

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 10 October 2012

TRANSPORT, ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Chairman's Statement

My Chairman's statement for this full council includes details of three Committee meetings! The scheduled meetings that took place on 17th July 2012 and 5th September 2012 and the extra meeting that took place on 15th August 2012.

17 July 2012

There was a comprehensive oral update from the Corporate Director Business and Environmental Services which included information on:

- The position regarding financial savings.
- Street Lighting
- Highways Maintenance Contract
- Unsurfaced, Unclassified Roads and Civil Parking Enforcement
- Schemes Devolved Funding / City Deals
- Allerton Waste Private Finance Initiative (PFI)
- Highways Agency – A64 Hopgrove Roundabout
- Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

Other reports considered by the Committee included:

- Use of A boards on Northallerton High Street.

We strive to encourage members of the public to get involved with overview and scrutiny so we were particularly pleased to welcome Mr Kevin Grainger to our July meeting to voice his concerns around the use of A boards in Northallerton High Street. Mr Grainger believes that 'A boards' cause an obstruction to pedestrians especially for those people with sight impairments or problems with mobility.

We welcome a common sense approach by Highways officers and acknowledge that it is a difficult issue to 'police' as there had to be a balance between appreciating the value of advertising for local businesses but not causing an obstruction to pedestrians.

- The Local Nature Partnership

An application to DEFRA was made for formal recognition as a Local Nature Partnership (LNP) for North Yorkshire & York, (since the meeting we were pleased to learn the submission was successful!)

Members supported the development of the partnership seeing it as clearly beneficial from both an environmental and economic perspective.

- Design Standards for Developer Funded Highway Works.

The Committee gave its views on a proposed policy for the application of appropriate design standards for developer funded road works within North Yorkshire.

It was clear to see there is a need for more robust guidance on developer funded highway works and that the guidance would support decisions taken should there be a need to defend them in any appeals process.

15 August 2012

- Highways Agency – A64

I called a special meeting of the Committee to facilitate a meeting between ourselves, the Highways Agency, Ryedale Area Committee and Yorkshire Coast and Moors Area Committee to look at issues surrounding the A64.

We were pleased to welcome Roger Wantling of the Highways Agency and representatives of both Area Committees.

Mr Wantling thanked the Committee for giving him the opportunity to engage with Members. He sincerely apologised to local residents and businesses for any inconvenience caused by delays surrounding the Brambling Fields scheme. Unfortunately the heavy rain had delayed the work, but the contractors were anticipating that the junction would be open to traffic by the end of August 2012.

He went on to advise us that the scheme at Hopgrove roundabout had been designed to accommodate future growth of traffic. A recent evaluation of the scheme had seen that there had been a small benefit realised in the journey time in the morning peak travel time and a larger benefit in the afternoon peak travel time. The disbenefits were occurring when traffic was lighter as the sequence of lights was not adjusted to distinguish between the amount of traffic. The Highways Agency would be looking at the sequencing of the lights to see if this could be improved.

A number of Members raised concerns around the increased costs associated with the Brambling Fields development and whether in fact the monies spent on the Hopgrove Roundabout Scheme would have been better spent elsewhere.

Barton Crossroads was raised as an area that was known as a notorious blackspot for traffic accidents and that would benefit greatly if a scheme was undertaken to improve the safety of the road. We believe that pedestrians should not have to cross a fast moving dual carriageway to catch a bus!

The meeting was useful both in informing Members about developments but also in forging links with the Highways Agency. Mr Wantling is keen to continue to work with us and we look forward to his attendance at our meeting on an annual basis.

5 September 2012

- Oral Update on Winter Maintenance Service

The Committee was encouraged to hear how the County Council has taken a range of steps to encourage more involvement from residents and the business community in winter maintenance. These initiatives are:

1. Parish and community involvement – parish self help scheme.
2. Parish and community involvement – neighbourhood self help scheme.
3. Business self help scheme.

In conclusion he commented that there is now a comprehensive package to bridge the gap in terms of what the County Council can deliver in terms of snow clearance and what is needed at a very local/community level.

Members expressed a good deal of support for involving local residents and businesses in winter maintenance activities and congratulated the Director and his staff for the success that had been achieved so far.

- Scrutiny Task Group –Vehicle Activated Signs Protocol

The Committee sees the Protocol as a means of setting out criteria for the use and funding of temporary vehicle activated signs for low level speed enforcement on the highway. He highlighted how the Temporary Vehicle Activated Signs Protocol provides an opportunity to address local concerns where speeds fall below the threshold required for further action by the 95 Alive Road Safety Partnership.

Update – I would like to thank County Councillor Mike Jordan (as my shadow Councillor) for an admirable job stepping in and presenting the report to the Executive on the 25th September in my absence. I was thrilled to hear that the Executive have accepted all the recommendations in principle and after some further work is undertaken to clarify the costings for parish Councils the Protocol will be put into place.

County Councillor Gareth Dadd Executive Member with responsibility for Highways said he “welcomed the depth and breadth of the report and its common sense proposals” which were backed by “sound evidence”.

- Countywide Civil Parking Enforcement Business Case

The Committee supported the broad principles and proposals set out in the Countywide Civil Parking Enforcement the Business Case and agreed that it would be useful for update reports to be brought back to the Committee on its progress in due course.

- Flood Risk Management Strategy

Under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 lead flood authorities are required to develop and deliver a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for their area. There is no guidance on what exactly a Strategy should cover and there is no precise timescale for them to be published. We will await further progress reports in due course.

- Street Lighting Energy Reduction Programme

The Committee sees this as a real success story as it was the recommendations from this Committee following a scrutiny review that set the ball rolling on this in July last year.

Members were updated on the positive progress with the County-wide street lighting reduction programme that is to be implemented over four years, involving part-night lighting, dimming and switching off lights as appropriate and following consultation and risk assessments in the proposed areas.

I would like to end my report by repeating just what switching off these lights can achieve....To switch off approx 60% of street lights between midnight and 5am will not only make a significant contribution to the Council’s carbon reduction programme but also save in excess of £400,000 per annum in energy costs!

County Councillor David Jeffels
September 2012