

Environment, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 14 September 2011

Present:

Mr A Byrne (Chairman)

Dr A Boswell

Mrs M Chapman-Allen

Michael Chenery of Horsburgh

Mr N Dixon

Mr P Duigan

Mr J Joyce

Mr M Langwade

Mrs J Leggett

Mr P Rice

Mr N Shaw

Dr M Strong

Mr J Ward

Mr A White

Non-Voting Cabinet Members:

Mr G Plant

Planning and Transportation

Mrs A Steward

Economic Development

Non-Voting Deputy Cabinet Member:

Mr J Mooney

Environment and Waste

Mr B Spratt

Planning and Transportation

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr A Adams (Mr N Shaw substituted), Mr T East, Mr M Hemsley, Mr B Iles (Mrs J Leggett substituted) and Mr R Wright.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2011 were confirmed by the Panel and signed by the Chairman.

3. Declarations of Interest

Mr Byrne declared a personal interest as a Member of the Police Authority.

Mr Joyce declared a personal interest in Item 11 as a Member of the Police Authority.

Mrs Steward declared a personal interest in Item 14 as she resides in the Brecks area.

4. Matters of Urgent Business

There were no matters of urgent business.

5. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

6. Local Member Issues/Member Questions

There were no local issues/member questions.

7. Cabinet Member Feedback on previous Overview & Scrutiny Panel comments

The annexed note (7) by the Cabinet Member for Community Protection was received and noted.

8. Scrutiny Forward Work Programme

8.1 The Panel received the annexed report (8) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development.

8.2 Members were advised that if they wished to propose any items for scrutiny they should contact either the Chairman or Sarah Rhoden direct.

RESOLVED:

8.3 The Panel agreed the Outline Scrutiny Programme as set out in Appendix A of the report, the scrutiny topics listed and the reporting dates.

9. Scrutiny of Broadband and Mobile Phone coverage for rural and urban areas in Norfolk – Progress Report

9.1 The Panel considered the annexed report (9) by the Chairman of the Scrutiny Working Group which provided an update on the progress made by the Scrutiny Working Group since their last update report to Panel in March 2011, and the next steps planned.

9.2 Members heard that the County Council was progressing the 'Better Broadband for Norfolk' programme under separate governance arrangements (approved by the Cabinet in July 2011). Therefore, the Working Group had proposed that the Broadband element of this scrutiny exercise was concluded and that work should focus on mobile phone coverage and the digital TV switchover, but retain a watching brief over Broadband as it was a closely related subject.

9.3 During the course of discussion the following comments were noted:

- Mr Duigan, Chairman of the Scrutiny Working Group, offered his congratulations to the Head of ICT Karen O'Kane and the Broadband Action Team who had helped to ensure that Norfolk was at the front end of the Broadband bidding process. Although the broadband element of scrutiny group's brief was now complete the group would keep a watching brief and receive regular updates. As part of the revised terms of reference the scrutiny group should now consider the impact of the digital TV on vulnerable people.

- Dr Strong said that she understood that the process of procurement needed to be moved away from the working group to a steering group. However the cross-party working group had proved its worth and following procurement she said there would be a need for considerable scrutiny as to how the authority should proceed. She suggested that 'Next Steps' paragraph 3.3 should be strengthened to state that following procurement the subject of Broadband would be returned to the working group.

In response, Ann Steward, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said that there was a role for all members to be involved in Broadband for Norfolk at the appropriate time. The need for further scrutiny by the Working Group would be kept under review, but at the current time there was no clear need for this.

- The Cabinet Member for Economic Development advised members that NCC had received £15,404,000 for investment in Broadband in Norfolk - slightly more than had been expected and she expressed her thanks to everyone involved. NCC would work closely with Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) and other authorities to take this forward and would also be working on demand stimulation. BT had been aware of the issues Norfolk faced and on 13 September BT announced a further nine broadband sites in Norfolk.
- Concern was expressed about the effects of the digital TV switchover on elderly people and it was suggested that carers and health visitors could be asked about the effects of the changeover on vulnerable people.

In response, members heard that an officer was undertaking work in this area and a Working Group meeting to be held later in September would receive information from representatives of the Switchover Help Scheme and Digital TV UK. An update report on the digital TV switchover could then be presented to a future Panel meeting.

RESOLVED:

- 9.4 The Panel approved the revised terms of reference for the scrutiny group, as set out at Appendix A of the report, which removed the Broadband from the scope of the exercise and included digital TV switchover.
- 9.5 The Panel agreed that the Panel should receive an update report on the digital TV switchover.

10. Environment, Transport and Development Department Integrated Performance and Finance Monitoring Report 2011/12

- 10.1 The Panel considered the annexed report (10) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development, which set out the progress against ETD's service plan actions, risks and budget.
- 10.2 During the course of discussion the following comments were noted:
- Mr Joyce requested updates on the following paragraphs:
 - paragraph 2.2 the reduction of the Park and Ride subsidy;

- paragraph 3.3 the increase of 5.2% in carbon emissions;
- paragraph 3.5.4 educational under pressure;
- paragraph 4.5 unresolved complaints, and
- paragraph 4.7 demand responsive/community transport. It was suggested that the recent article in the EDP could have led the public to believe that responsive/community transport was only for the elderly.

Paragraph 2.2 – in terms of managing Park and Ride budgets, NCC had reduced the costs of managing the sites and we are on track to hit the budget. However, income could be volatile and to reflect the level of attention required, the amber rating was considered prudent as it could change quickly. There was an unusual configuration of bank holidays through the April/May period which also impacted on performance at that time. The changes delivered so far reflected a major achievement and had helped to protect the service for the future.

Paragraph 3.3 - the figures shown were the year-end figures for 2010-11 which showed the direction of travel was upwards, predominantly because of the increase in floor space at the Hethel Engineering Centre and heating the Bus Station roof during a prolonged cold period when snow was on the roof which posed a health and safety risk.

Paragraph 4.7 – the article in the EDP concerning demand responsive transport would help to shift the public's perception of NCC's role; demand responsive/community transport was not just for everyone.

Officers agreed to provide written updates on paragraphs 3.5.4 and 4.5.

- Economic Development endeavoured to deliver within its budget and the Cabinet Member worked closely with the Economic Development team to pull funding in whenever possible.
- The Cabinet Member for Economic Development said that to encourage funding to Norfolk she had been in discussions with district councils concerning their priorities and had also attended meetings at Westminster to highlight possibilities. NCC had signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Skills for the Eastern Region. NCC was also in discussions with a Province of China and a delegation from the province would be visiting the region on Thursday 15 September. The Cabinet Member for Economic Development agreed to report back to the next Panel meeting on the outcome and opportunities following the Chinese delegation visit.
- The Enterprise Zone had brought many benefits to Norfolk and for the future the authority would be working closely with Essex and Suffolk. The Director of Environment, Transport and Development advised that the Government had capped the number of Enterprise Zones and currently had no intention of declaring any additional zones. However, the Government now intended to allow local authorities to retain growth in local business rates which would incentivise all local authorities to support local businesses. The Government propose that this additional funding would be split with around 80% being received by NCC and 20% being received by District Councils. The Government intention was that local authorities might want to borrow against anticipated future business rates

as a mechanism for supporting future business growth. The Head of Finance would be reporting to the October Cabinet. The Cabinet Member for Economic Development would chair the NCC/district authorities Member Portfolio meeting to help bring all this together.

- The 110.41% shown in the report for biodegradable waste land-filled against allowance was an early year estimate and the latest evidence was that the authority was now comfortably within this allowance; the next report would show a figure close to 92%.
- With reference to the authority's ability to sustain energy reduction, it had been recognised it would be a challenge to meet the target but it was anticipated that the authority was on track to achieve a 20% reduction.
- The 3rd River Crossing would prove to be good value for the County once it was established but blight payments had come forward more quickly than had been anticipated. The purchases represented assets which could be sold if the scheme did not ultimately progress.

RESOLVED:

10.3 To note the progress against ETD's service plan actions, risks and budget.

11. Department of Transport's 'Strategic Framework for Road Safety'

11.1 The Panel received and considered the annexed report (11) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development which set out the Government's new 'Strategic Framework for Road Safety' and the suggested County Council approach.

11.2 During the course of discussion the following key points were noted:

- The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation offered his congratulations to the officers concerned for achieving Beacon Status for road safety. Members agreed that this was a very good report and the officers involved should be congratulated.
- Speedwatch teams had reduced slightly from last year due to problems recruiting volunteers.
- Educational measures for people who had committed low level road traffic offences were available countywide.
- There were hard to reach groups, for example in high schools where the timetable did not allow officers to meet with individual year groups and there were difficulties in terms of take-up – this would be monitored.
- Motorcyclists, as a proportion of the total number of killed or seriously injured (KSI), had reduced from 32% to 25%.
- Although local parish and town councils could request changes to speed limits, NCC could not always agree to these requests. However, it was correct to state that everything NCC did on speed limits was influenced by local councils.

RESOLVED:

- 11.3 Members noted the Government's new 'Strategic Framework for Road Safety' and the Council's approach as described in the report.

12. Closed Landfill Updates

- 12.1 The Panel received and considered the annexed report (12) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development. The report built on the previous two reports in 2009 and 2010 which dealt with sites transferred from NEWS, and detailed the main issues that were occurring at sites which the County Council was liable for, and the works officers were progressing to proactively manage these issues.
- 12.2 During the course of discussion the following key points were noted:
- Docking did not have the capacity to generate power but officers were working with the Environment Agency to look at smaller systems.
 - NCC would continue to drive down the amount of rubbish sent to landfill and would use new technology to stop leftover rubbish going to landfill.
 - The Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste thanked officers for meeting required safety standards.

RESOLVED:

- 12.3 Members agreed that they wished to receive an update report during 2012.

13. Norfolk Concessionary Fares Scheme

- 13.1 The Panel received and considered the annexed report (13) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development which provided an update on the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme since April 2011.
- 13.2 During the course of discussion the following key points were noted:
- The Assistant Director Travel and Transport Services said that the authority had not received sufficient Government funding to deliver even the most basic concessionary fares scheme and planning would take place on the basis of an anticipated funding shortfall. Current projections showed an £11m cost but by law NCC must reimburse bus operators at the rate of 45p in the £.
 - The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation advised that the Government Policy on maintaining concessionary fares throughout the country meant that the authority had lost £4.2m on the funding scheme but had put in £3m as it had recognised that concessionary fares were of key importance to maintaining rural life. The Cabinet Member said he would continue to lobby to try to ensure that the county received what it was due. NCC investment in concessionary travel had increased by 30%.
 - This year bus operators had foregone £1.5m but it would be very difficult for them to agree to a fixed scheme for next year.

- With reference to bus operators using alternative fuels, officers liaise with bus operators about their longer term business plans. However, the Government had over-regulated the industry and fuel consumption had been increased in the new vehicle fleets to 6 – 10 miles per gallon to meet reduction in carbon requirements. It was difficult for bus operators to change their fleets overnight but across the whole of Norfolk no fleet was older than seven years.
- With reference to discretionary enhancements, no information was available on how much the continuation of the blind pass holder concessionary fare scheme had cost Cambridgeshire, Essex or Hertfordshire. The issue of concessionary fares would be received by Cabinet Scrutiny Committee at the October meeting. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation said that our legal advice was that it would be discriminatory for us to allow free travel to disabled working people only and we would be open to challenge if we treated this type of concession pass holder more favourably than other eligible pass holders.

RESOLVED:

- 13.3 Members noted the contents of the report and endorsed the approach prior to Cabinet approving a scheme in December 2011.

14. The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature

- 14.1 The Panel received and considered the annexed report (14) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development which set out details of the Government's Environment White Paper published in June 2011.

- 14.2 During the course of discussion the following key points were noted:

- The Brecks Countryside project core funding had been withdrawn but the Government White Paper would allow the project to apply for funding from central Government. The Cabinet Member for Economic Development said that living in the Brecks area she had recognised that projects such as this brought in important tourism opportunities.
- The Wood Fuel East Partnership was set up to secure a supply of wood, at the same time as bringing neglected woodlands back into management.
- With reference to ecological restoration, a working group had been set up which would discuss the formation of a Nature Improvement Area (NIA) with a range of people and organisations including the National Farmers Union and the Elveden Estate. The authority, through the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP), was also now in discussions about becoming a pilot for biodiversity offsets; Defra were hoping to tease out how this would work through the pilots.
- The Director Environment, Transport and Development said that members could be reassured that the planting of trees and hedges to reduce speed 'by playing with the driver's peripheral vision' was an initiative that was instigated by the Casualty Reduction Partnership.

- It was suggested that report was very aspirational and concern was expressed that the authority did not set itself up to fail; this would require a level of working not seen before and should be pitched at a level that could be delivered.
- Following the Big Conversation core funding had been withdrawn from the Norwich Fringe Project. However, the authority would continue to work with the project to help them undertake work and source alternative funding.
- In response to a question, it was confirmed that Broadland District Council was a member of the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership. The member expressed a hope that this would help protect, woods in Sprowston and Thorpe from development.

RESOLVED:

- 14.3 Members reaffirmed the strong link between environment work and creating a vibrant, strong and sustainable economy.
- 14.4 Members supported a New Anglia LNP, building on the foundations of the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership.

The meeting closed at 12.15.

Chairman



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Action Note

Environment, Transport & Development O&S Panel

Agenda Item	Report Title	Action
10.2	ETD Department Integrated Performance and Finance Monitoring Report 2011/12	Update on paragraph 3.5.4 educational under pressure Action: Complete - see Appendix A
10.2	ETD Department Integrated Performance and Finance Monitoring Report 2011/12	Update on paragraph 4.5 unresolved complaints Action: Complete - see Appendix B
10.2	ETD Department Integrated Performance and Finance Monitoring Report 2011/12	The Cabinet Member for Economic Development agreed to report back to the next Panel meeting on the outcome and opportunities following the Chinese delegation visit Action: Complete – see Appendix C

Appendix A:

Norwich University College of Arts (NUCA) decided at the end of the academic year 10/11 to move its operations out of EPIC and pursue a different approach. As a result, EPIC has been in discussions with a wide range of learning providers, including City College Norwich and Access to Music. Through one of EPIC's tenants, funding through 'Beyond 2010' has been secured, to allow short film courses to be run from EPIC.

Furthermore, the range of courses being run at EPIC by UEA continues to develop and grow.

Appendix B:

The number of issues raised from 1 June to 1 August is shown below. Please note that in 2009 and 2010 non reinstatement issues were higher as two dedicated officers were proactively identifying and addressing these types of obstructions. (Note 96% and 98% resolved respectively) .We will prepare updated figures for the October Cabinet meeting. In future, subject to Cabinet approval in October, we will be prioritising these issues and measuring against the service standards as set out in Appendix 2 of the July ETD OSP Norfolk Trails report - for example Priority 1 for Dangerous situations and Priority 5 for fingerpost problems.

Unresolved complaints in relation to the maintenance of Public Rights of Way

New issues raised 1 June - 1 August

Includes those reported by members of the public and officers

	Non-reinstatement (ploughing and cropping)	Natural vegetation overgrowth	Other (fingerposts/waymarking/ structures/fallen tree/ other obstruction etc)	Total
2011	56	152	145	353
Unresolved	54 (97%)	82 (54%)	123 (85%)	259 (73%)
Resolved	2 (3%)	70 (46%)	22 (15%)	94 (27%)
2010	144	55	157	356
Unresolved	3 (2%)	4 (7%)	37 (24%)	44 (12%)
Resolved	141 (98%)	51 (93%)	120 (76%)	312 (88%)
2009	84	56	140	280
Unresolved	3 (4%)	2 (4%)	23 (16%)	28 (10%)
Resolved	81 (96%)	54 (96%)	117 (84%)	252 (90%)

2009 and 2010 non reinstatement issues higher as two dedicated officers were proactively identifying and addressing these types of obstructions. (Note 96% and 98% resolved respectively)

Appendix C:

The Heilongjiang delegation visit on 30 June produced some potential opportunities for Norfolk, particularly for both Easton College and UEA who were able to promote their respective training offers. These interested the Chinese visitors a great deal. Other visits were made to Anglia Farmers, CTM Harpley Engineering, Norwich Airport (who were also keen to promote their engineering training capability) and the National Farmers Union. The delegation was very pleased with the programme and what they had learnt about Norfolk and extended a genuine return invitation to their province to further relations, including the potential to take a delegation to a major trade and investment Expo in June 2012. We are currently looking into the feasibility and value of this.