

Planning, Transportation, the Environment and Waste Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Minutes of the Meeting Held on Wednesday 3 March 2010

Present:

Mr A J Byrne (In the Chair)

Mr A D Adams
Mr R A Bearman
Mr A P Boswell
Mr J S Bremner
Mr N D Dixon
Mr T East
Mr T Garrod
Mr B Iles

Mr J M Joyce
Mr M C Langwade
Mr B W C Long
Mrs H Thompson
Mr J M Ward
Mr A M White
Mr R J Wright

Non-Voting Cabinet Member:

Mr A J Gunson
Mr I Monson

Planning and Transportation
Waste and Environment

Non-Voting Deputy Cabinet Members:

Mr B H A Spratt

1. Chairman's Announcements

- 1.1 The Chairman announced that Stephen Bett had resigned from the Panel in order to concentrate on his work with the Police Authority, who had recently appointed a new Chief Constable. All Members wished to thank Mr Bett for his contributions.
- 1.2 Mr Bett's position as Member of the Panel would be filled by Tom Garrod. Members welcomed Mr Garrod to the Panel.
- 1.3 Elections for Chairman and Vice-Chairman would be held as normal at the next regular meeting of the Panel in May 2010.
- 1.4 Members were reminded that there would be an additional meeting of this Panel on Thursday 30 March 2010 at 10:30am in the Edwards Room at County Hall. This meeting would be held to discuss the Waste Management contract.

2. Apologies and substitutions

Apologies were received from Mrs M Chapman-Allan and Mr G Cook (Mrs H Thompson substituting).

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2010 were agreed by the Panel and signed as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

5. Items of Urgent Business – Impact of Winter on Highway Maintenance

- 5.1 The Chairman called on the Director of Environment, Transport and Development to update Members on the issue of winter maintenance. His statement appears below:

“Members will be aware of the significant damage done to Norfolk's roads as a result of the prolonged periods of frost and snow over the last two winters. This has come on top of a underlying trend of deteriorating highway condition caused by the significant reduction in the purchasing power of our road maintenance budgets in the last 5-6 years.

The immediate issue we are addressing is filling potholes and quantifying the post winter damage. Some of that damage is immediately obvious. The full extent will not be apparent for some time, but will result in the premature failure of more roads in the future.

I am also aware of Members concerns that there have been failures on some of last seasons Surface Dressing sites during the winter. It must be remembered that this is the coldest Winter in over 30 years. And we know that there is a National problem with chipping loss on schemes carried out late in the surface dressing season. Both ourselves and May Gurney are represented at National level where this problem is being discussed. Obviously any failures are disappointing, but the Surface Dressing Programme generally has a low percentage of problem sites requiring remedial attention.

The material we use is the industry standard. This is a polymer modified bitumen emulsion. For environmental and health reasons, highway authorities have not been able to use straight bitumen, or tar/bitumen for many years.

The precise reasons for the chipping loss are still being investigated. Until that work is complete we will not know where any liability might rest. In the meantime, the sites are being swept and kept safe, and they are being assessed for suitable remedial treatment.

We will consolidate the assessment work for all the winter damage in mid-

March and set that alongside the currently proposed programmes for 2010/11. It will allow us to reassess and change priorities, where appropriate. One key emerging issue will be the need to surface dress roads where we have done extensive patching recently, to seal up the road and "lock in" the work we have done. We will still focus on the more heavily trafficked routes (as members have asked us to do) as our first priority.

The annual highway asset performance report to Overview & Scrutiny Panel in July will set the winter into context and seek member support for broad priorities for 2011/12. The national road condition surveys will be carried out in the late summer and autumn 2010 and will pick up the measurable effects of the 2009/10 winter. We will then get that data in early 2011, from which we can develop the firm programme for 2011/12.

So in summary,

- We are filling potholes now, and collecting data on condition
- We will review and revise 2010/11 programme in March/April,
- We will carry out surfacing and surface dressing summer 2010,
- We will measure post winter effects in autumn 2010
- And produce 2011/12 programme in March 2011."

5.2 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- Members thanked the Director of Environment, Transport and Development for his update on the matter. Members pointed out that failures in road surfaces were normal when considering the serious weather conditions this winter. The speed and quality of the work carried out should be commended.
- The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation also thanked the Director and his staff for their excellent work, particularly during inclement weather. The Cabinet Member noted that 1,400 tonnes of salt was to be delivered to Norfolk following a letter he had written to the Department of Transport regarding the poor allocation of salt to Norfolk. He felt that this salt would be sufficient for any further weather this winter.
- In response to a Member question regarding why liquid bitumen was no longer used to seal potholes, the Head of Highway Operations Service clarified that this substance created a slippery surface and made for dangerous driving conditions, particularly for cyclists and motorcyclists. In any event, it had not been possible for Highway Authorities to use straight bitumen for many years because of environmental and health and safety reasons.
- In response to a Member question, the Director of Environment, Transport and Development explained that until the cause of failures was established, it was not possible to say who would have to meet the costs of remedial works. However, the contract did provide means for redress, if the contractors were found to be liable.

5.3 The Chairman thanked the Director of Environment, Transport and Development for his update.

6. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

7. Local Member Issues/Member Questions

There were no local member issues or questions.

8. Cabinet Member Feedback

The Panel noted the annexed joint report (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.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation reported that, at their meeting on 3 March, the Cabinet considered recommendations from the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee on the Street Lighting Policy, and he updated Panel Members on this.

Overview Items

9. Highway and Community Rangers

9.1 The annexed report (14) by the Director of Environment, Transport, and Development was received. The report updated Members on the trial by the Council's Highway Maintenance Service of a new approach to routine highway maintenance, which aimed to be more efficient, flexible, and responsive to local priorities. Two existing road worker gangs became Highway and Community Rangers for the trial, incorporating more 'street scene' jobs and enabling them to deal with more problems 'on the spot' without the need to report these back to the depot.

9.2 Members were invited to discuss the Highway and Community Rangers approach and identify any key factors to consider in developing this to be rolled out across the county.

9.3 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- As the pilot involved working with 33 parishes in Norfolk, Members asked what ideas officers had for implementing this scheme in Norwich, where parishes did not exist. The Head of the Highway Operations Services replied that within Norwich, the County Council would work with the City Council and community groups.
- It was confirmed that Rangers could help to monitor grit bins around

the community and report those which needed re-stocking with salt.

- The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation added that while he was in favour of the proposed scheme he wanted to make Members aware that the department still had a large backlog of work due to the sustained period of winter weather and this could mean that the scheme may take some time to be rolled out.

9.4 Members thanked the Head of the Highway Operations Service for his report. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation spoke on behalf of all Members and officers when he thanked the Head of the Highways Operations Service, John Longhurst, for his 32 years of devoted service to Norfolk County Council's Highway Maintenance team. The Panel wished Mr Longhurst a long and relaxing retirement.

9.5 The Panel **AGREED** to note the report.

Scrutiny Items

10. Use of Civilian Traffic Marshals

10.1 The annexed report (8) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development was received. This report informed Members of the application of the policy for the use of Civilian Traffic Marshals. The Panel was asked to comment on the report and whether they wished to receive a further report in 2011.

10.2 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- For events generally, such as fireworks displays and the Norfolk Show, Norfolk County Council (NCC) encouraged event organisers to fund the traffic marshal service as one part of their event traffic management plans to minimise disruption. Where no specific organiser could be identified, the County Council would continue to take the lead in the deployment and would seek contributions from the beneficiaries. The main deployment in 2010 would be the pre-Christmas period in Norwich and King's Lynn.
- Members questioned the costs associated with the 2009 pre-Christmas period. The Network Manager clarified that the £19,680 only covered the cost of the traffic marshals brought in over the 2009 pre-Christmas period and did not include Norfolk County Council's staff costs.
- It was noted that Chapelfield contributed £4,500 toward the cost (£19,680) of the traffic marshals in the 2009 pre-Christmas period. Members pointed out that Castle Mall did not contribute to this cost and Members felt strongly that the costs of the traffic marshals should be completely met by the user, through the beneficiary businesses, and these costs should not be covered by the general

Norfolk taxpayer. The Head of Programme Management explained that Norfolk County Council could encourage businesses to contribute to the costs but had no power to force them to do so. The Director of Environment, Transport and Development added that it was clear that officers needed to increase their efforts in encouraging businesses to contribute to the costs. However, there were other value for money issues which Members should be aware of. Norfolk County Council needed to achieve its own objectives, for example, in regards to targets around improving bus punctuality. The traffic marshal scheme, through funding from NCC, had made a positive contribution to achieving this objective.

- Members questioned why traffic marshals were not used at Norwich City Football Club (NCFC) home games. The Network Manager responded by saying that NCFC home games represented a specific event with a defined organiser and in that case it was the responsibility of the event organiser to provide traffic marshals. To have Norfolk County Council provide traffic marshals for NCFC home games would result in significant budgetary implications.
- Members asked what the statutory responsibilities of Norfolk County Council were in regard to this issue and what the legal requirements of the businesses were (in the case of the pre-Christmas shopping period), and event organisers for specific events. The Head of Programme Management replied that the statutory requirements came down to a judgement call for officers in practice. The local authority would only learn if it was failing to meet the statutory requirements if it was taken to court and found not to be doing so. Businesses did not have a legal requirement to contribute financially to provide traffic marshals but could be found in breach of health and safety legislation through the courts.
- Members stated that there could be more clarity on the responsibilities of Norfolk County Council and others, such as the Police, businesses, and event organisers. Members also wished for some consistency in the application of the use of traffic marshals, particularly in regards to setting the level of when businesses and event organisers were requested to pay or not pay. Members agreed that NCC should take a leadership role on this issue. The Head of Programme Management replied that NCC and the Police both had strategic and tactical levels of responsibility for traffic management and that there was consistency in NCC's approach to implementing traffic marshals. However, the difficulty arose at times when there was not a single event or a single event organiser and it was not possible to clearly assign responsibility for the event where many different businesses benefited from the activity.
- It was noted that EventGuard were the sole local Police Accredited company empowered to direct traffic on the highway in Norfolk. With Norfolk Police no longer carrying out this function for events,

EventGuard were the exclusive police accredited traffic marshalling contractor in the area.

- It was noted that the issue of hiring EventGuard for the traffic management of events was an item for discussion on the next agenda of the Norwich City Centre Partnership. Mr Bearman planned to attend this meeting and said he would pass on the Panel's comments on this issue.
- The Local Member for Cromer added that even through there was significant cost for smaller event organisers, such as the Cromer Carnival, the carnival committee recognised the importance of hiring EventGuard to manage traffic and were prepared to pay for the safety of the public at the carnival.

10.3 The Panel received a motion, which was seconded:

“The Planning, Transportation, Environment and Waste Overview and Scrutiny Panel requests a report for its May 2010 meeting which includes details of what was needed for the County Council to comply with Traffic Management regulations. It is requested that the report also outlines the views of Norwich's retail group on options of how this could be funded.”

10.4 The Panel **AGREED** to note the report and **AGREED** to pass the above motion.

11. **Carbon Reduction Commitment: Quarterly Update**

11.1 The annexed joint report (9) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development and the Director for Corporate Affairs was received. The report provided the first quarterly update on preparations for the introduction of the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) from April 2011. The Panel was asked to note the current risk regarding the County Council's CRC league table position; that it was proposed to manage the initial purchase of allowances centrally during the introductory phase (2010-13); that it was also proposed to manage centrally the cost of any shortfall in the recycling payment during the introductory phase; and that it was proposed to review how NCC incentivised Departments to reduce carbon emissions.

11.2 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- It was suggested that more needed to be done to incentivise each Department and every individual employee to reduce their energy use. One option would be to ensure that each department would be able to keep the money saved for its own budget instead of this going into a central budget. Proposals on would be included in the next quarterly report to Cabinet in June.
- The report outlined that Cabinet endorsed a £9.38m capital spend on

this project over the next three years as part of a £13.9m five-year investment programme to improve the efficiency of the Council's estate. It was suggested that savings could be made to achieve better value for the £9.38m by looking at how this would be spent and considering which pieces could be put out to tender. The Sustainability Strategy Manager said that the £9.38m capital spend was an invest-to-save measure backed up by a sound business case.

- Members highlighted that energy costs had gone up in schools instead of the expected decrease following the replacement of older schools with modern school buildings. The Sustainability Strategy Manager noted that many local authorities across the country have underestimated the energy costs rise in schools, which was believed to result from rising ICT use and extended services. She added that energy use in schools had risen between 17 and 18% on average from 2007/08 to 2008/09 but that this rise was mainly influenced by 28 high schools and four primary schools.
- Members discussed the Energy Busters scheme run in some Norfolk schools and what further actions could be taken to encourage more energy reduction in schools. Members were also concerned that the Energy Busters scheme was not reaching enough of students and schools and those participating were not achieving significant levels of energy use reduction.
- The Sustainability Strategy Manager replied that NCC expected to hit its target number of schools involved in the scheme this year. The scheme was being reprioritised to focus on the highest energy using schools and to bring an additional 20 high schools into the scheme. Measures were also being put in place to embed energy efficient behaviour in the longer term, through improved energy monitoring and training for caretakers and business managers. The Assistant Director for Resources and Efficiency in Children's Services had established a dedicated group in Children's Services to drive forward this work. School children were increasingly well educated and motivated on saving energy, and it was important that the Council backed this up by ensuring its capital investment in the schools estate further improved energy efficiency.
- Following from a previous Member suggestion, it was confirmed that NCC and NPS had been exploring the possibility of using the interest free funding from Salix to cover Capital expenditure on energy efficiency projects. (Salix was an independent company funded by the Carbon Trust to help improve energy efficiency in public sector buildings.) It was explained that the main obstacle related to finding projects that qualified under the payback period.

11.3 The Panel received a motion, which was seconded:

“The Planning, Transportation, Environment and Waste Overview and Scrutiny Panel requests to receive a further report at the May 2010 meeting which detailed the £9.38m capital spend outlined in the report. Members wished to have an opportunity to suggest areas of potential savings through tendering before recommending the report to Cabinet. The report would include a section on options for incentivising schools to fast track improvement in this area.”

11.4 The Director for Environment Transport and Development suggested the Panel liaise with the Corporate Affairs Overview and Scrutiny Panel in regards to procurement and tendering issues.

11.5 The Panel **AGREED** the motion as outlined above.

12. Forward Work Programme: Scrutiny

12.1 The annexed report (10) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development. The report asked Members to review and develop the programme for scrutiny.

12.2 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- Members suggested not adding any further items to the scrutiny forward work programme due to the ongoing review of the scrutiny process.
- The Head of Highway Operations confirmed that consideration was being given to placing stickers on grit bins to show the telephone number to call if they needed to be re-stocked with salt.

12.3 The Panel **AGREED** the report and to remove the Grit Bins items from the Forward Work Programme.

Overview Items (continued)

13. Planning, Transportation, Environment and Waste Integrated Performance and Finance Monitoring Report 2009/10

13.1 The annexed report (11) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development was received. The report provided the most up-to-date information at the time of writing and provided an update of the latest progress made against the 2009-12 service plan actions, risks and finances for Planning and Transportation (P&T). Members were asked to comment on the progress against P&T's service plan actions, risks and budget and consider whether any aspects should be identified for further scrutiny.

13.2 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- Within the Revenue Budget section it was confirmed that the forecast outturn for Planning and Transportation had been misprinted and the

Forecast outturn should have been shown as £67.850m. The underspend was accurately shown as -£0.416m. The projected variance movement figure as identified in the Executive summary should be corrected from -£0.064m to -£0.068m.

- Members questioned the slow pace of the procurement process for the waste management contract. The Head of Environment and Waste replied that it was important to take the time to ensure that the contract was written in a flexible way and that the service was well placed to take advantage of opportunities which may come up in the future.

13.3 The Panel **AGREED** the report.

14. Service Planning 2010-13

14.1 The annexed report (12) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development was received. Following on from the reports taken to Panel in November and January, this report covered the next stage of delivery of the Service Plan 2010-13. The Service Plan presented to Panel did not take into account the changes to structures arising from the Organisational Review and it was anticipated that as managers were confirmed in post, adjustments to plans may need to be made as priorities are reviewed. The Panel were invited to review the plans and to consider any service areas for further scrutiny or monitoring.

14.2 The Panel **AGREED** the report.

15. Norwich Area Transportation Strategy (NATS) Implementation Package

15.1 The annexed report (13) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development was received. The report provided Members with emerging outputs of work being undertaken on an Implementation Plan for the Norwich Area Transportation Strategy (NATS). This summarised key outputs from public and business consultation and outlined how a wide range of transport schemes, including the Northern Distributor Road (NDR) were being accessed. An update was also provided on the NDR/Postwick work to date. Members were asked to comment on the emerging Implementation Plan, and endorse recommended changes to a small number of NATS policies and that the NATS area becomes consistent with the Norwich Policy Area.

15.2 Mr Adams was disappointed with the pedestrianisation schemes, particularly Westlegate, and thought they had been ill-conceived. He stated that he had wished the Director would have consulted him as the Chairman of the Norwich Highways Agency Joint Committee. The Director of Environment, Transport and Development apologised to Mr Adams for any offence caused, which Mr Adams accepted. Mr Adams proposed the following motion:

“That any reference within the NATS to closing Westlegate, Gaol Hill, and Exchange Street be deleted and any such proposals be considered when the NDR is provided and the alternative route options the NDR provide are in place.”

15.3 Members noted that this motion did not view the strategy as a whole and instead focussed on individual streets. It was emphasised that Members needed to consider the timescale of the project as some features cover up to the year 2025 and it would be unwise to delete certain streets in isolation rather than considering the entire area before making a judgement.

15.4 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- The Director of Planning, Transport and Development confirmed that NCC would actively pursue taking the NDR to the A1067. Traffic modelling showed that if NDR only went to the Airport, it did not worsen traffic congestion around Drayton, Taverham, and Costessey; however it did not improve it either.
- Dr Boswell referred to a question he had asked the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation outside of the Local Member Question framework. It was agreed that the Cabinet Member would reply to Dr Boswell in writing.
- It was requested that the letter from the Department for Transport relating to the NDR Programme Entry be circulated to Members of the Panel. The Director of Planning, Transport and Environment confirmed that he would circulate this letter to Members of the Panel.
- Members questioned the Summary of revised NATS Implementation Programme which was attached to the report at Appendix A. Members requested the objective qualification for the NATS Objectives scoring. In response, the NATS Project Manager explained that his team had considered schemes against objectives for NATS, the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and Delivering a Sustainable Transport System (DaSTS). He confirmed he would make the individual assessments available to Members of the Panel.

15.5 The Panel took the above motion to a vote following it being seconded. Members voted on the proposal as above and seven were in favour with five against. The motion was carried.

15.6 The Panel **AGREED** the report.

16. **Connecting Norfolk - Norfolk's 3rd Local Transport Plan**

16.1 The annexed report (15) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development was received. The report introduced Connecting Norfolk, Norfolk's Third Transport Plan and explained that this partnership document

would set out how transport would contribute towards five goals: tackling climate change, supporting growth and regeneration, promoting equality of opportunity, contributing towards safety and security, and improving quality of life and health. These goals had been set by central government and the strategy would be supported by a rolling three year implementation plan. Members were asked to consider the consultation results and comment upon the strategic priorities and preferred policy options presented within the report.

16.2 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- Members commented that there was a lack of rail travel mentioned in the document and that the Norfolk Orbital line should be explored. The plan needed to identify walking and cycling specifically and also touch on its impact on people with disabilities as 20% of Norfolk people identified themselves as disabled. It was suggested that the shop mobility scheme be rolled out across a wider area. The Head of Strategy and Performance assured Members that rail travel, walking, cycling, and disability issues were part of the implementation plan and that this document was just an overall view.
- Members added that video conferencing centres with high-speed broadband links could significantly contribute to savings.

16.3 The Panel **AGREED** the report.

17. **Greater Anglia Franchise Consultation**

17.1 The annexed report (16) by the Director of Planning, Transport and Development was received. The report set out the consultation being carried out by the Department for Transport on a specification for the Greater Anglia franchise, including train services operating from Norwich to London, Cambridge, Sheringham, and Great Yarmouth as well as from King's Lynn to London Liverpool Street. The new franchise would commence on 1 April 2011 and would probably run for ten years. Members were asked to comment on the key requirements for the Greater Anglia franchise in order to help shape the authority's response to the current government consultation.

17.2 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- Members noted that the franchise could probably run for longer than ten years and it was unreasonable to expect an operator to heavily invest in the franchise over such a short period of time. Bidders for the franchise would be able to put their case forward for a longer term contract. This was welcomed by Members as it gave operators reason to invest in the franchise.
- The Norfolk Rail Policy Group would be discussing this issue at its meeting on Thursday 11 March and their insight would be valuable.

- In regards to wireless internet (wi-fi) on trains, it was confirmed that East of England Development Agency (EEDA) had approved the business case but the costs for providing this were prohibitive.

17.3 The Panel **AGREED** the report.

The meeting concluded at 1:30pm.

CHAIRMAN



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