

ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 JANUARY 2011 AT COMMITTEE ROOM III, COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE.

Present:

Cllr Chuck Berry, Cllr Rosemary Brown, Cllr Nigel Carter, Cllr Peter Colmer, Cllr Peter Doyle, Cllr Jose Green, Cllr Mollie Groom, Cllr Alan Hill, Cllr Chris Humphries, Cllr Tom James, Cllr Ian McLennan and Cllr Trevor Carbin

Also Present:

Cllr George Jeans, Cllr Jon Hubbard and Cllr Dick Tonge

120. **Apologies and Substitutions**

Apologies were received from Cllr Stephen Oldrieve. Cllr Trevor Carbin was the substitute on behalf of Cllr Stephen Oldrieve.

121. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 November 2010 were signed as a correct record with the following amendment:

The meeting concluded at 12:55pm

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 21 December 2010 were signed as a correct record.

122. **Declarations of Interests**

No declarations of interest were received.

123. **Chairman's Announcements**

A report had been requested by the Chairman to provide an overview of the work and deadlines to be met as part of the transformation of the waste service for the Committee's next meeting in March.

Members were reminded that a Special Joint Scrutiny meeting was to be held on 10 February at 10:30am at County Hall where Councillors would be given

the opportunity to consider the proposed budget for 2011/12 prior to its submission to Full Council on 22 February.

124. **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

125. **Budget Monitoring**

Members were reminded that the responsibility for scrutiny of budget and performance had now been delegated to the relevant Select Committees following the disbandment of the Budget & Performance Task Group. Accordingly, the latest budget reports considered by Cabinet were circulated with the agenda papers for consideration. The Corporate Director, Neighbourhood and Planning, was in attendance to answer questions arising in relation to his directorate.

The current economic situation had impacted on the budget with specific note made to the development control, planning and building control areas where the number of applications received had reduced. This had not resulted in an overspend but the impact on projected income was significant. The income projected against local Land Charges was also affected. In order to minimise the effect on the budget vacant posts were not being filled within these areas and administrative costs reduced where possible.

A small budget existed within Economic Development for economic impact assessment use. Resource had been made available in staffing terms to consider the implications of local economic changes but further clarity would need to be sought from the Cabinet member in terms of future funding

The projected income in relation to car parking was also lower than initially projected. In order to minimise the budgetary impact, any associated costs (which related predominantly to staffing and maintenance) had already been streamlined.

The winter maintenance budget was also likely to be overspent due to the extreme weather conditions experienced. Although the expected usage of salt over the last decade had equated to approximately 6k tonnes, 13.5k tonnes of salt had been sourced from the beginning of the year with approximately 9k used to date. Members were asked to note that in addition to the costs associated with acquiring the salt there were also additional labour costs. Taking into consideration the quantities used over the last 2 years, the Corporate Director was likely to request that the standard requirement should be increased to 80% of actual use for this year of which the Committee agreed.

It was also understood that public bodies would no longer be able to charge for environment information requests and that this would have further budget implications.

The revised waste collection service would also affect the budget for 2011/12. Details of the anticipated costs associated with the revised waste collection service were currently being modelled and would be included within the budget for consideration by Full Council later this month. It was noted that although the revised service had been delayed following the Comprehensive Spending Review implementation was still expected to commence in 2011/12.

The benefit of standardisation of all contracts within the Council was expected to achieve significant cost savings to the Council.

Consideration was also given to the disposal of premises which were within the remit of the Workplace Transformation Programme. Housing Revenue was also discussed. Although this would not form part of the revenue budget, it was understood that calculations were likely to be made in line with the previous year.

Members were also reminded of the newly established Cabinet Capital Assets Committee which would meet regularly to discuss capital assets and where high level member overview and coordination of the capital budget would be undertaken.

Resolved:

To thank the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood and Planning for the update.

126. **Local Transport Plan**

The Committee had a long standing interest in the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and had considered the Car Parking Strategy at its previous meeting held in November 2010.

The Council had undertaken a consultation on the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan for 2011-2026 which, in order to adhere to the Council's statutory duty to produce a new Plan by 31 March 2011, had taken place between October and November 2010.

The Cabinet member for Highways and Transport and Principal Transport Planner – Transport Policy were in attendance to present a report and Presentation (which can be found attached to these minutes as [Appendix 1](#)) on the initial and general analysis of the consultation process.

Members noted that many respondents supported an improvement of the Trans Wiltshire rail route. Clarification was provided by the Cabinet member that

discussions had taken place to research this area further which had included discussions with Bath and North East Somerset (BaNES) in terms of potential partnership working.

The Committee discussed whether there existed potential for community based subsidies in replacement of existing services to allow individual communities the freedom to provide the most appropriate transport to meet local needs. The role of the voluntary sector was also raised as an area that could be further developed to help communities meet local needs.

In addition the implications of anticipated fuel price increases, the potential increase in internet shopping, increased numbers of employees working from home and the aging population were acknowledged as areas likely to impact on local transport provision.

Members noted that although the report emphasised the need to support the economy freight transport did not appear to be a high priority, although freight transport was a concern of many of the respondents. The involvement of those from the industrial community was also questioned where confirmation was provided that, although a good representation of responses had been received from this group, the overall response numbers could have been higher.

As the final draft document was to be submitted to Full Council on 22 February, members requested that a one-off exercise should be undertaken by the Committee to consider its content prior to its submission.

Cllrs Peter Colmer, Peter Doyle, Trevor Carbin, Ian McLennan, Alan Hill and Chris Humphries expressed an interest in attending. A date would be arranged following the Committee meeting with all Committee members and substitutes informed of the proposed dates.

Resolved:

To thank the Cabinet Member for the update and to agree that a one-off Rapid Scrutiny Exercise would be undertaken to review the final draft Local Transport Plan document prior to it's consideration by Cabinet.

127. **Renewable Energy**

This item was requested by Cllr Stephen Oldrieve for inclusion within the agenda papers following the Committee's previous meeting in November.

The Service Director for Economy and Enterprise was in attendance to present a report which was structured to provide an overview of the direction to be taken by the Council in relation to energy generation from renewable sources.

Members were asked to note that the Climate Change Team was now likely to be renamed the 'Energy, Change and Opportunity (ECO) Team'. This was supported by members who felt the name better reflected the work of the team.

In addition, members of the Committee were asked to consider the report provided by Cllr George Jeans following a wind farm site visit in Cornwall as provided with the Agenda under Item 9: Councillor Development. Due to the nature of the report it was felt that its contents would be better discussed under this item.

The Service Director confirmed that draft policies were currently being developed to support renewable energy development. These would be published for key stakeholder consultation and would form part of the Wiltshire Core Strategy upon completion. The Strategy would also be used within the development control process to ensure consideration was given to renewal energy at an early stage.

There was also a desire to ensure that the Strategy contained an appropriate framework to allow for community involvement. The development of a Renewable Energy Action Plan would set targets and expectations on what was to be delivered. The Plan would also cover opportunities already undertaken and those that were currently being researched.

In relation to potential renewable energy sources within Wiltshire, Appendix 1 of the report provided details of the study undertaken by Camco on behalf of the Council on the technologies that could be considered. Upon consideration Members of the Committee requested that further details should be provided on the wattage arising from the various technologies. The Service Director confirmed that this information would be sourced following the meeting.

Ensuing discussion commenced on the suggested technologies provided by Camco which included:

- Large Scale Wind
- Biomass
- Hydropower
- Solar Arrays
- Micro-renewables

Large scale wind power and biomass were both identified as obvious practical solutions most suitable for the area of Wiltshire although acknowledgement was given to the potential problems of site allocation and the need to ensure agricultural land was used for the most appropriate purpose.

Work undertaken by other authorities had been researched to ensure best practice. With this in mind, members felt that cross-boundary discussions with neighbouring authorities should be undertaken to explore potential collaborative partnerships that could result in cost savings to all parties involved.

Discussion included that the Regeneration South West paper, which had been published several years ago, may prove of interest to the Team as supporting documentation at the development stage of any Plans.

Members acknowledged that the energy plant situated at Slough was effective due to the size and capacity of waste received but that the costs associated for a new plant of a similar nature within Wiltshire would be significant and unlikely to prove practical due to a lower capacity need.

The use of solar panels was also recognised as a positive renewable energy source and that, where possible, Council owned buildings should be considered. The use of ground source heat pumps was also raised as a potential area to be investigated further.

Resolved:

To thank the Cabinet Member and officers for the update

To request that a more detailed proposal for developing the Wiltshire Renewable Energy Action Plan is presented to the Committee for comment once available.

128. **Task Group/ Project Board Updates**

Major Contracts Task Group

The approach to scrutiny of procurement and commissioning was being addressed by the Overview and Scrutiny Organisation & Resources Select Committee. The Chairman confirmed that the item had been included to raise awareness amongst members and to confirm that the report was expected to be presented to the Organisation & Resources Liaison Board at its next meeting in February. Following consideration by the Board, a further update was likely to be provided.

Resolved:

To note the report provided.

Gypsy & Traveller Project Board

An update report from the Board representative, Cllr Jose Green, was circulated at the meeting, a copy of which can be found [attached](#) to these minutes.

Clarification was provided that on 29 August 2010 Central Government announced that guidance outlining the Council's statutory obligations would be issued following its decision to revoke the Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites and Planning for Travelling Showpeople circulars.

As there was now no clear guidance on the statutory obligations for local authorities, it was proposed that no further work should be undertaken until such clarification was provided.

The Committee resolved to inform the appropriate Cabinet member of its conclusions and the Service Director, Strategic Services would be requested to provide an update on the latest position prior to any further discussion.

Resolved:

To note the update provided.

Housing Commissioning Board

The Board's Scrutiny representative, Cllr Ian McLennan, confirmed that since the Committee's last meeting two Board meetings had been scheduled. Cllr McLennan was unable to attend the first meeting and the second, which had been scheduled to take place in December 2010, had been cancelled.

129. **Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme provided.

130. **Date of next Meeting**

The Committee would next meet on **2 March 2011** and not 11 March 2011 as indicated on the Agenda.

131. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items for consideration.

(Duration of meeting: 10:30am – 13:15pm)

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