

Environmental & Community Services Select Committee

16 November 2016 – At a meeting of the Select Committee held at 10.30 a.m. at County Hall, Chichester.

Present: Mr Tyler (Chairman)

Mr Barrett-Miles
Mr Circus
Dr Dennis

Mr G Jones
Mr M Jones
Mr S Oakley

Mrs Phillips
Mr J Rogers

In attendance by invitation: Mr Barling (Cabinet Member for Residents' Services) and Mr Lanzer (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport)

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Brunsdon, Mr Rae and Mr Whittington.

Declarations of Interests

196. In accordance with the Code of Conduct, the following personal interests were declared:

197. Mr Circus as a member of Horsham District Council in relation to the Cabinet Member's Response to the Committee's Recommendations on the Recommended Changes to the Services, Opening Hours and Charges at Household Waste and Recycling Sites item.

198. Mr S Oakley as a member of Chichester District Council in relation to the Proposed Submission Draft of the West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan (Regulation 19 stage)

199. In accordance with the Code of Conduct, the following pecuniary interests were declared:

200. Mr Barling as a partner in Dean Wilson LLP that advises Shoreham Harbour Board in relation to the Proposed Submission Draft of the West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan (Regulation 19 stage) item.

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 October

201. Resolved – that the minutes of the Environmental and Community Services Select Committee held on 14 October 2016 be approved as a correct record, and that they be signed by the Chairman.

Cabinet Member's Response to the Committee's Recommendations on the Recommended Changes to the Services, Opening hours and Charges at Household Waste and Recycling Sites

202. The Committee noted the Cabinet Member's Response to the Committee's Recommendations on the Recommended Changes to the Services, Opening hours

and Charges at Household Waste and Recycling Sites (copy appended to signed minutes).

203. The Committee made comments including those that follow. It:

- Queried whether there had been an increase in complaints since the implementation, especially concerning fly-tipping and traffic impact on surrounding roads; and raised concerns as to whether these would be recorded accurately as the majority of these would be directed at the district and borough councils. The Cabinet Member advised that the general picture across the county is that the changes appear to be working well. Fly-tipping is being monitored with the district and borough councils and there was currently no increase over and above last year since the changes took place. Correspondence has reduced, but the next few months should give a more accurate picture. Recent traffic impact at the Bognor Regis site had now been resolved
- Looked forward to a formal review by the Committee, 6 months after implementation.

Proposed Submission Draft of the West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan (Regulation 19 stage)

204. The Committee considered a report by Director Economy Planning & Place and Strategic Planning Manager (copy appended to signed minutes).

205. Rupy Sandhu, Senior Planner and Darryl Hemmings, Planning & Transport Policy Manager introduced the report (copy appended to the signed minutes); which outlined the Proposed Submission Draft West Sussex Joint Minerals Plan, which was informed by the results of the informal public consultation carried out from 14 April to 17 June 2016, along with subsequent technical work. The plan sets out the background, the spatial context and the strategy and policy context within which it has been prepared. Key points were:

- Following the consultation and further technical work there had been two substantive changes in the plan; an amendment to the boundary of the proposed site allocation at Ham farm, near Steyning, and the introduction of safeguarding for the 2 temporary mineral wharves in the Western Harbour Arm of Shoreham Port. The consultation feedback included contrasting comments over the approach to mineral extraction in the South Downs National Park (SDNP) with some challenging the lack of site allocations in the SDNP and others requesting the inclusion of site allocations in SDNP.
- A number of responses, including a petition, opposing the allocation of the Ham Farm site had been received, of which key concerns included: transport issues associated with the site, including impacts on congestion and safety as a result of an increased number of heavy goods vehicles on the local road network, pedestrian safety, and traffic noise and pollution. An updated landscape assessment and transport assessment of the site have shown that the site is suitable for allocation. The size of the site had

now been reduced to 8 hectares, and the yield amended to 725,000 tonnes.

- The allocation of the extension to West Hoathly brickworks had raised some concerns, mainly related to the impacts on the High Weald landscape and HGV movements.

206. Mr J Rogers, Chairman of the Joint Minerals Local Plan Task and Finish Group (TFG) thanked officers for all their work involved in preparing the report, along with the contribution from other TFG members, who had been involved at every stage of the development of the plan and met with robust and informed conclusions.

207. A statement was read by the Chairman from Mrs Field, Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing and local Member for Lindfield and High Weald, regarding the West Hoathly site allocation and the potential for further traffic impact on the local community. She fully supported the comments submitted by West Hoathly Parish Council in view of the inclusion of this site.

208. Mr Barling, as local member for Bramber Castle, addressed the Committee and made the following key points in relation to the inclusion of the Ham Farm site in the draft plan.

- He supported the residents of Steyning in their concerns regarding road infrastructure surrounding the site, particularly the A283. He believed it was a sub-standard and dangerous road and would not be able to accommodate the increase in heavy goods vehicles, or that adequate road improvements for working vehicles to gain access to the site would be implemented. He was also against the proposed removal of vegetation that would be needed for clear site access.
- He was in possession of a letter from the landowner of the site to a neighbouring landowner which suggested that no definite decision had yet been made by him, as the landowner, to submit a planning application for mineral extraction on the site. Mr Barling believed an alternative site should be found for the extraction of soft sand. He therefore sought to persuade members of the Committee to recommend to the Cabinet Member that the Ham farm site be omitted from the Proposed Submission Draft Plan.

209. Mr Circus, as local member for Storrington addressed the Committee and made the following key points in relation to the inclusion of the Ham Farm site in the Proposed Submission Draft Plan.

- He considered the site to be unsuitable due to increased heavy traffic concerns and the dangerous conditions of the A283 road. He also raised concerns over the detrimental effect that additional traffic would have on the air quality in Storrington.

210. The Committee made comments including those that follow. It:

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- Welcomed the thorough work of officers in putting the Proposed Submission Draft Plan together, but queried why no site allocations had been included in the South Downs National Park (SDNP), especially given the importance of soft sand, the amount of planned building in West Sussex that is reliant on minerals, and in view of the fact that mineral imports from out of county supplies are currently relied upon. An officer advised that any extraction from within the SDNP would have to prove that there are exceptional circumstances and that it is in the public interest, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework. The exceptional circumstances test included looking at the supply of minerals from other sources outside West Sussex, and as there were soft sand resources currently available at sites outside of the SDNP, then these exceptional circumstances did not currently exist. For this reason, no site allocations are proposed in the SDNP.
- Raised concerns over the inclusion of Ham Farm as a site for soft sand extraction. These included: road suitability, safety and site access along the A283 road due to the increase in heavy goods vehicles and a detrimental environmental impact on the landscape due to the removal of vegetation site access visibility. An officer advised that transport assessments already carried out at this site had determined that the impact of development was not considered to be severe. If progressed, the identified issues could be sufficiently mitigated to make it acceptable, including the possibility of the operator entering into a traffic routing agreement. Both capacity and safety of the A283 had been considered and it was agreed that the installation of a priority junction was appropriate for the type of access and planned level of usage. Improvements to the nearby A283/A24 Washington roundabout would be needed at some stage but these are to address pre-existing issues although they would help to mitigate some of the issues. The need for road improvements would be looked at in more detail at the planning application stage. The promoter of the site was currently happy with the proposal and if this site was not used, there were no other alternatives for soft sand that were deemed suitable. The County Council had a responsibility to conform to national policy, which included planning for a steady and adequate supply of minerals. The current significant shortfall between the demand and supply of minerals would increase if this site were removed.
- Raised concerns over the robustness of the transport assessment and whether lorry load and weight needed more scrutiny. Also that overall rail and sea transportation should be more widely encouraged. An officer advised that the impact of heavy goods vehicles on roads was always a challenge, but likely to be the most viable option for short distance journeys and that mechanisms such as routing agreement can be used in the planning process to ensure that heavy goods vehicles do not use less suitable routes.
- Welcomed the safeguarding of Shoreham and Littlehampton Wharfs, but raised concerns that future housing developments and proposals could encroach upon them.

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- Queried what the consequences would be in the event that the Plan was not found 'sound' by a Government-appointed Planning Inspector. An officer advised that once the Plan was submitted, a Planning Inspector would examine the soundness and legal compliance of the Plan and suggest modifications to make the Plan sound, if required. Any modifications would then need to be approved by the County Council and the SDNP Authority before being incorporated into the Plan.

211. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport thanked the officers for putting together the Proposed Submission Draft Plan, along with further contributions from members and the public. He agreed to consider all comments with officers. He supports the County Council planning process and believes it would be sound and reasonable to say that all resources had been sufficiently identified. If the Ham Farm site were removed, there would not be sufficient evidence to allocate sites for soft sand extraction in the SDNP, as exceptional circumstances could not be proved.

212. Mr Tyler made the following proposal, seconded by Mr Barrett-Miles which the Committee considered: -

That the Committee following careful scrutiny, supports the proposed submission draft, on the understanding that the Cabinet Member considers the issues raised by local members.

213. A vote was held and the proposal was lost.

214. Mr Circus made the following proposal, seconded by Mr M Jones which the Committee considered: -

That the Committee proposes that Ham Farm, as a site, not be included for further consideration within the Draft Minerals Local Plan

215. A vote was held and the proposal was carried.

216. Resolved – That the Committee proposes that Ham Farm, as a site, not be included for further consideration within the Draft Minerals Local Plan

Impact of the Highways Transformation Programme

217. The Committee considered a report by Director of Highways and Transport (copy appended to signed minutes).

218. Matt Davey, Director of Highways and Transport introduced the report, which gave an update on the decision taken in March 2015 to adopt a series of transformational measures across the Highways and Transport directorate. Several of the measures have not been taken forward, specifically those relating to the creation of a super depot. Others have been successfully implemented. Key points were:

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- The proposals for a super depot had not been taken forward, as more detailed examination had revealed them to be not operationally efficient. There were still plans currently in place to cease use of the Broadbridge Heath depot, but no definite timeline for this was in place. The plan was to now rationalise the other existing depots, as opposed to centralising them. A change to operational teams and staffing roles had also taken place.
- There had been an overall increase in public satisfaction with the service, and a gradual downward trend in the number of highways enquiries received, assisted by the self-serve aspect of the County Council website.

219. The Committee made comments including those that follow. It:

- Welcomed the Highways efficiency improvements, but raised concerns that the original transformation programme had been presented as a complete package which would modernise the service and achieve savings with the introduction of a super depot. As this proposal had now been rejected, and together with the sale of the Broadbridge Heath Depot being progressed, this would mean a reduction in sites. Concerns were also raised over whether this will impact the quality of service provided in the north of the County, addressing short term financial issues only. Mr Davey advised that Balfour Beatty no longer operates from the Broadbridge Heath site, only from the 3 remaining depots in Drayton, Clapham and Hassocks. Currently the only staff located there were elements of the transport team dealing with inspections and enquiries. Staff should have less distance to travel if they were based in Crawley or Horsham and there was no intention to relocate them to make them less operationally efficient. There needed to be a strategic placement of the limited resources, which included keeping some staff in the north of the County. There had already been a significant change in the way staff carried out duties, with mobile working and staff travel to sites and meetings. Office space in County Hall North, Horsham and the utilisation of district council office space were also being considered.
- Questioned whether the capital cost of the super depot had been a hindrance to the project and whether in view of the expiry of the Balfour Beatty contract at the end of 2018, consideration had been given to the fact that future operators may deem the Broadbridge Heath Depot suitable. Mr Davey advised that although there had been some concerns over funding, the issue of cost was secondary in the decision to see if a single depot would work. Any potential operators will be consulted on their most operationally efficient way of working and going forward, there would be investment in planned maintenance such as the Better Roads programme and the Better Pavements Programme, rather than reactive funding.
- Highlighted complaints that often related to small amounts of funding, such as a lack of budget for road sign cleaning. Mr Davey advised that statutory highways duties need to take priority when it comes to funding, but that it was recognised that road sign cleaning was a cause of concern for the public and needs to be addressed.

220. Dr Dennis made the following proposal, seconded by Mr M Jones which the Committee considered: -

That the Committee expresses its concern over the disposal of the Broadbridge Heath Depot in the absence of creating a centrally located hub, as this would have constraints on the future delivery of an efficient and geographically effective highway service in the north of the County.

221. A vote was held and the proposal was carried.

222. Resolved – That the report be noted and that the Committee expresses its concern over the disposal of the Broadbridge Heath Depot in the absence of creating a centrally located hub, as this would have constraints on the future delivery of an efficient and geographically effective highway service in the north of the county.

3in1 Card Update on Mitigation Arrangements

223. The Committee considered an update on implementing the mitigation arrangements before the 3in1 Card scheme ceases on 31st December.

224. Bill Leath, Transport Bureau Manager and David Crockford, Principal School Transport Officer, gave a verbal update and presentation (copy of slides appended to the signed minutes) which outlined the steps taken to ensure mitigation was in place. Key points were:

- Positive talks had taken place with colleges and bus operators, with Stagecoach and Metrobus already introducing discounted products for post 16 year-olds. These include a Stagecoach discount of up to 27% on total term ticket price, with further weekly ticket discounts being discussed and a 25% discount across most tickets for students, including university ones, being offered by Metrobus. Compass Travel will offer a 25% reduction on most tickets with a possibility of extending to more. Under 16's will remain as the standard child fare.
- Lower income families of 16 to 19 year olds were being contacted directly through effectively working with colleges and schools. The County Council will allocate funding in proportion to the number of low income students, to be distributed through the extension of 16 to 19 bursary funds. The amount was being tailored in line with the impact on each student and this had been built into assumptions for the foreseeable future. Existing cards would continue to be valid as proof of age once the scheme finishes. There were currently 4,800 in circulation.

225. The Committee made comments including those that follow. It:

- Welcomed that bus companies were reacting so positively and that they were taking commercial steps to reduce fares, but questioned what publicity was available for the discounts and how much funding was the County Council prepared to put in for forthcoming years. An officer advised that bus operators would be encouraged to communicate the discounts with their customers, and officers had been effectively working

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with schools and colleges to directly target others. A budget of up to £70,000 had originally been set aside on the basis that fares would increase back to normal adult fares as of 1 January 2017. Further calculations will now be carried out to reassess. Funding has been put aside for 16 to 19 year olds, and a flexible approach to how this was to be dispersed has been taken.

- Questioned whether any geographical impact had been taken into account for the areas of Horsham, Mid Sussex, and Crawley; and raised concerns that the withdrawal of the card coincided with the closure of Sussex College and what impact this may have. An officer advised that mitigation would be carried out in a proportionate fashion, also that results of both the Young Persons Travel Survey and the consultation had informed this. Further work had been carried out to identify needs across the County with rural mitigation put in place where needed. Other travel modes, such as rail, significantly mitigated the Sussex College closure.
- Queried whether assurances had been given from the bus operators that the extra discounts would remain in place or whether they might be phased out once transition had completed. An officer advised that as these were commercial discounts the bus operators were not obliged to give assurances to keep them in place. As they were currently unsure of the costs, it was likely that they would do their best to make it financially viable for both them and their customers.

226. Resolved – That the update be noted.

Forward Plan of Key Decisions

227. The Committee considered the Forward Plan December to March 2017 (copy appended to signed minutes).

228. Resolved – That the Forward Plan be noted.

Date of the Next Meeting

229. The Committee noted that its next scheduled meeting will take place on 9 December 2016 at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

The meeting ended at 1.25pm

Chairman