

## **Environment, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

### **Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 13 July 2011**

#### **Present:**

Mr A Adams	Mr M Hemsley
Dr A Boswell	Mr B Iles
Mr A Byrne	Mr J Joyce
Mrs M Chapman-Allen	Mr M Langwade
Michael Chenery of Horsbrugh	Dr M Strong
Mr N Dixon	Mr J Ward
Mr P Duigan	Mr A White
Mr T East	Mr R Wright

#### **Non-Voting Cabinet Members:**

Mr B Borrett	Environment and Waste
Mr G Plant	Planning and Transportation

#### **Non-Voting Deputy Cabinet Member:**

Mr B Spratt	Planning and Transportation
Mr J Mooney	Sustainable Development

#### **Other Councillors also present:**

Mr J Perry-Warnes  
Mr R Rockcliffe

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mr H Humphrey and Mrs A Steward.

#### **2. Election of Chairman**

Mr A Byrne was elected as Chairman for the ensuing year.

(Mr Byrne in the Chair)

#### **3. Election of Vice Chairman**

Mr R Wright was elected as Vice Chairman for the ensuing year.

#### **4. Minutes**

- 4.1 The Minutes of the Panel Meeting held on 16 March 2011 were confirmed by the Panel and signed by the Chairman.
- 4.2 Paragraph 8, Forward Work Programme: Dr Strong said that a number of panel members had expressed concern about the Flood Warning Direct (FWD) and she requested that Members be kept informed.

## **5. Declarations of Interest**

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

Mr Duigan declared a personal interest in Items 11 and 12 as a Member of Dereham Town Council and Chairman of the Heritage and Open Space Committee.

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

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

Dr Strong declared a personal interest as she is a Flood Warden.

## **6. Matters of Urgent Business**

There were none.

## **7. Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

## **8. Local Member Issues/Member Questions**

There were no local issues/member questions.

## **9. Forward Work Programme: Scrutiny**

9.1 The Panel received the annexed report (9) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development.

9.2 During the course of discussion the following points were noted:

- A Member visit to the Forestry Commission at Santon Downham had taken place.
- It was suggested that the Panel should look at volunteering as this is featured in a number of service transformation reports being presented. Members queried whether volunteers would have sufficient capacity to deliver elements that support the service transformation proposed. Members agreed that volunteering was a significant issue for the Council as a whole and would be a legitimate topic for scrutiny.

## **RESOLVED**

9.3 The Panel agreed:

- The Outline Scrutiny Programme (at Appendix A to the report), the scrutiny topics listed and the reporting dates.
- That the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee be requested to consider volunteering as an item for scrutiny.

## **10. Independent Panel on Forestry – Call for Views**

10.1 The Panel received and considered the annexed report (10) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development and the draft answers set out in the

report in response to the call for views from the Independent Panel on Forestry.

10.2 The Chairman welcomed Richard Brook from the Forestry Commission to the meeting.

10.3 During the course of discussion the following points were noted:

- Members agreed that a priority would be to remove the uncertainty on the future of the Forestry Commission to allow key investment by the private sector to take place. To this end the importance of having an independent Forestry Commission should be emphasised in the response.
- Concern was expressed that a set of rules would be introduced across the whole gambit of forests with no consideration of the needs of individual forests. Members were reassured that there was no question that there would be erosion into natural woodland; there was considerable expertise in place both within Norfolk County Council and the Forestry Commission to ensure this would not happen. At the same time it was not just about increasing the area of woodland but about bringing large areas of unmanaged woodland into management.
- Government regulations exist to ensure swathes of woodland would not be given over to wood-burning and the Forestry Commission also had a regulatory role in this respect.
- If the Forestry Estate were to be dissolved, the regulatory function would be retained under the umbrella of Defra.
- The Forestry Commission would restrict public access due to wildlife only on very rare occasions. However, restrictions had been imposed on one occasion because of a stone curlew nesting site.

## **RESOLVED**

10.4 The Panel agreed the draft responses as set out and that the thrust of the whole report should be to state that the Forestry Commission must be retained.

## **11. Norfolk trails: re-focussed, more targeted Countryside Access and Public Rights of Way Service**

11.1 The Panel received and considered the annexed report (11) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development.

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

- It was acknowledged that getting parishes and voluntary groups to take on a greater role in maintaining footpaths would be a challenge. The Council had written to Parish Councils and the responses received had not been as positive as had been hoped so officers would continue to work with Parish Councils to connect them with voluntary groups. It would be vital to set up the right framework to encourage local activity. Better success had been achieved with rambler and other community groups; Norfolk had almost 60 groups involved in managing the environment in 200 locations.

- The Director of Environment, Transport & Development confirmed that whilst the authority had a statutory duty to ensure footpaths remained available, for the future a targeted and focussed approach would be initiated. NCC intends to ensure landowners meet their obligations, and to promote the Norfolk Trails Package to local short distance users, whether for residents or visitors, as well as long distance users.
- The question was asked whether the Big Society model was good enough to deliver accessible footpaths and whether additional resources were available to do more. In response, Members heard that there was no doubt that this was a huge challenge and at the present time it was unclear whether Parish Councils and voluntary groups would step in. In terms of monitoring, there were systems already in place and at a future meeting Members would receive a progress report which would include monitoring and targets.
- It was suggested that volunteers worked to their own schedules and whilst they undertook a great deal of voluntary work they wished to be flexible in the times that they chose to volunteer.
- Land owners had a responsibility to keep their footpaths clear and if necessary the authority would initiate enforcement action on an owner to require them to clear pathways. Parish Councils know their local land owners and local people were in a better position to advise local parish councils when paths were not cleared so that they could negotiate with owners. Local Members were able to report directly to the County Council who could then assist parishes to keep pathways open. This was a measured proportionate response to the very tight funding problem. Members heard that Parish and Town Councils would not be paid to look after footpaths. It was suggested that whilst Parish and Town Councils would be happy to take on this responsibility, they would need funds to enable them to undertake this work as they would not wish to increase their precept.
- Thanks were expressed to landowners for taking on responsibility for the upkeep of footpaths.
- The Environment Manager, Gerry Barnes, agreed to circulate details of the membership of the Norfolk Local Access Forum to Members of the Panel.

## **12. Winter Service Review 2010/11**

12.1 The Panel received and considered the annexed report (12) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development.

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

- Last winter the authority had a full stock of salt and a further 48 gritting runs could have been undertaken had the authority had been required to do so. The PFI arrangement ensures that additional salt requirements can be met.

- Requests for salt had been received from other authorities at the height of the bad weather.
- Town Councils had expressed interest in undertaking gritting.
- Gritting bins have a telephone contact number attached to them so people can request a refill. It was suggested that an item be included in 'Your Norfolk' to clarify the legal implications of people undertaking gritting in their local areas. Members heard that advice, which had previously been circulated, would be re-circulated.
- The cost implication of carrying out the DfT's Salt Cell requirement was not known.
- Members credited the important job that the road workers undertook during last winter. As the staff employed to fill grit bins were also required to grit the roads it had been recognised that there was a resource implication here, so the department was looking at ways to resource grit bin refilling.
- It was noted that the snow ploughs used by farmers were a key element of overall winter resilience planning and it was suggested that the department should encourage farmers to attend to issues on local roads under the direction of the County Council.
- The Chairman, on behalf of the Panel, thanked everyone involved in gritting during what was a very harsh winter.

## **RESOLVED**

### **12.3 The Panel confirmed:**

- The current policy and priority network.
- The Integration of Norwich City routes and services for 2011/12.

### **12.4 The Panel noted:**

- The retention of the Salt PFI with its amendments until 2020.
- The continuation of the current grit bin policy to promote community self help.
- The continuation of the procurement of local farmers and ploughs to assist with network resilience in severe weather and asked officers to seek to increase the number of farmers involved where it was cost effective to do so.

## **13. New Funding Streams for Infrastructure**

13.1 The Panel received and considered the annexed report (13) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development. The report provided a brief overview of potential new funding streams for growth and infrastructure as referred to in the Strategy for Economic Growth (Report 14 of the agenda).

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

- It was essential for the authority to explore new sources of funding and to maximise opportunities to support growth. Therefore, we would work closely with district colleagues and other partners in order to secure the infrastructure funding and improvements the county needs to achieve this growth. In conversation with district colleagues there had been recognition that collaboration would be required but how this would happen had not yet been agreed. The Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP) - a pathfinder for the development of CIL - could share information about models for collaboration with district colleagues and other partners.
- The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) could be used to support the Northern Distributor Route (NDR) and the Greater Norwich Development Partnership had decided to consider how the CIL could be applied.

## **RESOLVED**

13.3 The Panel agreed to endorse the conclusions on funding streams that the County Council:

- Works closely with District Councils to prepare the CIL Charging Schedules and a Protocol for ensuring the appropriate support for services such as schools and transport.
- Engages with District Councils where they propose to investigate the potential for Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to fund infrastructure that will unlock growth in order to better understand the opportunities and risks offered by this funding mechanism.

## **14. Norfolk's Strategy for Economic Growth**

14.1 The Panel received and considered the annexed report (14) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development.

14.2 Fiona McDiarmid, the Assistant Director for Economic Development & Strategy, said that Ann Steward, Cabinet Member for Economic Development had asked her to stress to Members that this report was at a very early stage. The Cabinet Member had met with Leaders who were providing input for each area in Norfolk and an update report would be presented to the September meeting of the Panel.

14.3 Dr Strong gave an update on the County's successful bid to the Government's Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK). The Council would now move into procurement but because of the process of procurement the authority would be extremely careful that it did not favour any potential bidder; the contract would be awarded in the summer of 2012. As Norfolk was a complex county, in terms of topography, much consideration would be needed as to which broadband technologies would be used and where. Once the authority was in the final stages of awarding a contract to a successful bidder there would have a clear picture of what could be achieved, where, when and how. This process would take time as would discussion at all levels of local government. However the practical stage should see 30% of the project completed by the end of March 2013; the

following year 60%; the final 40% by the end of March 2015. It was intended that the whole of Norfolk would have 2mg and as much as possible of the county to have Superfast (Second Generation) Broadband averaging 30mg.

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

- The College of West Anglia had met the criteria to access the Norfolk Infrastructure Fund and the same criteria would be applied for any other such request.
- There was a commitment from the GNDP to support part of the NDR with a local contribution of £40m from the CIL. It is anticipated that the CIL could generate between £200m - £400m.
- The World Class Norfolk website was still available and an evaluation of the programme had been positive. The next phase was now being considered and a report would be presented to a future meeting of the Panel.
- It was acknowledged that the success of economic growth was predicated on new funding streams for infrastructure and that was why ensuring CIL processes were in place and working closely with district councils and the GNDP were so important. The authority was keen to emphasise the importance of the CIL and to work closely with district councils in planning.
- The CIL would not be a major factor in wind farm development.
- At a recent meeting Network Rail had advised that the Intercity Express Programme would cover capacity to Cambridge but would not cover the half-hourly service to King's Lynn. The authority was working closely with Network Rail to ensure the wider benefits for West Norfolk and the Fens; Elizabeth Truss would be seeking a ministerial meeting later in the year. The Director of Environment, Transport & Development agreed to provide a report for the Norfolk Rail Policy Group on this issue.

## **RESOLVED**

14.5 The Panel agreed to note progress on the economic growth initiatives and to endorse the further development of an economic growth strategy for Norfolk to include:

- securing funding for and improvement to the County's strategic infrastructure;
- working with both Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) covering Norfolk, and other partners, to promote infrastructure priorities and grow key sectors and skills; and
- greater support for business start-ups.

## **15. Update on Shared Transport Provision in Norfolk**

15.1 The Panel received and considered the annexed report (15) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development.

- 15.2 The Assistant Director Travel and Transport Services advised there was a shift in the delivery of transport in Norfolk. Some community transport schemes had been partners for more than twenty years and the authority was moving away from the traditional “grant-aid model” to a new partnering model, designed to build capacity and sustainability, reducing reliance on public sector funding. The authority aims to harness the existing resource and with the sector, plan more efficiently, working “smarter”.
- 15.3 During the course of discussion the following key points were noted:
- Concern was expressed that the proposals predicated volunteers taking over to fill gaps caused by cuts of £1M to local bus subsidies and it was suggested that the authority should not devolve its responsibility to the voluntary sector. Assurance was sought that once the services reduced there would be sufficient people in the volunteer sector to fill the gap. In response, Members heard that paragraph 1.2 of the report explained the various methods to be used to achieve a shift in delivery; some of which would require paid staff. Volunteers would be an important, but relatively small part of the network.
  - Funding was provided for journeys in rural areas and these would be maintained, however, people may be required to plan their journeys in advance.
  - In terms of the Council's statutory duty, the 1985 Transport Act requires the authority to provide socially necessary journeys. Consultation would take place concerning the impact of service reductions. The Council's transport strategy already encourages a “hub and spoke” approach, to use core radial routes interchanged with shorter distance journeys.
  - It was agreed that, appropriate performance measures would be identified to monitor the effects of changes.
  - There had been reports about problems with the travel booking system, with people having to book weeks ahead. Members heard that the DRT booking processes were being reviewed to ensure there were appropriate resources in place and customer feedback was being sought on the best way forward.
  - The Cabinet Member for Travel and Transport said that the authority was working hard to provide use a mixed economy approach for transport providers. There were financial implications and the authority was working closely with communities to provide solutions.
  - By commissioning more community and voluntary transport provision, any profits made could be ploughed back into the transport system to enable growth in networks and to provide a more sustainable model.
  - Members could be reassured that publicity would be made available to ensure that people in local areas were aware of any changes planned, and the department was working closely with staff in the communications service to ensure people were well informed. It was recognised that effective communication for service users was key and local members also had a role to play in informing local parish councils.



- Following a query over current Park and Ride (P&R) performance, Members were advised that journeys had increased this year and 3.2 million passengers had used the P&R service. This is believed to be a direct result of the fares strategy that changed last year. Fares were now actually cheaper per person than they were 3 years ago. A marketing campaign had been launched on 11 July which aims to increase the number of customers per site. Any revenue that can be generated from P&R can reduce costs for this service, and potentially could create a funding stream for other supported public transport.
- Postwick and Costessey P&R sites had been closed on Saturdays as they had not been well used and there was sufficient capacity at the other sites to meet this demand. The vast majority of people now used other P&R sites and passenger numbers were holding up. The department would continue to review the P&R sites and were anticipating the reinstatement of the Postwick P&R site on Saturdays over the Christmas period.
- The Cabinet Scrutiny Committee would be considering concessionary bus passes at its August meeting.

## **16. Highway Asset Performance**

- 16.1 The Panel received and considered the annexed report (16) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development.

### **RESOLVED**

- 16.2 Members noted the revised priorities for 2011 and 'Budget Need' for 2012/13.
- 16.3 The Panel agreed to support the proposed changes to the Transport Asset Management Plan for 2011/12 for approval by Cabinet and the County Council.
- 16.4 The Panel agreed the delivering schemes in partnership with parish councils as set out in paragraph 5 of the report.

## **17. Integrated Performance and Finance Monitoring Report 2010/11**

- 17.1 The Panel received and considered the annexed report (17) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development.

### **RESOLVED**

- 17.2 The Panel noted the progress against ETD's service plan actions, risks and budget.

## **18. Service Planning 2011-2014**

- 18.1 The Panel received and considered the annexed report (17) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development.

**RESOLVED**

- 18.2 The Panel agreed to support and to recommend the 2011-14 Service Plan for approval by Cabinet and the County Council.

The meeting closed at 12.40pm.

**Chairman**



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**Action Note**  
**Environment, Transport & Development O&S Panel**  
**13 July 2011**

Agenda Item	Report Title	Action
9.3	Forward Work Programme	<p>It was suggested that the Panel should look at volunteering as this is featured in a number of service transformation reports being presented. Members queried whether volunteers would have sufficient capacity to deliver elements that support the service transformation proposed. Members agreed that volunteering was a significant issue for the Council as a whole and would be a legitimate topic for scrutiny.</p> <p>At the 26 July 2012 Cabinet Scrutiny Committee members agreed to add this item to the Forward Work Programme.</p>
11.2	<b>Norfolk trails: re-focussed, more targeted Countryside Access and Public Rights of Way Service</b>	Membership attached as Appendix A.
14.4	<b>Norfolk's Strategy for Economic Growth</b>	<p>At a recent meeting Network Rail had advised that the Intercity Express Programme would cover capacity to Cambridge but would not cover the half-hourly service to King's Lynn. The authority was working closely with Network Rail to ensure the wider benefits for West Norfolk and the Fens; Elizabeth Truss would be seeking a ministerial meeting later in the year. The Director of Environment, Transport &amp; Development agreed to provide a report for the Norfolk Rail Policy Group on this issue (Wednesday 9 November 2011 meeting).</p>

## **Appendix A - Membership for new three-year Term of Office commencing August 2009**

### **Norfolk County Councillors (3 members)**

David Callaby (Liberal Democrat)  
Stephen Little (Green)  
Hilary Thompson (Conservative)

### **Representing Countryside and leisure users (5 members)**

Stephanie Howard  
Allan Jones  
Don Saunders (Chairman)  
Martin Sullivan  
Ray Walpole

### **Representing land owner/manager interest (5 members)**

Chris Allhusen (Vice-Chairman)  
Ross Haddow  
Thomas Love  
*Vacancy*  
*Vacancy*

### **Representing other interests (4 members)**

John Miles  
Fiona Prevett  
George Saunders  
Lucy Whittle