

North Yorkshire County Council
Transport, Economy and Environment
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held at County Hall, Northallerton on 5 September 2012 at 10:00 am.

Present:-

County Councillor David Jeffels in the Chair.

County Councillors: Keith Barnes (as substitute for Stuart Parsons) , Mike Cockerill, Michael Heseltine, Robert Heseltine, Mike Jordan, Penny Marsden, Don MacKenzie, John Savage, Tim Swales (as substitute for John Blackburn) , Cliff Trotter, Richard Welch

Apologies: J W Marshall

In attendance: County Councillors Carl Les, Janet Sanderson

Officers:

David Bowe, Corporate Director Business and Environmental Services (BES)

Mike Roberts, Head of Highway Operations, Highways, BES

Allan McVeigh, Integrated Transport Group Manager, BES

Tom Bryant, Transport Projects Officer, BES

Mark Young, Flood Management Officer, BES

Paul Gilmore, Road Lighting Manager, BES

Hazel Davidson, Project Manager (Energy), BES

Bryon Hunter, Scrutiny Team Leader

Two members of the public attended.

Gail Cook, Community Partnerships Officer, Ryedale District Council

Cllr Geoffrey Acomb, Ryedale District Council

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

86. Minutes

That the Minute of the meeting held on 15 August 2012 , having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

87. Public Questions or Statements

None

88. Business and Environmental Services – Oral update from the Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services

The Director referred to the comprehensive briefing he had provided to the Committee at its meeting on 17 July 2012 as providing the overall context to the major developments across the Directorate and that the agenda today dealt with the current and emerging issues that were “live”.

The Director did however highlight recent guidelines published by the Department for Transport on devolved funding arrangements for major capital schemes. In essence the Department for Transport is looking to devolve funding to a local level in which the local transport authority will broker a partnership approach. In North Yorkshire this will include consulting with the district and borough councils to take account of their aspirations under the Leeds City Region and the Local Enterprise Partnerships. The Director emphasised the need to consult and involve all stakeholders to arrive at a thorough understanding of the situation but also the need to guard against fragmentation and a loss of a coordinated approach. Responses to the Department of Transport have to be submitted by the end of October 2012.

Members expressed a good deal of sympathy and understanding for the work facing the Directorate in delivering a coordinated response back to the Department of Transport by the end of October and a number of 'dual-hatted' councillors undertook to raise awareness to these issues in their district/borough councils.

89. Oral Update on Winter Maintenance Service

Considered –

Verbal update from Mike Roberts (Head of Highway Operations, Highways, Business and Environmental Services).

Mr Roberts commented that the transfer of operations to the new contractor, Ringway, had gone smoothly. He highlighted how improvements to the fleet will lead to an improved service and that the County Council is well prepared for the winter. The winter policy is unchanged. There is also the review meeting held each year before the start of the winter season where the Corporate Director in conjunction with the Executive Members considers any submissions for changes to the gritting routes. Mr Roberts then went on to highlight how over the last 12 months 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.

Resolved –

The Committee supports the approach of involving local communities in winter maintenance activities and recommends that in order to assist in the wider roll out of the initiative a briefing paper is sent round all county councillors

90. Exclusion of the Public: Work Programme – Annex 4 (Private Paper)

Members of the public were excluded from the meeting for Annex 4 of the Work Programme report. Annex 4 was treated as private on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

91. Scrutiny Task Group –Temporary Vehicle Activated Signs Protocol

Considered –

The report of the Scrutiny Team Leader inviting the Committee to:

- a. Note the information in the report;
- b. Consider the report and recommendations of the Scrutiny Task Group on the Temporary Vehicle Activated Signs Protocol to be presented to the Executive on the 25th September 2012.

County Councillor David Jeffels (Chairman of the Task Group) introduced the report. In doing this he also referred to correspondence which he had received from County Councillor Elizabeth Casling and County Council Michael Heseltine. Councillor Jeffels referred to the Executive Summary of the Task Group's report and highlighted how the Task Group had conducted a review of the Permanent Vehicle Activated Signs Protocol and recommended that the eligibility criteria should remain unchanged.

With regard to the Temporary Vehicle Activated Signs Protocol and had concluded that it provided a useful tool in the speed management toolkit for those parishes who do not meet the criteria for permanent activated signs.

Councillor Jeffels then invited Allan McVeigh from the Business and Environmental Services Directorate to provide further details on the Temporary Vehicle Activated Signs Protocol.

Mr McVeigh summarised 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.

Members made a number of specific comments on the Protocol including:

- The Protocol provided a useful starting point
- Funding was limited
- The Protocol needs to be monitored on an ongoing basis.
- What would happen in non-parished areas?
- Only two temporary signs per district could lead to demands from individual parish councils being unmet.

Mr McVeigh accepted these comments and reported that these were the very issues that the Protocol sought to address. He also emphasised the need to avoid a proliferation of temporary signs which could become untidy on the highway and undermine the impact that all speeding control signage seeks to achieve.

Members also commented that the Protocol needs to promote a proactive approach rather than waiting until there is an accident.

County Councillor Michael Heseltine, referring to his letter to the Chairman, County Councillor David Jeffels proposed an amendment to the recommendations in the Task Group report which was seconded by County Councillor Cockerill as follows:

1. Recommendations 1, 2 and 3 be retained.

2. The first Recommendation 4 be deleted.
3. The second Recommendation 4 be retained.
4. The second sentence of Recommendation 5 be deleted.

Following a vote, two members were in favour of the amendment and 9 opposed.

11 members supported the proposal for an additional recommendation, Recommendation 7, to be included in the Task Group's final report as follows:

That the operation of the Temporary Vehicle Activated Signs Protocol be reviewed after one year and the outcome of that review be reported back to this Committee.

- The Protocol provides a transparent process on how temporary signs will be managed.
- The Protocol provides a pragmatic way forward.

Resolved –

Members are recommended to:

- (a) Note the information in this report;
- (b) Agree the report and recommendations of the Scrutiny Task Group on Temporary Vehicle Activated Signs protocol to be presented to the Executive on the 25th September 2012.

92. Countywide Civil Parking Enforcement Business Case

Considered –

The report of the Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services.

To seek the Committee's views on the countywide Civil Parking Enforcement business case prior to consideration by the Executive on 25 September 2012.

County Councillors Tim Swales and Mike Jordan declared personal interest in this matter.

Resolved –

- a) That the report be noted
- b) That the broad principles and proposals set out in the Countywide Civil Parking Enforcement Business Case are supported.
- c) That further reports be brought back to the Committee once countywide Civil Parking Enforcement is operational.

93. Flood Risk Management Strategy

Considered –

The covering report of the Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services.

To provide an update on progress towards development of the North Yorkshire Flood Risk Management Strategy.

Mr Mark Young, Flood Management Officer, introduced the report by referring to the fact that 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. He commented that to date there was no guidance on what exactly a Strategy should cover and there were no precise timescale for them to be published.

County Councillor Keith Barnes commented that the strategy seemed to be “starting from scratch”.

Mr Young commented that currently many organisations have their own strategy but there is an absence of a co-ordinated approach, there were also some gaps such as who has responsibility for surface water flooding.

Councillors Mike Jordan and Mike Cockerill highlighted flooding problems in South Milford and Filey respectively. In respect of both cases Mr Young advised Members that the Strategy will provide the basis of a co-ordinated and comprehensive response to such problems across the whole of the County. He also emphasised that existing flood management arrangements would remain in place until improved arrangements have been put in place by the Strategy being implemented.

County Councillor Richard Welch drew attention to the importance adequate gully emptying.

Mr Young advised the Committee that this is a Highways authority responsibility and that it would feature in the Strategy. He also highlighted that gully being full is only a symptom of too much water in the system. Quiet often the problem can be traced back to changes in land usage and the deluges we have see in recent months changing the way water drains off the land, including on to adjacent highways.

Resolved -

That the report be noted and the Committee to receive further reports on this matter in due course.

94. Street Lighting Energy Reduction Programme

Considered –

The report of the Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services.

To update the Transport, Economy & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress of the four year street lighting energy reduction programme that was approved by Members in July 2011.

Mr Gilmore updated the Committee on the implementation of the County-wide street lighting reduction programme. The programme is being implemented over four years, and involves part-night lighting, dimming and switching off lights as appropriate. To switch off approx 60% of street lights between midnight and 5am. This will make a significant contribution to the Council's carbon reduction programme and save in excess of £400,000 per annum in energy costs.

He went on to update Members on Phase 1 of the programme

- Selby Bypass – Complete
- Harrogate Town
 - Consultation 100% complete

- Switch over 90% complete
- Knaresborough
 - Consultation 100% complete
 - Switch over 0% complete
- Scarborough Town
 - Consultation 5% complete

The vast majority of responses were very positive and supportive of the proposals. The negative feedback and concerns were mainly around community safety issues and lack of consultation.

Mr Gilmore also highlighted the lessons learned:

- Improvements to information management and dissemination:
 - Additional FAQs on the website and information leaflet
 - Space for contact details on the online feedback form to allow replies to direct requests and questions
 - Additional releases to the local press
- Improved communication with key stakeholders:
 - Early contact and advice to local councillors to assist in curtailing the spread of misinformation and speculation
 - Further encouragement of community police involvement
 - Include MP's in consultation process
 - The Customer Service call system be amended to identify the number of calls which relate specifically to the energy reduction programme

Resolved –

That the BES directorate be congratulated on its work and that the Street Lighting Manager be invited to attend the Committee meeting on 23 January 2013 to give further update on progress.

95. Work Programme

Considered –

The report of the Scrutiny Team Leader asking the Committee to:

- (a) Note the information in the report;
- (b) Confirm, amend, remove or add to the list of matters shown on the work programme.

Resolved –

- (a) That information in the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 12:50 pm.

BH
21 September 2012