

AT A MEETING of the ECONOMY, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT
SELECT COMMITTEE of the COUNTY COUNCIL held at The Castle,
Winchester on Tuesday, 20 January 2015.

PRESENT

Chairman:
p Councillor Sharyn Wheale

Vice-Chairman:
p Councillor Geoff Hockley

Councillors:

p Graham Burgess	p Roger Huxstep
p Charles Choudhary	p Rupert Kyrle
p Shaun Cully	p Peter Latham
p Philip Fawkes	p Steve Rippon-Swaine
p Brian Gurden	p David Simpson
p Edward Heron	p Mark Staplehurst

Also in attendance: Cllr Sean Woodward, Executive Member for Economy
Transport & Environment

73. **BROADCASTING ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chairman announced that the press and members of the public were permitted to film and broadcast the meeting. Those remaining at the meeting were consenting to being filmed and recorded, and to the possible use of those images and recording for broadcasting purposes.

74. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received; all members of the committee were present.

75. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter considered at the meeting they must declare that interest at the time of the relevant debate and, having regard to the circumstances described in Part 3 Paragraph 1.5 of the County Council's Members' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 1.6 of the Code. Furthermore Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Personal interest in a matter being considered at the meeting they considered whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to

Part 5, Paragraph 4 of the Code, considered whether it was appropriate to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

76. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

77. **DEPUTATIONS**

No deputations were received at this meeting.

78. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman had no announcements on this occasion.

79. **CAPITAL AND REVENUE BUDGET REPORTS FOR ECONOMY TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT FOR 2015/16**

The Committee considered reports and a supporting presentation from the Director of Economy, Transport & Environment and Director of Corporate Resources regarding the proposed revenue budget for Economy Transport and Environment for 2015/16 and the proposed capital programme for Economy Transport & Environment for 2015-18 (see Item 6 in the Minute Book). The papers included reports due to be considered at the Decision Day of the Executive Member for Economy Transport and Environment due to take place on 20 January 2015 at 2:00pm.

Members heard that:

- As part of the corporate overview, it was reported that it had been anticipated to draw £5.6m from the grant equalisation reserve in 2015/16, however this was no longer needed due to a surplus in council tax and business rates collection above what had been forecast
- The reserves strategy was explained and it was noted that £28.5m of the grant equalisation reserve was due to be used to support the revenue budget for the 2014/15 financial year
- Across the Council, 94% of the savings required in 2015/16 would be in place by 1 April 2015, due to the early action taken this year
- For the Economy Transport & Environment Department, the savings target for 2015/16 was due to be achieved, however there would be a time lag for some of the savings e.g. for the Household Waste Recycling Centres, due to the contract coming up for

renewal in 2016

- Challenges for the coming year included: waste volumes increasing and the potential impact of changes in legislation governing waste, the increasing move to competitive bidding processes for funding and retaining key staff, as there was demand for capital works across the country and therefore there was competition with the private sector for appropriate staff

- There had been a staffing restructure in Economy Transport & Environment in 2014 and there is no requirement to make further workforce reductions to achieve the savings targets for 2015

- The Capital Programme for Economy Transport & Environment was significant, as the Council had been successful in bidding for funding for schemes. However, there was pressure to deliver schemes to certain timescales to receive the funding, which could be challenging at a time the construction industry was booming and therefore had competing demands

Following questions Members heard:

- That of the business rates raised in Hampshire about 9% is returned to the County Council at present (50% comes back to Hampshire, but the majority goes to district councils, and some to the fire service)

- That the savings in economic development did not have a direct service impact; there had been no staff reductions, but savings had been made as the function was increasingly funded from external sources

- It was anticipated the Council would see a benefit from the reductions in fuel costs in the energy purchased for street lighting. There was less likelihood of a change in public transport costs, as an index for inflation was built in to those contracts and contractors absorbed the impact when prices went up

Members commented:

- That the budget demonstrated good forward planning by the authority, as compulsory redundancy had not been needed and no use of reserves is required in order to achieve a balanced budget in 2015/16

The following recommendations were agreed (by majority with three abstentions):

RECOMMENDED:

The Recommendations to the Executive Member given in the revenue budget report at section 10 and the capital budget report at section 25 are supported by the Economy Transport & Environment Select Committee.

Recommendations passed to Executive Member

80. **CHANGES TO THE HOUSEHOLD WASTE
RECYCLING CENTRES HOURS OF OPERATION**

The Committee received a report from the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment regarding proposed changes to the opening hours of household waste recycling centre sites (see Item 7 in the Minute Book). The papers included proposals due to be considered at the Decision Day of the Executive Member for Economy Transport & Environment due to take place on 20 January 2015 at 2:00pm.

Members heard:

- That it was proposed to change opening hours from 8am - 4pm in the Winter to 9am - 4pm, and in the summer from 8am - 7pm to 8am - 5pm
- Consideration had been given to data on the average number of visitors to sites per hour, and preferences expressed in feedback to a public consultation
- That the contractor services the bins first thing in the morning, so they are clear at the start of the day
- Data shows sites are used more between 8am and 10am than between 5pm and 7pm. The proposal to close at 5pm would affect around 174,000 visits (about 4%)

Following questions Members heard:

- That sites received more visits at the weekend than during the week (and a greater volume of waste) however the pattern of visit times remained the same
- That sites were well used across the week and there wasn't an obvious quiet day
- It had been a priority to keep consistency in opening hours so it was clear for the public
- Closing certain sites on certain days of the week had not been considered at this time, although it could be revisited when the contract is due for renewal in 2016
- The highest public preference from the consultation was for later morning opening (37%), with earlier evening opening the least popular (6%)
- Some sites need to close when the bins are serviced, however this usually only takes 15 minutes, and site staff will use their judgement to have the least impact on those wishing to access the site

Members commented:

- That discussions could be held with the planning authorities for those sites whose opening hours were limited by planning restrictions, to seek consistency
- That it was preferable to chose the option which reflected the feedback from the public consultation
- Some members were concerned about the

impact of reducing opening hours, meaning that people who work 9am to 5pm may not be able to get to HWRCs during the week

The recommendation proposed in the report was Option E: Winter opening hours 9am to 4pm, Summer opening hours 8am to 5pm

This was put to the vote and only supported by one member. Cllr Cully proposed the committee recommend Option C, as this was anticipated to generate the same level of savings as option E, but reflected consultation responses by opening later in the morning and retaining opening after 5pm in the summer.

Therefore, the following recommendations were agreed by majority vote (Cllr Kyrle wished it to be recorded he was against any reductions to opening hours):

RECOMMENDED:

1) That the Executive Member for Economy Transport & Environment approves a permanent change to the opening hours at all HWRCs (with the exception of the three with planning restrictions):

Recommendations be passed to Executive Member

As per Option C in the report: Winter 9am to 4pm, Summer 9am to 6pm

2) The Select Committee to review the impact of the changes six months after implementation (e.g. to consider if visitor numbers increase at the weekend as a consequence, and the extent to which sites can accommodate this)

Work programme be updated

3) That when future savings from the HWRC service are considered, opening times be revisited – to assess the feasibility of large sites having a late night opening one day a week, whilst smaller sites close one day a week (taking account of the geographical spread of sites, and current usage by day of the week)

81. **MOTION REFERRED FROM COUNTY COUNCIL:
URGENT AND EMERGENCY UTILITY WORKS ON
THE HIGHWAY**

The committee considered a report from the Director of Policy and Governance regarding a motion referred to this committee for consideration by County Council (see Item 8 in the Minute Book).

Cllr Simpson had proposed the motion at County Council and was invited to present the motion. He

explained that when utility companies undertake works on the highway classed as 'urgent' or 'emergency' the County Council does not get prior notice. He suggested that those companies undertaking a large amount of urgent works appeared to not be undertaking regular maintenance appropriately if such high levels of urgent works were required. It was noted that a handout had been circulated providing figures for the number of such works undertaken in Hampshire in both 2013 and 2014.

The committee considered a briefing note prepared by the Director of Economy Transport and Environment which summarised the County Council's involvement with urgent works by utility companies.

Members heard:

- The majority of works on the highway are minor planned works, for which companies are required to provide three days notice to the county council. If works will be of a duration of four to ten days, ten days notice is required. For works lasting more than ten days or requiring a road closure, three months notice is required
 - Works are classed as emergency if there is a threat to life or property e.g. a gas leak. Works are classed as urgent if a customer has lost connection or is at risk of losing connection. In these cases (termed 'immediate' works) operators are required to notify the Council two hours after work starts, and the authority can then take action to try to minimise the impact of the works
 - Once the Council receives notice, there are legislative powers which can be used to co-ordinate works
 - An analysis of the data shows that the most disruptive works for vehicular traffic (involving road closures or temporary traffic lights) constituted 5% of 'immediate' works, and 1-2% of all utility works
 - Descriptions of works provided by utility companies and random site inspections confirm that the utility companies are making appropriate use of the immediate works category
 - There is a variation in the number of 'immediate' works undertaken by the different water companies, suggesting that some have a pro-active approach to maintenance and others a reactive approach. In particular, two of the five water companies execute a significantly higher amount of immediate works than the other three that operate in Hampshire
 - Complaints received regarding roadworks are not known to be higher for immediate works than planned works
 - The County Council makes full use of the powers given in legislation, and a permit scheme would have no

additional benefits for coordinating immediate works

- If reinstatements following works are found to be not up to standard, utilities are required to replace them at their own cost
- Roads that have been resurfaced are usually protected by the County Council against further planned works for a year, and new roads for five years, however immediate works cannot be restricted

Members commented:

- That it would be preferable for utility companies, including broadband providers, to put in their infrastructure as standard on new developments, rather than dig up the highway each time to connect individuals
- That if meetings are arranged with the utility companies undertaking the highest proportion of immediate works, the Chairman of the Select Committee and Cllr Simpson be involved in such meetings
- The Chairman indicated that if any members have relevant issues they would like raised, to email the author of the briefing note and copy in herself and Cllr Simpson

Following the debate, the Committee agreed the following recommendations be made back to County Council:

RECOMMENDED:

1) That the Director of Economy Transport & Environment arrange for the Chairman of the Economy, Transport & Environment Select Committee, together with the proposer of the Motion, to meet with those utility companies undertaking the highest proportion of 'immediate' works, to encourage them to consider industry best practice to increase the proportion of works undertaken as regular maintenance.

2) That the Economy Transport & Environment Select Committee review the situation in January 2016 to consider whether there has been any improvement, and consider any further action.

Recommendations be reported to County Council

Work programme be updated

82. **OUTCOMES: TASK & FINISH WORKING GROUP ON TRIALLING NEW WAYS OF WORKING DURING THE EXTENSION OF THE HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT**

The Chairman presented a report providing the outcomes of the Task & Finish Working Group on trialling new ways of working during the extension of the highways maintenance contract (see Item 9 in the Minute Book).

Officers from Economy Transport & Environment were invited to provide an update on the aspects identified in the report for follow up.

Members heard:

- That the viability of delegating cutting of vegetation to district councils was awaiting feedback from legal
- Regarding updating the drainage inventory – two rural districts had been checked and 174 additional gullies and 80 other drainage features added to the inventory. In the context of 202,000 gullies across the county this was only a small increase

Members commented:

- That they were aware of examples where landowners ignored letters requesting drainage or vegetation be cleared, and once the county undertook the works it was deemed too costly to undertake legal proceedings to recover the costs. This therefore meant landowners were not incentivised to undertake the works themselves, and it was suggested a more robust approach should be taken
- The Chairman highlighted that there was a report going to the Executive Member for Economy Transport & Environment Decision Day later that day regarding the Parish Lengthsman scheme. The report was proposing the future of the scheme be reviewed in the coming year, and this was something the committee may have an interest in being involved with

The committee agreed the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) That at least one of the district councils currently covered by the County Contractor be invited to trial undertaking the weed control service on behalf of the County Council.
- 2) That at least two parish councils be offered the opportunity to trial taking on writing to landowners requesting overgrown vegetation be dealt with.
- 3) That a number of parish councils be offered the opportunity to trial taking on writing to landowners regarding keeping waterways clear.
- 4) Payments to districts for grass cutting be reviewed to ensure equity across the county.

Recommendations
be passed to
Executive Member

RESOLVED:

That the Select Committee have a Task & Finish Working Group on the Parish Lengthsman Scheme in 2015.

Work programme
be updated

83. **OUTCOMES: TASK & FINISH WORKING GROUP ON THE FUTURE FOR HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE**

The Chairman presented a report providing the outcomes of the Task & Finish Working Group on the future for highways maintenance (see Item 10 in the Minute Book).

Members of the Working Group praised the work of the group, reporting that all options had been considered, and the option being recommended was evidence based and affordable.

The Chairman thanked the officers who had supported the work of the Task & Finish group.

The committee agreed the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDED:

1) That the County Council take steps to develop a contract following the Term Maintenance Contract Plus model, for provision of highway maintenance services following the end of the current contract.

Recommendations
be passed to
Executive Member

2) The Members of the Highways Phase 2 Task & Finish Working Group form an Advisory Panel, to work with the Executive Member for Economy Transport & Environment going forwards, to provide advice and oversight as the new contract is developed.

84. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman presented the Committee's forthcoming work programme (Item 11 in the Minute Book).

The Chairman proposed to add an item to the work programme regarding the Cycling and Walking Strategy (a report regarding which was being considered at the Decision Day of the Executive Member for Economy Transport & Environment on 20 January at 2:00pm).

Cllr Heron requested an item be added on animal casualties on the roads, particularly in the New Forest.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee's work programme be approved subject to any amendments made at this meeting.

Work programme
be updated

Chairman, 16 April 2015