

ENVIRONMENT, HIGHWAYS AND WASTE POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Environment, Highways and Waste Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 25 March 2010.

PRESENT: Mr C Hibberd (Chairman), Mr M Robertson (Vice-Chairman), Mr N J Collor, Mr J Cubitt, Mr J D Kirby, Mr R A Pascoe, Mr R J Parry (Substitute for Mr M J Harrison), Mr K Smith (Substitute for Mr S Manion), Mrs P A V Stockell (Substitute for Mr W Richardson), Mrs E M Tweed and Mr M Whiting

ALSO PRESENT: Mr N J D Chard

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Austerberry (Executive Director, Environment, Highways and Waste), Mr S Gasche (Public Transport Team Leader), Mr D Hall (Head of Transport & Development), Mr R Hallett (Directorate Finance Manager), Pierpoint (Public Transport Team Leader), Mr M Sutch (Head of Planning & Transport Strategy) and Mrs C Valentine (Community Delivery Manager) and Mrs K Mannering (Democratic Services Officer).

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Minutes - 22 January 2010

(Item A3)

(1) Mrs Tweed requested the following be added to the final sentence in paragraph 6(4) – Equalities in Environment, Highways and Waste Annual Report:-

“,in particular, repeated complaints by elderly motorists about road safety at road junctions with poor visibility, where near-misses have been encountered.”

(2) RESOLVED that, subject to the above being included, the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2010 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

2. Cabinet Member's and Executive Director's Update (Oral report)

(Item B1)

(1) Mr Chard gave a verbal report on the following issues:-

Integrated Strategy & Planning

DaSTS Study London to Dover/Channel Tunnel; Lower Thames Crossing; Minerals & Waste Development Framework; Rail Summit; Terminal T2, Dover; Olympic Delivery Authority's Transport Plan; A21 Tonbridge - Pembury

Waste Management

New Romney HWRC – Update – Planning Permission for site had been approved 16 March 2010; North Farm HWRC, Tunbridge Wells – Planning Permission for Site Improvements had been approved 4 March 2010.

Kent Highway Services

Traffic Systems; Business Improvements; Network Performance; Roadworks; Member Highway Fund Seminar; Director of Kent Highway Services; JTB Referrals; Transportation & Safety Package Programme.

Environment

DeCReASE Regional Board

- (2) RESOLVED that the update be noted and a copy circulated to Members of the Committee.

3. Financial Monitoring Report

(Item B2 - Report by Mr Nick Chard, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste; and Mr Mike Austerberry, Executive Director of Environment, Highways and Waste)

(1) Members were asked to note the March budget monitoring report to be reported to Cabinet on 29 March 2010. There were no significant variances to report on the revenue budget since the report was written. The major elements of the predicted outturn remained a significant underspend on Waste offset by additional spending required on Highways. Since the report was written there had been some slippage on the energy and water investment fund.

- (2) RESOLVED that the budget variations for the EHW Portfolio for 2009/10 based on the March report to Cabinet be noted.

4. Kent Winter Service Review - December 2009 to February 2010

(Item B3 - Report by Mr Nick Chard, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste)

(1) The past winter was the worst in the UK for over 30 years. This impacted on services and agencies across the country as well as in our region. The report set out how key operators in Kent fared during the severe weather and the lessons learnt that would be used to improve services in the future.

(2) Kent Highway Services had a Winter Service Policy and Plan which was approved by the POSC in September 2009. These set out how KHS dealt with keeping the highway network free from snow and ice. The report included information relating to snow emergencies; salt bins; district council assistance; salt; media; customer contact; staffing; future development of the winter service; Southeastern; Eurostar; Eurotunnel; and the Port of Dover.

(3) There followed a question and answer session which included the following issues:-

- The inclusion of small hamlets in future plans
- The employment of District Councils' workforce to assist with snow clearance
- The gritting of roads not on bus routes and the condition of pavements

(4) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the report be noted;
- (b) officers be thanked for the excellent service provided, and for the regular member updates; and
- (c) a more detailed report be submitted to the POSC at a meeting to be arranged in May.

5. Public Transport Development

(Item B4 - Report by Mr Nick Chard, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste)

(1) The annual report informed members of the principal developments, funding arrangements and initiatives undertaken in the provision of public transport in Kent during 2009/10 and planned for implementation during 2010/11. This year's report also provided a summary of the principal legislative changes following the Local Transport Act 2008, and the bearing they were having on the delivery of public transport.

(2) Public Transport continued to go from strength to strength in Kent. Principal developments included Quality Bus Partnerships; Bus Stop Improvements; Kent Freedom Pass; KCC Kickstart; DfT Kickstart; Smartcards and Real Time Information (RTI); the Kent & Medway Concessionary Travel Scheme; and Rail Services.

(3) This year's report provided a summary of the principal legislative changes following the Local Transport Act 2008 and the bearing they were having on the delivery of public transport. The new legislation had developed the original powers contained in the Transport Act 2000, and provided three distinct levels of agreement to facilitate partnership between bus operators, district councils and local transport authorities which were set out in the paper.

(4) KCC had continued to make significant investment, through both funding and personnel, in the creation of good quality public transport services throughout the county. The County Council was committed to attaining modal shift from car to public transport, by enhancing the provision of bus services and by improving access for all. Wherever possible KCC would make use of the new powers contained in the Local Transport Act 2008 to enhance the quality of the partnerships between the County Council and its stakeholders.

(5) There followed a question and answer session which included the following issues:-

- Sittingbourne/Victoria train services
- Progress on DfT Kickstart bids
- Status of QBP in Sevenoaks
- Kent Freedom Pass – working with rail operators
- Withdrawal of Cannon Street train service via Maidstone East

(6) RESOLVED that:-

(a) the report be noted; and

(b) a further report be submitted to the next meeting of the POSC detailing -

(i) data and information on the present timetabled Mainline train services to and from London stations to Kent that had changed after the introduction of the High Speed train service;

(ii) an analysis of those services that were quicker, the same time or slower;

(iii) what KCC could do to influence a change of services and connectivity to allow a much higher percentage of better services; and

(iv) the report to be sent to the Chairman of the RED POSC with a request for it to be included on the agenda for its next meeting.

6. Results from the Highway Tracker Survey 2009

(Item B5 - Report by Mr Nick Chard, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste; and Caroline Bruce, Interim Director of Kent Highway Services)

(1) The report informed Members of the key results of the 2009 Resident, County Member, District Member and Parish/Town Council Highway Tracker Survey. The full survey report was over 200 pages long and available on the KCC website. It provided a wide range of information to help shape and improve highway service delivery.

(2) Satisfaction surveys, to gauge perception of the highway service had been carried out since 1987. The 2009 survey was carried out in November and December and included seeking views from residents, County Members, Parish/Town Councils and for the second time, District Members. The survey was conducted by an independent market research company called BMG and a summary of the results were presented in the report. The information would be used by the Director and Senior Management team to identify actions to help improve service delivery.

(3) The key headline from the survey was the continuing improvement in the public's perception of pavements and streetlights with a slight dip in roads caused primarily by dissatisfaction with the condition of country lanes and residential roads. However for the fourth successive year there were more residents satisfied than dissatisfied.

(4) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the progress being made in public perception of the highway service be noted; and
- (b) Members work closely with officers to continue to improve the service as seen through the eyes of Members and Parish/Town Councils.

7. KHS Contracts - A Brief Overview

(Item B6 - Report by Mr Nick Chard, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste; and Caroline Bruce, Interim Director, Kent Highway Services)

(1) The KHS Alliance delivered services to the people of Kent through 4 main organisations; Ringway, Jacobs, Kent County Council (KCC) and Telent. Individual contracts existed between KCC and the three private sector organisations. A position statement on the current KHS contracts including current contract remits and relevant timescales was submitted to Members.

(2) Contractor and consultancy contracts were re-tendered in 2006 and although some market testing was currently taking place, highway services were primarily delivered through the three countywide term-service contracts shown in the report. The contracts had an initial 5 year term to 2011 with possible annual extensions to 2016. The contracts did not have any work load guarantees and all had a 12 month termination notice clause.

(3) RESOLVED that the report be noted and further information be provided to Members in due course.

8. Delivering a Sustainable Transport System (DaSTS) - Presentation

(Item B7)

(1) Mr Sutch gave a presentation on the DaSTS Study: London to Dover/Channel Tunnel. There followed a question and answer session which included the following issues:-

- M2 Junction 5/5a
- Local Development Frameworks – schemes/prioritisation
- Ashford Relief Road
- Housing provision
- European funding

(2) Following debate Mr Sutch was thanked for a very informative presentation.

(3) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the current situation be noted; and
- (b) copies of the presentation be circulated to Members.

9. Select Committee - update

(Item C1 - Report by Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager)

Select Committee: Renewable Energy

(1) Further to Minute 8 of 22 January 2010, the Select Committee held its inaugural meeting in January 2010. The Select Committee was piloting a different style of working and had gathered written evidence prior to agreeing its list of oral witnesses. This mirrored the way that Parliamentary Select Committees carried out their work. Visits had been arranged for the Select Committee and it would be meeting on 31 March 2010 to review the written evidence received and agree a list of witnesses. Hearing sessions would be held during April, May and the first week of June.

Suggestions for Select Committee topic reviews

(2) The Scrutiny Board at its meeting on 24 February 2010 received an update on the current Select Committee topic review programme. It was agreed that Members be asked to consider whether there were any topics that they would like to put forward for consideration for inclusion in the future topic review programme.

(3) RESOLVED that:-

(a) the report be noted; and

(b) Members submit any suggestions for the 2010/11 Select Committee Topic Review Programme to Karen Mannering.