

Planning, Transportation the Environment and Waste Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 November 2009

Present:

Mr A J Byrne (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)

Mr R A Bearman

Dr A P Boswell

Mr J S Bremner

Mrs M Chapman-Allen

Mr P G Cook

Mr N D Dixon

Mr T East

Mr J M Joyce

Mr M C Langwade

Mr B W C Long

Mr A M White

Mr R J Wright

Substitute Members:

Mr T Garrod

Ms D Irving

Mr P Wells

Cabinet Members Present:

Mr A Gunson

Mr I Monson

Planning and Transportation

Waste and Environment

Deputy Cabinet Member Present:

Mr B H A Spratt

Planning and Transportation

1. Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Mr A D Adams, Mr S W Bett and Mr J M Ward.

2. Minutes

2.1 The Minutes of the meeting that took place on 9 September 2009 were signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

- Paragraph 9.4, fourth bullet point – To amend the date of the IPCC document to 2007.
- To add the following paragraph after paragraph 9.5: There was discussion of the above points during which some Members said they understood that there was not a consensus on the science of links between dredging and coastal and beach erosion. The NGO MARINET

had a comprehensive website of evidence that countered the Environment Agency's view. Some Members noted there was a need for a more informed debate about this issue.

- Paragraph 11.1 -To add the following sentence: The Panel's attention was drawn to the Project Board's recommendation for the shortlist.
- Paragraph 11.2 - To read:

During discussion:

- A view was expressed in favour of an applicant that was expected to probably deliver an alternative to Energy from Waste. An alternative view underlined that the interest was actually in the top four and not any particular one.
- It was explained that the evaluation process reflected the financial, legal and technical experience of the applicants and that the Applicants' Conference was for potential bidders.
- An appreciation was registered for the thoroughness and extent of the evaluation process.
- It was established that the Norfolk Waste Partnership already had a Local Area Agreement to increase recycling levels to 48% and unlike some other authorities was already well advanced with a procurement to treat residual waste supported by PFI credits.
- It was explained that separate combined heat and power studies had been provided to applicants that looked at Energy from Waste and Mechanical Biological Treatment and the benefits they could deliver.
- An intention was given to present medium term proposals, for the period up to 2015, to the Panel in November, that were likely to include proposals for smaller framework contracts.
- It was established that the bid evaluation process looked at partnership working proposals such as the approach to managing the contract or the practicalities of the timetables proposed.

2.2 In addition, the Panel agreed that the following point raised by Dr Boswell about Dutch dredging activity should be noted: The Dutch did not grant dredging within 25km (16 miles) of their coastline and only at depths greater than 20 meters, while in the UK licences were issued for dredging up to 5km off the east Norfolk and Suffolk coasts.

3. Declarations of Interest

3.1 Members declared the following interests:

- Mr Borrett declared a personal interest in item 18 (A47 to A1067 Link Road) – being the Local Member for Elmham and Mattishall.
- Mr Bremner declared a personal interest in item 8 (Street Lighting) - being a Norwich City Councillor.

- Mr Byrne declared a personal interest in item 8 (Street Lighting) - being a Member of the Norfolk Police Authority.
- Mr Joyce declared a personal interest in item 18 (A47 to A1067 Link Road) – being the Local Member for Reepham.
- Mr Long declared a personal interest in item 9 (Partnership Working) – being the portfolio holder with responsibility for the environment at the Borough Council of King’s Lynn and West Norfolk.
- Mr Wells declared an interest in item 8 (Street Lighting) – being a member of the Norfolk Police Authority

4. Matters of Urgent Business

There were no matters of urgent business.

5. Public Question Time

5.1 Question from Ruth Goodall (Chair, Weston Longville Parish Council)

The scheme proposed [for the A47 to A1067 Link Road] would cost £2.4 million, it would cause damage to the environment and (since nothing is said about traffic management other than the change in priority at Wood Lane and Walnut Lane) offer fewer benefits to Weston Longville than the status quo. Indeed it is likely to increase rat-running in and around the village as commuter traffic seeks to avoid two-way HGV traffic. In its current form, Weston Longville Parish Council would not support the proposal and would ask NCC to maintain the status quo. Without a local consensus in support of the scheme, is the high price that would have to be paid by Weston, by the environment and by the County Council for removing HGV traffic from Hockering justifiable in the current economic and financial situation? "

Response by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation

The Cabinet Member explained that he understood Mrs Goodall was disappointed that officers had not recommended a more extensive scheme. However, the proposed scheme, combined with additional traffic management measures within Weston Longville village, which was currently the subject of a separate feasibility study, should result in improvements for the residents of Weston Longville and a reduced traffic flow through the village. The proposals should not result in increased rat running through Weston Longville as the improved road will be suitable for two-way HGV flow and will provide a good link between the A1067 and the A47. This would be further enhanced by upgrading the route to a B road and signing it accordingly.

The scheme was expensive at a cost of between £2.1m and £3.3m, and this was the upper limit to give value for money. However, the local issues here were such that the County Council felt it was the appropriate amount to spend

to resolve the local issues. The environmental damage would be minimised by limiting the road to 6 metres wide.

Mrs Goodall went on to ask what evidence the County Council had that the current arrangement was not working and that it was not fair and equitable.

The Cabinet Member explained that funding was targeted to stop HGVs having to go through Hockering on the present one way system. It was evident from driving on that road that it was not satisfactory but it was difficult for the County Council to find the money to do more given pressures on expenditure and local priorities.

5.2 Question from Penny Hawker, Clerk, Hockering Parish Council (put to the Panel by Stephen Ashford, Hockering Parish Councillor)

The report [about the A47 to A1067 Link Road] makes little mention of the NDR. When that is built, traffic levels between A1067 and A47 will increase greatly. If a substantial link road is not built by then, how will NCC cater for the inevitable congestion and road damage?

Response by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation

The Cabinet Member explained that report did not mention the Northern Distributor Road (NDR) in detail although it was referred to in the Background section. However, both the NDR and the Link Road schemes were part of the overall Norwich Area Transportation Strategy which aimed to increase accessibility through widening transport choice and enabling growth through the provision of sustainable development. It was this strategy which sought to address a variety of issues including congestion and rat running around Norwich. The link road proposal took account of the likely impact of the NDR, which was not expected to be completed until 2015.

In addition, the report recommended a scheme which in the short to medium term addressed the traffic issues in the area. It also identified a more substantial scheme if more funding became available in the longer term.

5.3 Question from Richard Hawker (put to the Panel by Stephen Ashford, Hockering Parish Councillor)

The report [about the A47 to A1067 Link Road] finds that the scheme may not be justified in terms of the LTP objectives of environment, casualty reduction and congestion relief. How does the committee view the concept of improving the environment for humans and prevention of accidents and congestion rather than having to react to problems after they have arisen?

Response by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation

The Cabinet Member explained that the first section of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel report highlighted the existing levels of through traffic in Weston Longville village and HGV traffic through Hockering village centre,

and the detrimental environmental impact on local residents and their quality of life. It was the importance of these issues which had resulted in the current proposal which sought to find an affordable and buildable solution.

It was always the aim of the County Council to improve the environment, prevent accidents and reduce congestion rather than having to react to problems after they had arisen. However, given the current and anticipated future levels of funding, and the number of problems and issues around the county, it had to continually review priorities and develop solutions which were value for money and deliverable in reasonable timescales.

- 5.4 A query was raised as to why the Panel as a whole had not received notification of the questions in advance of the meeting. A discussion concluded that further advice be sought on the matter and that clarification would be circulated to Members.

7. Local Member Issues/Questions

7.1 Question from Andrew Boswell, Local Member for Nelson Division

What annual targets for reducing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions have been set for the PFI Waste contract (contract B) – please provide the annual targets over the 25 year project period and their absolute values of tonnes of CO2 equivalents – and what are the detailed criteria for GHG emissions being given to the shortlisted bidders?

Response by the Cabinet Member for Waste and Environment

The Cabinet Member explained that specification for the waste PFI contract included amongst other performance targets, a contractual target for continuous reduction in Greenhouse Gas emissions on a rolling five year period from year 5 onwards. The County Council had not set absolute values for a Greenhouse Gas emission target as this may fail to achieve the optimum Greenhouse Gas reduction available. However, it had - with the help of the public through an extensive consultation exercise - developed an evaluation model which placed a significant weighting on environmental performance and therefore would reward those bids which offered the best Greenhouse Gas emission reduction. This incentivised bidders to offer high performing solutions that would deliver an extremely high level of waste treatment and landfill diversion and, by its nature, high performance in Greenhouse Gas reduction.

Dr Boswell went on to ask if the County Council would ask for a comprehensive carbon balance sheet to be submitted with each bid?

The Cabinet Member explained that starting at year 5 was part of the PFI contract performance target but that he would look into the matter.

- 8. Order of Business** – The Panel agreed to take item 18 as the next item.

9. A47 to A1067 Link Road

- 9.1 The Panel considered the annexed report (item 18) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development, which provided a summary of work done since January 2008 looking into two shortlisted options and recommended a way forward.
- 9.2 Mr Borrett, Local Member for Elmham and Mattishall, reported that the villagers had greeted the report with unanimous despair but understood the financial difficulties facing the County Council. He recommended the Panel should agree the proposal as a first step but that there would need to be a permanent and substantial solution. Taking traffic out of Hockering would transform residents' lives.
- 9.3 Mr Joyce, Local Member for Reepham, commented that the road was not designed for what it was doing and that a designated HGV route linking Fakenham with the A47 was needed. He asked the Panel to note the comments made by the Chair of Weston Longville Parish Council and suggested that, in the absence of sufficient funding for Option 1, making the current situation fit for purpose was the best option.
- 9.4 During discussion, the following key points were made:
- Some Members felt that spending public money on the recommended option could not be justified as it would not provide an effective solution. The only effective solution would be to build a link road and that this should be done when funding was available.
 - Some Members felt that improving the maintenance and repair of the current arrangement as part of the County Council's maintenance programme, together with traffic calming measures, would be a better option until the County Council had enough funding to build a proper link road.
 - Some Members felt that lobbying the Government to put measures in place to decrease the number and size of lorries on the road, such as improving the rail system, was key to this addressing the issue generally.

The Cabinet Member responded by emphasising that no decision had been made and that the outcome of the Panel's discussion would inform the Cabinet's decision. The purpose of the proposed reduced cost option was to take HGV traffic out of Hockering without making matters worse for Weston Longville. The solution didn't do all that he would like it to, but the proposal had to compete with other priorities across Norfolk. The Panel needed to decide whether Hockering needed relief and if so whether the proposal was the best solution given the greater shortness of funding.

- 9.5 Mr Joyce proposed, seconded by Mr East, that the current arrangement should be maintained until the County Council had got the wherewithal to build a proper link road. With four votes in favour and six votes against the motion was LOST.

- 9.6 Mr Wright then moved the recommended way forward, as outlined in the Panel report, as being the best value for money. This was duly seconded.

RESOLVED

With six votes in favour and four votes against the Panel agreed that the recommended way forward, as outlined in the Panel report, was the best value for money.

10. Cabinet Member Feedback on Previous Overview and Scrutiny Panel Comments

- 10.1 The Panel noted the annexed joint report (item 7) by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation and the Cabinet Member for Waste and Environment, which provided some feedback on Cabinet discussion of the Panel's comments.

11. Street Lighting

- 11.1 The Panel considered the annexed report (item 8) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development, which provided an update on the review of street lighting policy with regard to the introduction of part night lighting.
- 11.2 During discussion the following key points were made:
- The street lights erected through the PFI used low wattage bulbs, particularly in streets with low traffic volume, and maximum potential savings from part-night lighting in the long term were about £170,000 per year.
 - Some Members commented that despite the fact that Norfolk was a low crime area, there were still high levels of fear of crime. For example, the recent Place Survey showed that although 46% of people living in Norwich felt safe when outside after dark, 38% did not. In certain wards the percentage of people who did not feel safe was even greater.
 - Some Members supported the policy of part night lighting but suggested that local consultation would be needed for areas where this would be proposed.
 - Some Members supported the recommendation in the Panel report but suggested that a tailored approach to implementation was needed to take into account fear of crime.
 - One Member suggested there were other options to consider that would allow further energy and financial savings to be made. He provided officers with a report that provided details of a trial that had been undertaken in Germany called "Dial a light", where residents could turn on street lights by using their mobile phones. This had provided savings of €4000 and might be an option worth considering for urban areas and market towns. Using LED lights or renewable energy to power lights were other options the County Council might consider.

- Another Member suggested that switching off traffic lights in rural areas could produce energy savings and improve air quality through preventing traffic from sitting idling unnecessarily.

11.3 The Panel agreed that a further report should be considered at the January meeting to update Members on proposals.

11.4 The Panel agreed to endorse the proposal to seek Cabinet approval to a change in street lighting policy to remove the commitment to light throughout the night when street lighting is provided.

12. Partnership Working

12.1 The Panel considered the annexed report (item 9) which reviewed three health, social and well-being partnerships.

12.2 A discussion took place about whether the Panel should continue with the programme of partnership review, given that at the mid point in the two year cycle no significant areas of concern had been highlighted.

12.3 The Panel agreed to conclude the review. It also requested that, as the information had proven useful, a list of the remaining partnerships be circulated to the Panel so that Members could follow up any areas of interest.

13. HGV Route Hierarchy

13.1 The Panel considered the annexed report (item 10) by the Chairman of the HGV Route Hierarchy Member Working Group which summarised the work that had been carried out to scrutinise HGV Route Hierarchy. It recommended that the scrutiny exercise should not be progressed.

13.2 The Panel noted that without dedicated funding to deal with any issues identified the expectation of local communities might be unfairly raised.

13.3 The Panel agreed that the scrutiny item should not be progressed any further and that it be removed from the forward work programme.

14. Forward Work Programme: Scrutiny

14.1 The Panel noted the annexed report (item 11) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development, which asked Members to review and develop the scrutiny work programme.

14.2 The Panel noted that 'trading on the highway' was an ongoing area of officer work and agreed that an updated report should be considered at a future meeting.

15. Integrated Performance and Finance Monitoring Report

- 15.1 The Panel considered the annexed report (item 12) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development, which provided an update on progress made against the 2009-12 service plans, mitigation of risks deemed to be of corporate significance and financial monitoring to the end of September 2009.
- 15.2 The Panel noted that performance against the Passenger Transport indicator had moved to “slightly off track”, which meant that there was no performance significantly “off track”.
- 15.3 During discussion the following key points were made:
- Highways Service – Failure to implement Northern Distributor Road (NDR): There was an ongoing dialogue with the Department for Transport and a decision on Programme Entry was expected by mid December. A decision had been requested in time for the GNDP meeting on 17 December.
 - The Street Lighting PFI sinking fund would cover ongoing payments to the PFI contractor over the next 23 years. The amount held in reserve would change depending on the amount of works undertaken.
 - The Carbon Reduction Commitment would begin on 1 April 2010. The County Council’s short-term aim was to get a reasonable ranking but providing metering in all buildings would assist the position. The report title was a standard format for reporting a potential risk.
- 15.4 The Panel agreed that an update report on the Carbon Reduction Commitment should be considered in March 2010.

16. Service and Budget Planning 2010-13

- 16.1 The Panel considered the annexed report (item 13) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development, which provided an overview of the main planning consideration for the services covered by this Panel and the context in which they were set, including the financial position and the relevant performance and improvement considerations relating to delivery of the County Council’s performance objectives.
- 16.2 The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation drew the Panel’s attention to the following issues:
- The cost pressures outlined at paragraph 2.6 of the Panel report would mean the County Council would need to find considerable and ongoing cost savings if it was to sustain services and budgets over the medium term.
 - The level of cash uplift for services together with savings identified was sufficient to meeting revenue pressures in Planning and Transportation but not Environment and Waste.
 - There would still be a subsidy on the Park and Ride service.
 - Savings could be realised by adopting the part night lighting policy.
 - In real terms the highway maintenance budget had reduced significantly over the last five years as it had not increased in line with inflation.

- 16.3 The Cabinet Member for Waste and Environment added that the County Council was looking closely at where it could make savings. Boosting recycling and reducing the opening hours of some Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) would reduce costs but would still leave a shortfall of £1.425m in the Environment and Waste budget.
- 16.4 During discussion the following key points were made:
- The County Council was open about its charging proposals and the Planning and Transportation department reviewed its charging annually.
 - There was no plan B if the DfT decided not to include the NDR in the Programme Entry.
 - Reducing opening hours of HWRCs should not make a difference to the level of fly-tipping in the county as the kind of what that was fly-tipped was not the kind intended for recycling.
 - The department would undertake extensive publicity to inform local people about changes to the opening times of HWRCs.
 - There was a service standard for the sighting of HWRCs to help ensure that residents did not have to travel far to access them. The future policy of creating larger, more centralised centres aimed to encourage people to reduce their carbon footprint by combining their recycling and shopping trip.
- 16.5 The Panel noted the report.
- 17. East of England Plan Review to 2031: EERA Consultation on Scenarios for housing growth**
- 17.1 The Panel considered the annexed report (item 14) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development, which suggested a response to EERA's consultation on four growth scenarios.
- 17.2 The Panel agreed on the inadequacy of the assumptions made by EERA and that infrastructure requirements needed to be addressed before growth could happen in Norfolk. During discussion, the following points were made:
- Some Members reflected on the position of their local areas and Thetford and King's Lynn were highlighted as particular areas where existing infrastructure was already stretched to the limit.
 - Some Members challenged the assumption that rail improvement was not critical and suggested that that point needed should be revisited because it would be crucial to delivering infrastructure developments.
 - One member highlighted that the draft response to question 3 was different to the summary at paragraph 2.5 of the Panel report and suggested that the response should be strengthened to make the sure those points were made to the Government.
- 17.3 The Panel endorsed the draft response subject to a strengthened response relating to question 3 as outlined in the above minute.

18. Waste Procurement Strategy

18.1 The Panel noted the annexed report (item 15) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development, which made recommendations to adjust the County Council's Waste Procurement Strategy.

18.2 The Cabinet Member for Waste and Environment commented that he was enthusiastic about the opportunities offered by short-term contracts and that officers would work hard in the coming months to ensure some were established. He hoped the Panel would approve the recommendations in the report, which would help the County Council to avoid landfill taxes.

18.3 During discussion, the following key points were made:

- The PFI Residual Waste Treatment contract was based on the original European Union limit of 170,000 tonnes.
- The intention of a forthcoming seminar was to invite partners to come closer together to create a unified waste treatment system for Norfolk. Current contracts made this a complex issue and the loyalty of the public to their District Council would slowly need to be addressed.
- The newly established Norfolk Public Service Board had agreed that waste was one of the three priority areas for collaboration.
- The County Council was working hard to identify companies for the short-term contracts. A framework contract is limited to 14 years.

18.4 The Panel agreed that the following should be recommended to Cabinet:

1. The adjustments to the Waste Procurement Strategy outlined in the Panel report should be adopted.
2. Trading Landfill Allowances in accordance with the agreed strategy, up until 2015 and beyond
3. That a new Recycling Credit rate, for bio-degradable household kitchen waste, up to the avoided cost of disposal should be introduced from April 2010.
4. That the existing waste disposal contracts should be extended for up to one year from April 2010, with the exception of Edgefield landfill.
5. That the Edgefield landfill contract should be extended as a Service Level Agreement for 3 years from April 2010, with a gate fee agreed under an open book arrangements.

19. Norwich Area Transportation Strategy (NATS) update including Norwich Northern Distributor Road (NDR)

19.1 The Panel noted the annexed report (item 16) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development, which provided an opportunity for Members to comment on the consultation material.

19.2 The Panel also noted that it would have the opportunity to consider the results of the consultation in the new year, to inform Cabinet's decision.

20. Review of 'Probity in Planning' Guidance Note

- 20.1 The Panel considered the annexed report (item 17) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development, which made recommendations to enhance the County Council's approach to planning.
- 20.2 The Panel noted that where the report referred to a 'Planning Committee' that this meant the Planning (Regulatory) Committee.
- 20.3 Some Members commented that training was essential for Members of the Committee and that Members who were not on the Committee should also be encouraged to attend. Officers clarified that when a new committee was set up a training session was always provided and that training was provided for new Members either in advance of their first meeting or as soon as possible after their appointment.
- 20.4 The Panel endorsed the proposals to enhance the County Council's approach as set out in the Panel report.

21. Norfolk's 3rd Local Transport Plan (LTP3)

- 21.1 The Panel considered the annexed report (item 19) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development, which provided an overview of the work underway to develop LTP3.
- 21.2 Officers were thanked for the Member workshop that took place on 22 October, which had been very useful. Members endorsed the challenges and Policy Options developed to date. Some Members added that the LTP3 needed to clearly show that it covered roads and the accessibility of transport infrastructure overall as a challenge, which could be addressed through creating a more integrated transport system.
- 21.3 The Panel noted the report and the comments made by Members.

(The meeting closed at 13:00 pm)

Chairman



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