

Environment, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 January 2013

Present:

Mr R Wright (Vice Chairman)

Dr A Boswell	Mr P Rice
Mr B Bremner	Mr J Shrimplin
Mr M Chenery of Horsbrugh	Mr T Tomkinson
Mr I Mackie	Mr J Ward
Mr P Duigan	Mr A M White
Mr M Langwade	

Cabinet Members present:

Mr N Dixon	Community Protection
Mr G Plant	Planning and Transportation
Mrs A Steward	Economic Development

Deputy Cabinet Member present:

Mr J Mooney	Environment and Waste
Mr B H A Spratt	Planning and Transportation

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr A Adams (Mr J Shrimplin substituted), Mr B Borrett, Mr A Byrne, Mrs H Cox, Mrs M Chapman-Allen, Mr T East and Dr M Strong.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2012

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2012 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Vice-Chairman.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Items of Urgent Business

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation gave the Panel an

update on the gritting situation following the recent heavy snow fall. He said that the snowstorm was heavier than had been forecast and had also covered the grit that had already been spread on the highway which had then become compacted due to the volume of traffic, which had contributed to the traffic congestion experienced by road users.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation confirmed that the gritting lorries had been continuously gritting the main roads since Sunday night and he paid tribute to the staff and their efforts to keep Norfolk moving in the very difficult circumstances.

He reassured members that although one of the gritters had come off the road near Griston at 3am, he was pleased to report that the driver had not been injured and that another gritter had completed that particular gritting run.

All Members paid tribute to the drivers of the gritting lorries, and also to the volunteers who gritted the pavements. Members also urged all drivers to drive within their abilities, keep a good distance from the vehicle in front and to be patient when travelling.

During questions from Members, the following points were noted:

- The salt mixture did become slightly less effective as temperatures dropped but through continuous treatment of the network it was still an effective treatment during icy conditions.
- If any member of the public was seen using grit from the highway grit bins for their own private use, the incident should be reported to the police as it was a criminal offence.
- The A47 and the A11 were the responsibility of the Highways Agency for gritting and not the county council.
- Sufficient salt mixture was available to fill the 1300 grit bins across the county three to four times per year.
- As Parish Councils held responsibility for the purchase and siting of grit bins within their parishes, Members urged them to purchase salt bins and spreaders and to let Norfolk County Council know where these had been sited. Norfolk County Council would ensure the grit bins were filled with grit upon request.
- The gritting mix used by the County Council to treat road services was Safecoat which was a treated salt product, coated to give it extra sticking properties which meant it stayed on the highway longer and had more effective de-icing qualities. This was a British Standard approved product which was widely used across the country.

The Director for Environment Transport and Development (ETD) thanked Members for their support and praise for the gritting teams. He added that it

was a very difficult and demanding job and it was frustrating to hear complaints that the roads hadn't been gritted when they had. He added that, as with every winter, a review of how the authority had responded to the bad weather would take place later in the year, and if there were any lessons to be learned they would be identified and taken into account, although it was difficult to know what could have been done differently.

5 Public Question Time

No public questions were received.

6 Local Member Issues/Member Questions

No Local Member issues/questions were received.

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

The Panel received the annexed report (7) by the Cabinet Members for Planning and Transportation, Economic Development, Environment and Waste, and Community Protection, providing feedback on items discussed at Cabinet which had previously been discussed at an Environment, Transport & Development Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development informed the Panel that the Broadband Working Group had now been reconfigured to look at raising the profile of mobile phone coverage, although there would be no government funding for mobile phone coverage as there had been with the broadband initiative.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

8 Forward Work Programme: Scrutiny

8.1 The annexed report (8) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development was received by the Panel. The report set out the forward work programme for scrutiny and Members were asked to consider the Outline programme at Appendix A of the report, consider new topics for inclusion on the scrutiny programme and consider the feedback from the Member Working Group set out in section 3 of the report and provided verbally at the meeting.

8.2 Sarah Rhoden, Senior Business Support Manager (Development and Processes) updated the Panel on the work completed so far on the Snettisham Access Signs Working Group. The Panel noted that a stakeholder meeting had been held on 8 January 2013 which had proved very positive. Everyone who had attended the meeting showed a common willingness to resolve the problem.

Officers had been requested to design some potential new signs, after which they would be visiting all the stakeholders to show them the draft signs and

get their provisional agreement.

A further stakeholder meeting had been organised for 20 February 2013, where it was hoped that the draft signs could be approved by everyone in attendance.

The Working Group were very pleased with the progress made so far, but also recognised that a certain amount of compromise would be needed to finalise the matter and get final agreement from each stakeholder on the signs that would eventually be erected at the site.

- 8.3 The County Council meeting held on 14 January 2013 had discussed a motion, proposed by Mr Little and seconded by Mr Bearman, about the potential environmental and health related concerns associated with the extraction of shale gas by the process of hydraulic fracturing, or 'fracking'.

County Council had agreed to set up a cross party working group to establish the Council's position on 'fracking' with particular reference to its potential impact on Norfolk's environment and the county's wider contribution to carbon emissions and its possible implications for local planning policy.

Following the decision made by County Council, members of the ETD O&S Panel **agreed** to set up a working group to ascertain the facts of 'fracking' and to present their findings to Government. The Government had commissioned some investigations to ascertain the potential risks from the extraction of gas from rock, but the results were not yet available and no guidelines had yet been drafted.

The following Members agreed to form the working group:

Mr J Ward
Mr A White
Mr B Bremner
1 Member from the Green Group
Mr B Spratt

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development reassured members that no 'fracking' had taken place anywhere in Norfolk to date.

- 8.4 **RESOLVED** to

- i) Establish a working group to establish the facts of extracting gas from rock ('fracking') prior to the Government commissioned work on 'fracking'.
- ii) Note the report.

- 9 **Norfolk Economic Growth Strategy: Norfolk Infrastructure Fund Site Acquisition – update and draft proposals for the future use of RAF Coltishall.**

- 9.1 The Panel received the annexed report (9) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development, updating the Panel on the draft proposals for use of the site. The Panel were asked to consider and comment on the progress being made to develop proposals for the future use of the RAF Coltishall site and engage local communities to inform further detailed work on Master Planning. The Panel received a summary of the comments that had been submitted from members of the Community Liaison Reference Group (attached at Appendix A to these minutes).
- 9.2 The Cabinet Member for Efficiency attended the meeting for this item and reiterated that all ideas and suggestions for the use of the site were being considered and that no firm decisions had been made on any proposals as yet.
- 9.3 The following points were noted during the ensuing discussion:
- Members felt that the site had been purchased as an investment for the people of Norfolk and represented excellent value for money. The potential diversity of the site should not be underestimated, and purposes such as agricultural, commercial, housing, tourism and heritage use would be considered.
 - Norfolk County Council had identified the need to generate income to preserve the services they provided and establishing the RAF Coltishall site could generate that income from various sources. One potential income from the site could include the letting of allotments for community use.
 - A proportion of the airfield would be set aside for more agricultural and farming use with some of the site already being used for agricultural purposes.
 - No suggestions or ideas had been finalised as yet. All suggestions and opportunities would be progressed and modified as issues arose to develop the full potential at the site.
 - Some of the existing hangars at the site were being utilised on a temporary basis by some small businesses, and it was hoped that these temporary tenancies could continue in the future. There were several small businesses that had shown an interest in moving their business premises to operate from Coltishall.
 - In terms of the investment made, a high level business case had been published and it was confirmed that the types of rental and receipts from the opportunities in a five year period should put Norfolk County Council in good stead to generate a significant income stream that would help the council have less reliance on Government funding. The site had lots of potential for income generation.

- Members welcomed the asset to Norfolk County Council that the purchase of the site could provide. They also welcomed the £572,500 set aside to form the Project Team who would develop the Master Plan and to identify, market and progress the opportunities to develop the site and generate income for Norfolk County Council.
- This was an excellent opportunity to replace some of the 650 Norfolk jobs which had been lost at the site when RAF Coltishall closed, although decisions on how to utilise the site would not be rushed.
- Requests for further information and to express comments and put forward ideas for the future use of the site could be emailed using futureofRAFcoltishall@norfolk.gov.uk. More information could also be found by visiting the website www.norfolk.gov.uk/RAFColtishall.
- The Cabinet Member for Efficiency wished to thank everyone who had been involved in the purchase of the site, in particular Chris Brown, Solicitor for his invaluable expertise.

9.5 **RESOLVED to**

- note the report and the progress being made to develop proposals for the future use of the RAF Coltishall site and engage local communities, to inform further detailed work on Master Planning.

10 **Highways Capital Programme 2013/14/15 and Transport Asset Management Plan**

10.1 The Panel received the annexed report (10) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development summarising the Local Transport Plan (LTP) Settlement for 2013/14 and seeking comments on the highways capital programme for 2013/14/15 and Transport Asset Management Plan for 2013/14 to 2017/18. The report detailed the main sources of funding and budget allocations, and described how these were allocated between the main types of scheme.

10.2 The points below were noted following questions from the Panel:

- The Panel said that they would like to request Cabinet allocate £8m one off funding for highways improvements, but should also request additional funding from the Government following the severe winter conditions experienced so far this winter. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation agreed that he would lobby government for extra funding if this was necessary.
- Concern was expressed that the Integrated Transport Fund had been cut to allow more funds to be allocated to road maintenance. The Director for ETD reassured Members that the decision to reallocate resources to road maintenance had been made by elected members, after careful consideration, as part of the Strategic Review and that

members had accepted at that time that the highway asset plan was in a reasonable condition to allow funds to be reallocated.

- Following a question about road traffic sign replacement or removal, the Assistant Director Highways confirmed that when roads were inspected for repair or maintenance purposes, any damaged signs, or signs that had exceeded their useful life, would be removed if the judgement was taken that it would be safe, from a road user perspective, to do so. Members acknowledged that many of the signs had originally been erected as a result of requests by Parish Councils or local councillors.
- A proactive programme of removal of all unnecessary signs could only take place if government funding was received as it was more appropriate to allocate the funding available for road maintenance.
- No money had been shown as “winter damage funding” in 2012/13 as the money had been provided from Central Government in 2010/11 and 2011/12 in recognition of the impact of extreme winter weather and therefore was not a guaranteed income for next year.

10.3 **RESOLVED** that

- i) the contents of the report, in particular the reallocation of integrated transport funding to structural maintenance to partially address the deterioration in highway condition be noted, and to recommend it to Cabinet for approval;
- ii) the proposed change to the TAMP for 2013/14 to 2017/18 be noted and to recommend it to Cabinet for approval;
- iii) the Panel recommend to Cabinet that the use of Chief Officer delegated powers, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation, to manage the two year programme, including the possible increase in the Integrated Transport programme to £3m to deal with any major scheme cost pressures if they arise.

11 **Local List for the Validation of Planning Applications**

- 11.1 The Panel received the annexed report (11) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development, setting out the Local List and updating the Panel on the information requirements deemed necessary to ensure planning officers and consultees will have sufficient information to assess a planning application.
- 11.2 **RESOLVED** to recommend to Cabinet that the revised Local List for Validation of Planning applications (2012) be formally adopted.

12 Environment, Transport and Development Enforcement Policy

- 12.1 The Panel received the annexed report (12) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development, bringing together the various regulatory functions of the ETD Department, including the Trading Standards regulatory function. Members were asked to note that this document would continue to change as the needs of the business changed and would include flood and water management and details of planning services as they were updated.
- 12.2 **RESOLVED** to note the proposed enforcement policy and recommend its approval by Cabinet.

13 Norfolk Rail Prospectus

- 13.1 The Panel received the annexed report (13) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development, setting out the requirements across the network that would be required for rail to fulfil its vital role. A copy of the draft Norfolk Rail Prospectus could be found at http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Travel_and_transport/Transport_future_for_Norfolk/Rail_in_Norfolk/index.htm. The Prospectus would be used to influence key decisions being made by government and the rail industry over the next few months.
- 13.2 The report was presented by the Principal Infrastructure and Economic Growth Planner and the following points were noted during the introduction:
- The Rail Prospectus had been drafted through the Norfolk Rail Group and detailed discussions were now being entered into to develop the Prospectus further and to include aspects such as access for disabled people at some railway stations with key stakeholders including businesses.
 - Cabinet would be asked to approve the Norfolk Rail Prospectus when it was presented to them at their meeting on 28 January 2013.
 - The Rail Prospectus included the detail relevant to Norfolk, building on the strategic vision and requirements in the Rail Prospectus for East Anglia which was agreed by the Local Enterprise Partnership Transport Plans and local authorities across the region. The Cabinet Member for Planning & Transportation said that the Prospectus was an excellent example of strategic working between Suffolk, Essex, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire in an attempt to improve rail services in East Anglia.

The following points were noted in response to questions from the Panel:

- Members welcomed the Norfolk Rail Prospectus and agreed it was excellent news that the Government had recognised the importance of rail travel within East Anglia.
- Members thanked everyone who had been involved in and supported the

development of the Norfolk Rail Prospectus, including most of the Norfolk MPs.

- Following a question as to the actual process for the re-franchising exercise and how long this process may take, it was confirmed that as yet there were no definite timescales laid down. It was explained that the Greater Anglia Franchise expired in 2014 and once the re-franchising process had commenced, the Government would specify the required services. There would then be an opportunity for the Government to be made aware of the initiatives that were important in East Anglia.
- Once detailed discussions had taken place with the franchise providers and the franchise had been assigned, discussions could then take place to ensure that the operators delivered the services that had been promised.
- Network Rail was responsible for the infrastructure works programme. They had produced a plan of what they felt would be required between 2014 and 2019 and detailed discussion would be required to finalise that plan for major track investment, which would hopefully include the Bow junction improvements on the Norwich to London Liverpool Street route. However, this would only be confirmed once the final plan was agreed.
- The issue of non-collection of rail fares on trains due to there being no staff available to man the stations and collect ticket money was raised. It was recognised this was a problem, but it was up to the train operators to provide staff to collect fares and tickets. All ticketing issues would be raised with the train operators, although it needed to be recognised that to get the provision of manned stations, higher fares or even the possibility of losing trains may be the result.
- Sites for new stations were being considered, particularly a station near Broadland Business Park, although some sites were not viable for progressing, such as Forncett.

13.6 **RESOLVED** to recommend the Norfolk Rail Prospectus for approval by Cabinet.

14 Environment, Transport and Development Service and Budget Planning 2013 to 2015.

14.1 The Panel received the annexed report (14) by Director of Environment, Transport and Development, updating the Panel on further information and changes affecting the proposals submitted to the November Panel meeting. The report included an update from the Chancellor's Autumn Statement and confirmation of the Provisional Finance Settlement, updated information on revenue budget proposals and capital funding bids as well as the latest information on the cash limit budget for the services relevant to the Panel.

14.2 Members were asked to note that revenue budget proposals for ETD remained consistent with that reported in November 2012 and no additional

capital funding bids had been identified by the Department. However as highlighted elsewhere on the Agenda NCC had received additional capital funding.

- 14.3 During the discussion Members noted that Highway Rangers provision had not been included in this report as nothing had changed with the service since the report in November 2012. Members praised the Highway Rangers services provided and urged members to encourage establishing Highway Rangers in their constituencies.

14.4 **RESOLVED** to agree:

- i) The provisional finance settlement for 2013-14, and
- ii) The information on spending pressures and savings for ETD which had not changed since the November report and the cash limited budget for 2013-14.

(The meeting closed at 12.15pm)

Chairman



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APPENDIX A

Item 9

RAF Coltishall

Officers had planned to provide a verbal update on comments made by Community Liaison Reference Group (report Para 2.3.5) that was scheduled to take place earlier this week. Unfortunately the meeting did not take place due to the snow. However following is a summary of the comments that have been submitted from members of the group on the report before Panel.

1. **Buxton with Lamas Parish Council:** is appreciative of the opportunity to discuss the potential future use of the former air base with the Council and does not have specific comment to make on the content of the panel report.
2. **Badersfield Residents Campaign Committee for the Protection and Development of ex-RAF Coltishall** (comments received from the Chair): Concerned that response to petition submitted (report para 2.3.6) is misleading as decisions about any future uses for the site have already been made. Questions robustness of the process to take forward development of the site. Concerned that the Zonal Plan (report Appendix B) has been drawn up by Council Cabinet Members and Officers and no one else, and that the Council is simply interested in 'asset stripping' the site. Questions the need for the Council to become involved in the site when a private sector bidder had made the MoJ a higher offer based on returns from a major solar PV farm.
3. **Coltishall Parish Council** (comments received from the Chair): Confirm the consensus view of the parishioners remains in broad support of a sustainable use of the site, supportive of some form of a return to agricultural use together with employment generated by small scale industrial opportunities. The recognition of the historic significance of the site would also be received in a very positive light. The Parish Council do however recognise the potential for proposals to affect traffic movements both in and around the immediate area of the camp but also potentially for the village of Coltishall where they are concerned about traffic flow and parking.
4. **Barbara Rix, Broadland District Councillor for the Buxton Ward:** Local people relieved that something useful would be done with the 603 acres of land there. Parish Councils were pleased to have representatives of the Council come to the Parish Council Meetings and listen to ideas, hopes and fears. Recognises that fear of the unknown often brings negative ideas and this is true, as a body of people in the Buxton Ward were voluble with what they did not want, even though nothing has been set in stone. Pleased that local people being given an opportunity to contribute ideas and that the County is listening. The open and transparent approach taken by the County is been appreciated.