

Scrutiny Annual Report: April 2013 to March 2014

Select Committee: Economy Transport & Environment

Report of Chairman: Councillor Sharyn Wheale

In-depth Reviews undertaken / outcomes being monitored:

Flood Risk Management – the committee agreed at the June 2013 meeting to undertake scrutiny of flood risk management. Written evidence was invited from stakeholders in October 2013 and an oral evidence session with invited witnesses took place in December 2013 as part of a conference involving partner authorities. The findings and recommendations are due to be approved by the Select Committee at the April 2014 meeting, with monitoring of responses to these recommendations and any learning arising from the flooding experienced in the winter of 2013/14 subsequent to the scrutiny to be undertaken over the course of 2014/15.

Light Touch Reviews undertaken / outcomes being monitored:

A Board Policy – in 2012 the Select Committee supported the introduction of a policy on A Boards, allowing district councils to use a discretionary licensing scheme for A Boards if there were areas where use of A Boards would benefit from being managed. At the June 2013 meeting Members received an update on progress since introduction of the policy. The committee supported the County Council's policy position and recommended that the District and Borough Councils be written to, to remind them of the policy.

A3 Zip Bus Priority Corridor – in 2012/13 the Select Committee had a Working Group on this topic, to follow up issues identified by a joint scrutiny review undertaken by Havant Borough Council and East Hampshire District Council. At the June 2013 meeting the Select Committee received an update on the actions taken to address the issues discussed by the Working Group. Members were satisfied the issues raised had been addressed appropriately.

Pre-scrutiny of Significant Executive Decisions:

Local Flood Risk Management Strategy – at the June 2013 meeting the Select Committee considered the draft of this strategy, to establish how the County Council will fulfil its responsibilities to manage 'local' flood risk. The Committee commended the strategy to the Executive Member for Economy Transport & Environment for adoption.

Traffic Management Policy & Guidance – at the November 2013 meeting the Select Committee considered the draft Traffic Management Policy & Guidance document, which brought together the County Council's traffic management policies. A deputation was received regarding the policy on use of 20mph speed limits. The Committee commended the document for approval by the Executive Member for Economy Transport & Environment, subject to further investigation of the 20mph speed limits issue.

Highway Maintenance Management Plan – at the November 2013 meeting the Select Committee considered the draft Highway Maintenance Management Plan, which brought together the County Council's highway maintenance policies. The Committee commended the document for approval by the Executive Member for Economy Transport & Environment.

Call-in of Significant Executive Decisions: None in this period

Referrals:

Fracking - At the May 2013 meeting of County Council a motion was tabled regarding hydraulic fracturing to access shale gas (fracking). This was referred to this Committee for consideration, which took place at the November 2013 meeting. The Select Committee were briefed on the fracking process, and the independent review of the major risks undertaken by the Royal Society and Royal Academy of Engineering. The committee recommended to County Council that no further action was required by the County Council at that time as the committee was satisfied that rigorous regulations and controls were in place to manage the potential risks from shale gas extraction. The committee also recommended that as this area was at an early stage in the UK, that the regulatory framework and government guidance remain under review, and that the recommendation of the independent review regarding development of specific shale gas guidelines be supported.

Scrutiny of Budgets and Performance:

The Committee monitored progress with achieving the efficiency savings required by the Economy Transport & Environment Department in 2013/14 at the November 2013 meeting.

Members pre-scrutinised the revenue and capital budget for 2014/15 onwards for the Economy Transport & Environment portfolio at their January 2014 meeting. Following questions, Members agreed with the recommendations set out to the Executive Member for Economy Transport & Environment in relation to both the revenue and capital budget.

Policy Review:

20mph Speed Limits – At the January 2014 meeting Members considered the County Council's policy with regard to use of 20mph speed limits. Two deputations were received in favour of more widespread use of 20mph limits. Following debate, the Select Committee supported the existing policy of undertaking pilot 20mph schemes prior to further implementation, however the Committee recommended that an additional rural area be included in the pilots, and agreed to revisit the policy when evidence from the pilots is available.

Questioning and exploring areas of interest and concern:

- At the first meeting under the new administration (June 2013), the Select Committee was briefed on the service areas within the remit of the committee
- control of weeds on the highway – at the January 2014 meeting Members received a report detailing the current procedures for managing weed growth on the public highway. The Committee resolved to initiate a light touch task and finish group on this topic, to consider whether improvements could be made to how weed control maintenance is undertaken (to take place in 2014/15, work programme pressures permitting)

Upcoming topics:

- Term Highway Contract
- Waste Strategy
- Local Enterprise Partnership funding and local growth deals
- Flood Risk Management - ongoing monitoring