network.

The Chairman commented that he believed it would be dreadful if we sacrificed even one life due to insufficient road safety for the sake of employment and that it was a very awkward subject to tackle. The Chairman also commented that whilst road safety may not have been ranked top priority by Members of the Committee, he was sure it would be in the top five.

Councillor E. Gibson commented that she had ranked Speed Reduction under Priority 1 and felt that this was connected to addressing safety.

Councillor Heron commented that he did not always agree that slowing speed was safer in all instances.

Mr. Clark summed up the findings, advising that there were different conflicting views, which was why there was a need for a system which could balance all views.

The Chairman commented that it was a complex area that needed to be looked at and felt these meetings were very valuable but there was a need for further consultation. The Chairman also commented that there was a need for more Members to participate, to get more opinions and get a real weight behind the policy review to establish what is good for us and what is safe for us.

Mr. Clark advised that he would collate the findings from this meeting and come back to a future Committee meeting with recommendations and a view to broaden the scope and refresh the system regularly.

Councillor Porthouse agreed that only seven Members was a poor sample for consultation and suggested that community meetings be used to obtain a cross section of people's opinions also.

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

(Signed) G. MILLER,
Chairman.