

Environmental & Community Services Select Committee

12 June 2013 – At a meeting of the Select Committee held at 11.30 am at County Hall, Chichester.

Present: Mr de Mierre (Chairman)

Mrs Brunsdon	Mr R Oakley	Mr Tyler
Dr Dennis	Mr S Oakley	Mr Whittington
Mr G Jones	Mrs Phillips	
Mr M Jones	Mr J Rogers	

In attendance by invitation:

- Mr Barnard (Cabinet Member for Residents' Services)
- Mr Montyn (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport)

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Mr Barrett-Miles

Declarations of Interest

1. No pecuniary or personal interests were declared.

Minutes

2. The following response had been received regarding an action for the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport in minute 132 to check whether there was any correlation between commercial bus routes and high concessionary fares: -

There is no link between the amount the scheme costs and the commerciality of bus routes. The scheme, by its nature prevents reimbursement for bus operators contributing towards the (profitability) commerciality of bus routes. One of the key features of the scheme is that by law bus operators are no better off with the scheme than without it. So by definition bus routes cannot be any more or less commercial whether the scheme exists or not.

It is certainly true the all operators know what revenue they will receive from running a bus route, part of which will be concessionary travel. It is also true that bus operators focus their efforts on those routes that have the potential to carry the highest number of passengers. But they would have received a proportion of that income in any event if the scheme did not exist. The fact that the scheme provides free travel and will generate therefore bus use that wouldn't have existed without the scheme is accounted for by only paying for a proportion of the journeys and a proportion of the fare. Finally the scheme provides a dis-incentive for bus operators to increase their fares because such increases are also factored into reimbursement with the effect of reducing it. All of this is achieved through following national guidance and local negotiation.

3. The Committee requested an update on the Council's Draft Response to the Government's Aviation Policy Consultation (minute 134 refers).

ACTION: Ninesh Edwards to circulate a briefing note to the Committee by email.

4. The minutes of the Environmental & Community Services Select Committee meeting held on 27 February 2013 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

Committee Membership

5. The Committee noted its membership.

Terms of Reference

6. The Committee noted its Terms of Reference.

Total Performance Monitor

7. The Committee listened to presentations by Geoff Lowry (Head of Highways and Transport) Andy Ekinsmyth (Divisional Manager Transport and Countryside Services) Lesley Sim (Information Services Manager) Duncan Barratt (Community & Economic Development Manager) Lee Neale (Deputy Chief Fire Officer) Tony Kershaw (Head of Law and Governance) and Graeme MacPherson (Head of Waste Services) and considered a report by the Director of Finance and Assurance, Director of Service Operations, Director of Communities Commissioning and Chief Fire Officer (copies appended to the signed minutes)

8. Highways and Transport

8.1 Geoff Lowry included the following points in his presentation:

- The County Council is responsible for over 2,500 miles of highway in West Sussex.
- The highway network is the County Council's biggest single asset
- The Council was not responsible for private roads or Highways Agency roads - the M23, A23 and A27
- The County Council's asset does not just include tarmac – also includes drainage, bridges, street lighting, street signage and street furniture.
- The Council's Highway Service plans up to 10-20 years ahead and produces the Integrated Works programme, which details works to be delivered over the following two years.
- A Members' Task Force had been established to look at the long-term investment needed in roads
- A website had been developed in conjunction with Balfour Beatty to inform Members and residents about the services we provide to maintain the condition of the highway. This includes Operation Watershed, planned and reactive maintenance, routine maintenance (such as grass cutting), as well as performance and travel information.

ACTION: Geoff Lowry to send Members a link to the website - additional information would follow via newsletters

9. Summary of responses to Members' questions and comments:

- The Love West Sussex website could not be expanded to provide the information above as it was a reporting website. Also, creating a new website would be the quickest way of providing this information to residents
- The Highways Rangers Service was seen as very important and was subject to a review to see how it would fit in to the new structure

10. Countryside and Transport

10.1 Summary of responses to Members' questions and comments:

- Income from the issue of Blue Badges for the disabled and money from the Government meant that the Blue Badge scheme was cost neutral to the Council
- Most controlled parking schemes were accepted by residents, but the Council was reviewing how it consulted on, and developed schemes in the future
- Roughly 50% of formerly subsidised bus routes still operated
- National guidance was followed when considering the possibility of cycle routes when new housing was developed
- There had been a slight increase in the Rights of Way in the county and a 40% increase in those managed by the Council

11. Information Services

11.1 Lesley Sim included the following points in her presentation:

- The income from lending CDs and DVDs was declining, so the service was trying new ways of raising income, such as Amazon lockers
- The Library Service was considering using texting to remind customers to return books and lending e-books, although physical books remained the most popular

12. Summary of responses to Members' questions and comments:

- The Record Office had facilities for customers to access genealogy websites such as Ancestry.com
- Members requested that a tour of the Record Office be arranged on one of the Committee's project days – **ACTION**: Ninesh Edwards/Rob Castle to arrange
- The Library Service's performance was measured by customer surveys, benchmarking against other local authorities and the ratio of compliments to complaints
- A record of items borrowed was kept so libraries knew how each part of the service was performing
- The Library Service spent £1m a year on books, CDs and DVDs – new books were selected weekly with old ones being sold cheaply directly to the public. Valuable books were sold via Amazon and rare books by Sothebys
- Despite a 33% reduction in spending, lending was only down by 9% and no libraries had closed
- Academies could choose whether or not to buy back the services of the School Library Service

13. The Economy, Active Communities and Community Safety

13.1 Duncan Barratt included the following points in his presentation:

13.2 Economy

- There were targets around a strong and diverse economy aimed at producing the following four outcomes: More West Sussex Business, More Business Start-ups in West Sussex, More Apprentices Recruited by West Sussex Businesses and More West Sussex Residents in Work
- An Economic Commission was being developed to help understand business needs by pulling together different aspects for all parties

13.3 Active Communities

- There were many projects where the cooperation and support of communities was needed for delivery e.g. the Green Deal and Superfast Broadband
- Communities had shown a great desire to engage with the Council

13.4 Community Safety

- Members could influence how the Council dealt with issues such as business crime, rural crime and crimes against older people

14. Summary of responses to Members' questions and comments:

- The Council's support for businesses was primarily advisory, not financial
- Improvements to the A27 were vital to economic growth and would be a significant issue relating to proposals in West Sussex associated with the Brighton City Deal
- The Champion for Enterprise objective would consider links with neighbouring authorities to the west

15. The Fire and Rescue Service

15.1 Lee Neale included the following points in his presentation:

- The three aspects of the service were prevention, protection and emergency response: -
 - Prevention – educating young people in matters such as road safety and older people on home safety
 - Protection – the inspection of public places and enforcing regulations
 - Emergency Response – to fires, road traffic accidents etc.
- The Service's budget had been reduced by £2.5m due to savings being made
- The Service was matching resource to risk

16. Summary of responses to Members' questions and comments:

- The savings made were the equivalent to those that would have been made if the Service had merged with East Sussex Fire Authority – there were no advantages left in merging
- The number of fires had reduced due to new regulations regarding furniture and preventative work by the Service

17. Regulatory Services

17.1 Tony Kershaw included the following points in his presentation:

- The core services of Registration/Ceremonies were statutory, there were also some discretionary ceremonial services (venue usage measured)
- Income from ceremonies covered the costs of the whole Registration Service
- 'Tell us Once' was a service that will enable people, after the death of a relative/friend, to provide all relevant information to the Registration Service, which would then pass it on to all other organisations that required it
- Apart from its statutory services, Trading Standards also provided support services to businesses, vulnerable adults (through scam busting schemes) and children (by regulating the sale of cigarettes and alcohol)
- There was a statutory duty to support the Coroner – this was done with a small number of staff, but costs were incurred for inquests and mortuary services
- The Medical Examiner Service would revamp the way deaths were certified and be self-funding

18. Waste Services

18.1 Graeme MacPherson included the following points in his presentation:

- Viridor ran the Council's household recycling and waste transfer sites and had greatly improved recycling rates
- 44.3% of household waste went through the Materials Recycling Facility – the target to be reached by 2015 was 45%
- The Materials Resource Management Contract dealt with black bag waste
- The Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) Plant has just been completed at a cost of £100m and would be operational by the end of the year
- Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) was what was left after organic material and metal had been removed from waste – this could then be used as fuel – the Council was aiming to procure a market for RDF by Spring 2014
- The Council also intended to dramatically reduce the amount of waste it sent to landfill
- Compost Like Output was produced and was used instead of top soil on landfill sites
- The Council was not responsible for the disposal of commercial waste

19. Summary of responses to Members' questions and comments:

- There was a law about reducing packaging e.g. lighter glass bottles, and more packaging was now recyclable
- The Council could get income from commercial users sending waste to the MBT Plant
- There was a Joint Municipal Waste Strategy under which the district and borough councils in West Sussex had joint collection standards – the Council was also looking at working with other south east authorities, but would need to be sure that any further joint working would produce greater benefits than those already in place

20. Stef Young, Finance and Performance, introduced the main Total Performance Monitor report highlighting the following points:

- The Highways & Transport, Public Protection and Deputy Leader portfolio areas were all underspent at the end of the financial year

- £1.3m of underspend from the Highways and Transport Capital Programme would be used for the Shoreham Bridge project
- Of the six performance measures, five were green with the one against increased percentage of customer satisfaction as measured through the annual National Highways and Transport Network Public Satisfaction Survey showing red – measures were in place to improve in this area

20. Summary of responses to Members' questions and comments

- Each year the amount of waste expected to go to landfill was based on estimates of how much each District/Borough Council thought it would collect, therefore, if more was collected, more went to landfill
- Changes to the bus network had been taken into account when estimating how many people would make bus journeys, so the most likely reason for lower numbers than expected was bad weather
- Currently it was not possible to measure how many tourists used buses as not all operators had the necessary technology
- Extra gangs working on the Highways Maintenance Contract might be kept on
- Delays due to installation problems had caused under performance of the street lighting contract, bad weather meant that the position would not be rectified until Autumn 2014

21. Resolved – That the Committee notes the revenue, savings, capital, performance and risk position at the end of March 2013.

Appointment of Business Planning Group Members

22. Nominations were received for Mr de Mierre, Mr J Rogers, Mr S Oakley, Mrs Phillips and Dr Dennis (in the absence of a nomination from the Labour Group)

23. Resolved – That the Committee appointed the following members to its Business Planning Group: Mr de Mierre, Mr J Rogers, Mr S Oakley, Mrs Phillips and Dr Dennis

Business Planning Group Report

24. The Committee considered a report by the Chairman of the former Business Planning Group (copy appended to the signed minutes)

25. Resolved – That the Committee endorses the content of the report

Work Programme Planning

26. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Finance & Assurance and the Head of Law & Governance (copy appended to the signed minutes) and made the following comments/suggestions:

- The following topics to be considered by the Business Planning Group as being dealt with by Task & Finish Groups:
 - Review of On-Street Parking Charges
 - Review of the Integrated Parking Strategy (possibly with the above topic)
 - Highways Asset Management
 - Community Infrastructure Levy

- The following topics were also considered to be priorities:
 - Flood Risk Management
 - Aviation Policy
 - Enabling Community Action
- It was noted that the item on the Procurement Process for Substance Misuse Treatment would now come to the Committee in September instead of July
- The Committee requested the following items to be considered for the Work Programme:
 - Development of a Waste Strategy – **ACTION:** Ninesh Edwards to check when would be the most appropriate time for the Committee to look at the Waste Strategy
 - The issue of drilling licences including possible fracking
- The Committee wished to visit the sites of the Mechanical Biological Treatment Plant and the Materials Recycling Facility – **ACTION:** Ninesh Edwards/Rob Castle to arrange visits for early 2014

Forward Plan of Key Decisions

27. The Committee considered extracts from the Forward Plan for July to October and had no comments to make.
28. Resolved – That the Committee notes the Forward Plan.

Date of Next Meeting

29. The next meeting of the Committee will be on 12 July at 10.30am in County Hall, Chichester. Items likely to be on the agenda include:

- Strategic Transport Investment Programme
- Rampion Offshore Windfarm

The meeting ended at 13.50pm

Chairman.