

Planning, Transportation the Environment and Waste Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 March 2009

Present:

Mr A D Adams	Mrs B Lashley
Mr D Baxter	Mr P W Moore
Mrs H Bolt	Mr B Morrey
Miss E Collishaw	Mrs H Panting
Mr T East	Mr B Spratt
Mr G Hemming	Mr J Shrimplin
Mr J Joyce	Mr M Taylor

Substitute Members:

Mr Spratt for Mr Bett
Mrs Panting for Mrs Harris
Mr Shrimplin for Mr Baskerville

Cabinet Members Present:

Mr A Gunson Planning and Transportation
Mr I Monson Waste and the Environment

1. Election of Chairman for the meeting

As the Chairman and Vice-Chairman had both given their apologies, Mr Baxter was elected as Chairman for the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr Baskerville, Mr Bett, Mr Byrne and Mrs Harris.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2009 and the minutes of the special meeting held on 27 January were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to 'Mr P E Moore' being amended to 'Mr P W Moore' on the Membership List of both.

4. Declarations of Interest

Mrs Panting declared a personal interest in Item 14, as she was the Vice-Chair of the NELM Development Trust.

Mr Joyce declared an interest in Agenda Item 11, as he was a Member of the Police Authority.

5. Matters of Urgent Business

There were none.

6 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

7. Local Member Issues

The Local Member for East Depwade expressed his concerns over the lack of lighting on the new roundabout on the A140 at Pullham Market. He felt that insufficient emphasis had been given to the problems that may arise from the lack of lighting. He felt that there would be an increase in the number of accidents if it was not lit and requested that the engineers look at the project again. He felt that £50,000, which would be the cost of the lighting, would be a small price to pay, to stop more accidents, which he was sure would happen on that stretch of road.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation stated that he had received a petition from Pulham Market Parish Council. In response to the Local Member's concerns he said that careful consideration had been given by engineers to the project. The existing lighting needed to be in place because of the layout of the existing junction. Four safety audits had been carried out on the roundabout scheme and the outcome of the latest was awaited. Although the cost of the extra lighting may only be £50,000, if this was spent on lighting at this roundabout it would result in a project elsewhere in the County not being funded.

The Cabinet Member said that he respected the views of the Local Member and the villagers of Pulham Market but there were other areas in the County where accidents were happening and if the funds were spent at Pulham Market, other areas in need would not be able to have their safety measures.

8. Cabinet Member Feedback on Previous Review Panel Comments

The annexed joint report by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation and Cabinet Member for Waste Management and the Environment was received.

It was noted that the issue of including comments on climate change in all reports, went to Cabinet but it was decided that there were plenty of strategies to ensure climate change was considered so it was not

recommended that the paragraph be included.

9. Forward Work Programme: Scrutiny

The annexed report of The Director of Environment, Transport and Development asking Members to review and develop the programme for Scrutiny was received.

It was reported that a letter had been sent by the Leader of the Labour Group to Members of the Panel to request that it look at the Broads Strategy with regard to coastal protection and the Broads. It was agreed that the matter be brought to the next meeting as most of the Panel had not received the letter.

It was noted that there was a scrutiny protocol scoring system with regard to items for scrutiny and it was up to individual panels as to whether or not they wished to use it. This Panel had previously decided that the scoring system would not be used.

10. Waste Disposal and Recycling – Scoping Report

The annexed report of The Director of Environment, Transport and Development outlining a number of topic areas that Members may wish to consider for future scrutiny was received.

The following suggestions were made by the Panel:

- Trade waste needed to be looked into further, the public needed to know what the Authority was doing to help cut down on the disposal of trade waste. It was noted that the “Love Food, Hate Waste” awareness campaign had started at the beginning of this week also a conference was taking place in Peterborough on the topic.
- The impact of commodity price fluctuations should be taken into consideration.
- The practice of feeding waste food to pigs should increased within the County as the process to make the food safe for animal consumption was not an onerous one.

The following responses were given to questions posed by the Panel:

- Campaigns to minimise waste disposal were the way forward with the promotion of home composting etc.
- Satisfaction survey forms were available to be filled in on site by users and an annual survey is carried out by post in October or November.
- There would be significant changes to the composition of waste over the next 25 years.

It was agreed to take forward the proposals regarding trade waste and commodity price fluctuations and bring a report back to the Panel in the summer.

11. Landfill Sites Formerly Operated by NEWS - Update

The annexed report by The Director of Environment, Transport and Development updating the Panel on the six landfill sites transferred to the County Council was received.

The following comments were made in response to questions from the Panel:

- At Costessey the long term impact of leachate levels could cause considerable contamination of the water supply. This would be monitored in conjunction with the Environment Agency.
- There was no risk to drinking water in Costessey at the moment.
- The permit to collect hazardous and non hazardous waste at the site had been granted until 2013.
- Putting households on mains water if they are unable to continue to use water from a borehole would be at the cost of the local authority. The costs of this was not known but the question would be looked into and the information would be given to Mrs Lashley.
- Water rate bills were not paid by the Authority if households were put on to a mains supply as households would usually save money on having to have their boreholes serviced. It was agreed that officers would write to Mr Joyce informing him of what would happen in a case where using water from a borehole was cheaper than being on a mains supply.
- With regard to Blackborough End, there was currently no tanking of leachate but the situation was monitored weekly and leachate levels were getting better. Levels had been significantly reduced to within compliance levels.

It was agreed to bring a report back to the Panel in six months time.

12. Delays Occurring on County and Trunk Roads

The report by the Chair of the Member Working Group was received.

Mrs Lashley reported back on behalf of Mrs Harris on the findings of the Scrutiny Working Group as follows:

The lack of communication of information was the main point to come out of the scrutiny. Better ways of informing the public were being looked into as currently it was poor. Information on diverted routes needed to be relayed to the public in a more comprehensive way. Thanks were given to officers for their help and support.

Concern was raised regarding the problems with incorrect address information loaded on to satellite navigation systems, which meant large delivery lorries were sometimes sent down unsuitable roads to get to their destination. Officers were asked to ensure that addresses supplied to manufacturers of such systems were correct.

In response to a question regarding the diversions in Bawdswell and whether alternative roads were passable, it was noted that there were systems in place to check this along with liaison between the Police, the Local Authority and the Highways Agency but this did not always happen satisfactorily. All parties concerned would be reminded of the systems that should be followed.

It needed to be stressed that the County Council wished the Police to set up a mechanism whereby if an emergency occurred and a road needed to be closed, the system of rerouting traffic should be improved. It was also felt that the Police should liaise with parish and town councils in an emergency situation. It was also felt that if traffic needed to be diverted onto smaller roads in the event of an emergency then police officers were needed on the route to direct the traffic.

It was further felt that when works by utility companies are carried out and they over run the estimated time period, the sub contractor should have a liability to erect notices informing the public of this.

The Panel supported the recommendations in the report and all of the suggestions and comments that had been made above.

13. Use of Civilian Traffic Marshals

The annexed report of The Director of Environment, Transport and Development outlining the issues and feedback arising from the use of civilian marshals in Norwich prior to Christmas 2008 was received.

It was noted that the NORSE Group owned Event Guard and it was the only organisation of this kind that was accredited to carry out activities with the Police. The County Council had representation on the NORSE Group. It was hoped that some profits from this would be realised by the County Council soon.

It was noted that a further report would be brought to the Panel in 2010.

14. Improving Local Leadership for Flood Risk Management – The Government's response to the Pitt Review

The annexed report of The Director of Environment, Transport and Development informing Members of Progress on Actions being undertaken on the Pitt Review and expectations from Government on local authorities was received.

It was noted that there had been many problems with pitch fibre pipes including the high cost of them and the County and district councils were in the process of trying to get these pipes adopted by the water companies but the water companies were negotiating on the state of the pipes before they would adopt them.

Concern was expressed that coastal erosion would worsen if there was not suitable flood risk management, as they were inextricably linked.

It was noted that there was an overlap in the area of flood management with the Fire and Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Panel, it was asked that work was co-ordinated so that plans were infallible.

It was agreed to note the progress made in progressing the Pitt recommendations and that discussions would take place with the Norfolk Resilience Forum on how the County Council take the matter forward.

15. Partnership Working

The annexed report by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development, outlining the agreed two year rolling programme of review for Planning and Transportation partnership working, was received.

It was felt that governance was good and good exit strategies were in place. The Panel agreed to take the programme forward.

16. Budget Monitoring 2008/09

The annexed report by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development Panel monitoring the budget for 2008/09 was received.

The following comments were made in response to questions from the Panel:

- Waste trends had changed and had reduced the level of underspend considerably.
- The traffic calming budget had increased due to the uncertainty over when developers would sign up to Section 106 Agreements, this was an impact of the recession. Expected levels of increase in this area were expected to reduce over the next year and this would be factored into the budget.
- Sixty thousand responses had been received regarding the Local Development Framework (LDF) consultation and additional staff had been employed as a result.
- Section 38 and 106 Agreement funds had helped fund the LDF work in previous years. However the lack of this funding in 2008/09 had led to the LDF work overspending.
- Provision had been made in the 2009/10 revenue budget for extra funding to carry out the LDF work.

In response to a question asking whether the Department was putting too much importance on getting income in this way as the funds could not be guaranteed, it was reported that it was a significant issue that had been considered by Cabinet Scrutiny. It was pointed out that local planning authorities were able to take advantage of infrastructure funding and there were other ways to seek developer contributions in the future.

The Director of Environment, Transport and Development stated that Norfolk County Council had a good record and compared very favourably to other local authorities.

The report was noted.

17. Service Planning 2009-12

The annexed report of the Director of Environment, Transport and Development, inviting the Panel to look at Planning and Transportation's 'suite' of Service Plans 2009/12 to consider any service areas for further scrutiny and monitoring, was received.

The following comments were given in response to questions by the Panel:

Civil parking enforcement was due to be introduced in April 2010 but with the possible changes as a result of the Local Government Review (LGR) this would be delayed until 2011 as the LGR had been delayed.

It was suggested that one individual area of the plan be looked at in greater detail to monitor whether sufficient money was being spent in that area.

The Director of Environment, Transport and Development invited the Panel to consider looking at areas in more detail as he welcomed Members' input into such plans.

In response to a question asked regarding the cessation of some of the First Bus routes in the County, it was noted that the County Council were working with First Bus to discuss withdrawing some routes and how this could be best achieved with the minimum impact.

Talks had taken place with several other operators to try and fill any gaps in the service left by First Bus.

It was agreed that the area of environmental services be looked at in greater detail. It was suggested either a sub-committee or the full Panel go through the Plan and decide on a way forward and report back at the next meeting of the Panel.

18. Update and Planning and Transportation's Service Plan Actions, Risk and Performance 2008/09

The annexed report of the Director of Environment, Transport and Development providing an update on progress made to date against the 2008/09 Service Plan, the Corporate Improvement Plan (CIP) performance indicators and the mitigation of those risks deemed to be of corporate significance, was received.

It was noted that the Northern Distributor Road had been placed on the risk register for monitoring purposes, so any risks could be mitigated. It was also noted that there was 1% of the service plan actions where progress was off track, officers gave assurances that they were in the process of revising and improving the process to negate the difficulties currently being experienced.

The report was noted.

19. Progress Update on the Review of the Norfolk Coast Areas of Outstanding natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan

The annexed report of the Director of Environment, Transport and Development, providing an update on progress with the review of the Norfolk Coast Partnership, was received.

The Cabinet Member for Waste Management and the Environment stated that the new plan set out clear objectives over the next five years which was a credit to the team working on it.

The report was noted.

20. Kick Start Programme

The annexed report of the Director of Environment, Transport and Development informing Members about the 2009 Kickstart competition aimed at pump-priming funding to new or enhanced bus services was received.

It had been hoped to involve Members in bids for funding in this project but due to the timings it had not been possible.

It was felt that low carbon or electric vehicles should be considered for use in any pilot area and if successful it could be rolled out to the rest of the County and that inclusion of community transport operation as part of the bid would be advantageous.

The following comments were made in response to concerns by the Panel:

- All possibilities were being looked at in working up bids, not just services into Norwich as it was hoped to offer a good mix of services to provide urban and rural examples.
- Sustainability of any new services needed to be considered in all cases due to constraints on funding for bus subsidies. Any successful bid would be pump primed by the kickstart funding but the County would need to provide any future subsidy when the extra funding was exhausted.
- Taxis were considered to be feeders to bus services in some rural areas and were an important part of the overall network.

The Panel gave its support to officers to put in any bids that they felt appropriate using their professional skills and experience. The Panel felt that

officers were best placed to judge the merits of each potential scheme and that the routes should not be “planned by committee”.

It was agreed that bids should be based on one or more of the options as set out in 5.3 of the report.

21. Local Transport Plan Settlement and Highways Capital Programme 2009/10/11

The annexed report of the Director of Environment, Transport and Development summarising the Local Transport Plan Settlement for 2009/10 and suggesting a programme for 2009/10/11 was received.

In response to a question, it was agreed to send information to all Members of the Panel relating to whether or not there had been a significant increase to the budget for traffic calming measures in the County. It was noted that budget headings in the report included funding for other factors such as air quality improvement studies and traffic management.

There were issues around maintaining the quality and the surfaces of footpaths in rural areas as it was acknowledged that some were not very good. Officers were happy to pick this aspect up as part of the consultation. It was asked that parish councils be included in this.

It was noted that a report would be brought to a future Committee on options and costs. Officers were congratulated on obtaining the extra funding of £20,000.

It was agreed to recommend to Cabinet the use of Chief Officer delegated powers to manage the two year programme.

22. Greater Norwich Development Partnership: Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and south Norfolk – Public Consultation

The annexed report of the Director of Environment, Transport and Development updating Members on the emerging Joint Core Strategy (JCS) for Broadland, Norwich City and South Norfolk was received.

The report was noted.

23. Phase two of the Residual Waste Treatment Project – Bid Evaluation Methodology

The annexed report of the Director of Environment, Transport and Development ensuring that the most economically advantageous tender is taken though to the award of contract, was received.

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

- Focus groups were key in looking at a range of stakeholders across the County.
- A lot of information had been gathered from questionnaires from people of all age groups and genders.
- There was a more detailed report available for inspection in the Members' Room.
- There was no difference in the responses given from people in the West Norfolk area to those given by people in the rest of the County.

It was felt that the seminars given on the subject were very interesting and detailed and was seen as a very good way to assess bids, it was seen as good practice by DEFRA.

The Panel recommended that:

- i) Cabinet adopt the evaluation model outlined in section five of the report so that it could be used to assess bids for the waste PFI contract.
- ii) That Cabinet adopted a pre-qualification process that allows between four and six bidders, subject to at least four meetings as the minimum requirements, to be taken forward and asked to submit detailed solutions for the waste PFI contract.

(The meeting closed at 1pm)

Chairman



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