

AT A MEETING of the ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION SELECT COMMITTEE of the COUNTY COUNCIL held at The Castle, Winchester on Tuesday, 5 October 2010.

PRESENT

Chairman:

p Councillor Sharyn Wheale

Vice-Chairman:

p Councillor Geoff Hockley

Councillors:

p Ian Beagley

p Adam Carew

a Vaughan Clarke

p Mark Cooper

p Edward Heron

p Rupert Kyrle

a Steve Rippon-Swaine

p Elaine Still

p Marilyn Tucker

p Alan Weeks

Councillor Mel Kendal, Executive Member for Environment also gave his apologies.

46. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful that, where they believed they had a personal or personal prejudicial interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting, they should normally at the time of the debate declare their interest, and having regard to the circumstances described in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12 of the County Council's Code of Conduct, consider whether to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 12 of the Code.

Councillor Edward Heron declared a personal, non prejudicial interest, as he is a Member appointee to the New Forest National Park Authority.

Councillor Alan Weeks declared a personal, non prejudicial interest, as he is a Member appointee to the New Forest National Park Authority.

47. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Committee held on 29 June 2010 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Arising thereon:

The Committee thanked Environment officers for co-ordinating the waste infrastructure visit, which took place on Tuesday 3rd August, and was attended by six members of this Select Committee. Members who had been present for the tour suggested:

- that future visits are extended to all Councillors in Hampshire with an interest in waste infrastructure;
- that further documentation is provided for visiting Members to take away, and;
- that dust masks are in future distributed to Members attending waste infrastructure sites.

48. **CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**

The Chairman did not have any communications for this meeting,

49. **MINERALS APPORTIONMENT**

The Director of Environment updated the Committee on the latest development in relation to minerals apportionment. Members heard:

(Take in Report)

- That the report provided to the Committee sets out the types of minerals found in Hampshire, the reasons for mineral extraction, and the history of extraction apportionment assigned to the County. The report also details the recent events which have impacted the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy going forward.
- That Hampshire County Council has a statutory duty to publish a Minerals Core Strategy, and this has been indicated to continue under the new coalition government.
- That the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy was adopted in 2007, in conjunction with the Unitary Councils of Portsmouth and Southampton, and the New Forest National Park Authority.
- The South Downs National Park Authority will become a partner organisation contributing to the Core Strategy when it becomes a recognised planning authority in April 2011.
- In light of recent events, such as the outcome of a recent Public Examination by a Planning Inspector on local apportionment, and the revocation of the South East Plan and regional government, it is suggested that slight amendments to the agreed 2007 Core Strategy should be proposed.
- The new coalition government's planning advisor has

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sent a letter to all local authorities with mineral apportionments to suggest that the figures stated in regional planning documents, such as the South East Plan, should be the starting point for current apportionment figures.

- That Hampshire County Council believes it has new and robust evidence to argue that local apportionment should be lower than the current figure of 2.05 million tonnes per annum (mtpa). Any argument would be made based on sustainability and historical trends.
- That the likely figure Hampshire County Council will be suggesting to central government will be in the region of 1.6 – 1.7mtpa.

In response to questions, Members heard:

- That all allocated sites for extracting mineral aggregates collect data on production figures, which can then be used as evidence for a reduced mineral apportionment figure.
- That central government use a 10 year average of extracted minerals in each region as a guide for proposed apportionment figures. The current Hampshire figure is circa 1.7mtpa.
- That a Member half day briefing is being provided on this topic on 14 October 2010. There will be further information provided on the content of the Core Strategy at this briefing.
- That Hampshire has the capacity to recycle aggregates up to the level of 1.7mtpa. It is not currently possible to finalise the exact details of how many aggregates are recycled each year. The target figure for aggregate recycling is separate to the apportionment figure of 2.05mtpa, and this target has been met and exceeded by Hampshire County Council historically.
- That Hampshire wish to move away from allocating mineral extraction sites, and would set out how this would be managed differently in any revised Core Strategy.
- That the Council would not suggest a figure of below 1.6mtpa as the Planning Inspector would be unlikely to find favour in such a low figure.
- That transportation of minerals across national park areas is something that would be explored as part of a revised Core Strategy.
- That the revised Core Strategy would be open to extensive consultation. The Environment Department would hope to replicate the Member workshops held previously in order to gain elected Member's views on the amended document.

RESOLVED

That the Environment & Transportation Select Committee is invited to contribute to the consultation

on the revised Hampshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy.

50. **CONCESSIONARY FARES**

The Director of the Environment presented a report to the Committee on the transfer of concessionary fares to the County Council. Members heard:

(Take in report)

- That since the time of this report a letter has been received from Norman Baker MP suggesting that Councils may be able to continue with the current Concessionary Bus Schemes. A response seeking clarity has been forwarded by Councillor Mel Kendal, Executive Member for Environment. A copy of this letter will be circulated to all Members of the Select Committee.
- That the draft Hampshire Concessionary Travel Scheme will now be considered by the Executive Member for Environment at his Decision meeting on 19 November 2010. Hampshire County Council has a legal duty to publish the Scheme on the 1 December 2010.
- That from April 2011 the funding for the Concessionary Travel Scheme would no longer be received by district and borough councils in Hampshire, and would instead be received by the County Council. The amount that the County Council would receive was yet to be confirmed.
- That there have been a large number of legal actions from bus companies nationally who have argued that current reimbursement rates do not meet the cost of travel for those with Concessionary Bus Scheme passes.
- That a national consultation is currently ongoing within central government. This consultation is on behalf of the Department for Transport, and seeks views on revised reimbursement guidance for the Concessionary Bus Travel Scheme in England, the proposed associated legislative changes and future options for more radical reform. The response from stakeholders to the consultation questions will feed in to the process for calculating reimbursement rates for bus operators partaking in the Schemes.
- That recent data releases have shown that the free English National Concessionary Travel Scheme costs £1bn annually.
- That the last national government was expecting a 12% efficiency saving on the cost of providing Concessionary Travel by moving administration to County Councils.
- That there are significant risks associated with the funding from central government being insufficient to meet the basic statutory scheme costs. Other significant risks will also affect the cost of the basic Concessionary Travel Scheme: those who are entitled to bus passes are living longer and increasing in number, bus fares on

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which concessionary cost are based may be subject to increases, bus pass take-up rates may be higher, and bus companies may withdraw from providing certain services.

- That currently 11 different Concessionary Bus Schemes are operated in Hampshire one for each Borough and District Council. In order to meet equalities legislation, each county-wide scheme must be standardised. There may be opportunities for enhancements, but this cannot be confirmed until funding is agreed.
- That the extended 12 week consultation on options for the Hampshire Concessionary Travel Scheme closes at midnight on Friday 8 October. As at the date of this Committee meeting, over 1000 responses had been received.
- That the Hampshire consultation asked stakeholders and users what enhancements would be preferable on top of the statutory scheme, should funding be available. The three most popular answers to this question highlighted that respondents would prefer to see:
 - The ability to travel at any time of the day;
 - The use of travel tokens for other methods of transport;
 - The inclusion of community transport.
- That the district and borough councils in Hampshire had been approached to continue administering Concessionary Travel Scheme passes but had not wished to continue this and therefore responsibility would also pass to the County Council from April 2011.

In response to questions, Members heard:

- That it is likely that central government will remove the funding that has been used previously to enhance the statutory bus scheme. District and borough councils will no longer have the power nor the finances from central government to provide enhancements. However, district, borough and eligible parish councils could provide enhancements under well-being powers should they find the finances within their own budgets.
- That the smartcard technology being employed would be similar to the London 'Oyster' card and could have other applications for County Council facilities.
- That the County Council was considering an enhanced scheme for disabled pass holders, to address the responsibilities of the County Council under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- That the Concessionary Travel Scheme is not means-tested, and is therefore universally available to those who are entitled to it due to age or disability. The scheme is one of those under review by the coalition government.

RESOLVED:

That the Environment & Transportation Select Committee comment on the draft proposals for the Hampshire Concessionary Travel Scheme prior to the Executive Member for Environment making a formal decision on the item at their 19 November 2010 meeting.

Following discussion, the Chairman highlighted that the next meeting of the Environment and Transportation Select Committee was not due to convene until January 2011, which would not allow for pre-scrutiny of the Hampshire Concessionary Travel Scheme prior to its consideration on 19 November. Therefore a proposal that 'The Environment & Transportation Select Committee hold an extraordinary meeting in order to conduct a pre-scrutiny of the Hampshire Concessionary Travel Scheme' was proposed by the Chairman, Councillor Sharyn Wheale, and seconded by Councillor Adam Carew. The proposal was carried.

51. **NATURAL ENGLAND**

Wanda Fojt, West Area Manager, London and South East Region, Natural England, presented to the Committee work undertaken by the organisation, it's strategic priorities going into the future, and partnership working ongoing within the County. Members heard:

(Take in presentation)

- That the purpose of Natural England is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development. The organisation is also charged with helping to make a better natural environment, through the management of landscapes and improvement of land designated.
- That protected landscapes in the south east cover more than 35% of the area. This is a significant portion of the nation's natural landscape assets
- That Hampshire has significant landscape assets, including two National Parks covering a significant portion of the county, and two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Natural England plays a significant role in upholding legislation and providing funding in these areas.
- That Natural England are currently taking forward a key area of work, looking to define objectives for Hampshire landscapes, agreeing what it is that needs to be achieved and where, and what is needed to deliver and with whom. It is felt that this is not just a job for Natural England, but that a partnership approach is needed using expertise and views from across the region.
- That Hampshire is home to a large proportion of Sites of

Special Scientific Interest, with approximately 15% of the County designated. Averagely, other areas in England have around 7% of land designated.

- That work has been ongoing over the previous ten years to improve the value of Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Currently 87% of Hampshire Sites are in improving or favourable condition.
- That over 80% of the Hampshire coast is designated with a large proportion of this experiencing coastal squeeze resulting in the loss of salt marsh. This is due to a mix in sea levels rising, flood defences being built, and the inability of salt marsh habitats being able to migrate inland as a result. Natural England are working with partner agencies such as the Environment Agency and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in order to address these issues.
- That Hampshire has some 'tricky' sites which require different approaches to solve, such as strategic solutions. An example of this has included helping to remedy the eutrophic nature and poor condition of some of Hampshire's harbours and rivers through the Downs & Harbours Clean Water Partnership with Natural England, the Environment Agency and Portsmouth Water.
- That the South East section of Natural England managed 5,300 planning consultations in 2009/10, which was 37% of all cases received by the organisation. Hampshire and Kent areas have especially high numbers of planning consultations.
- That Natural England also undertakes work around the marine environment. Natural England are specifically tasked with advising government and industry on marine conservation and seascape issues in England's territorial waters.
- That Natural England is involved in the designation of Marine Conservation Zones, which, unlike Sites of Special Scientific Interest, will be proposed following an examination of evidence and consideration by stakeholders representative of interest groups at a regional and local level.
- That a healthy natural environment has value to local people, especially their health. Being able to access such areas is important to people's well being. Green infrastructure can play an important role in this.
- That climate change is the biggest long term threat to the natural environment and is one of the biggest challenges facing society. Natural England seeks to identify sustainable responses to climate change where adaptation and mitigation measures further exacerbate the impacts of climate change on one sector for the benefit of another (i.e. flood defences).

In response to questions, Members heard:

- That Natural England receives a substantial proportion

of its funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, but acts as an independent body in providing advice and information to central government. Natural England also has statutory duties and responsibilities that it must carry out under legislation.

The Committee agreed that it had many specific questions relating to the work that Natural England undertake in Hampshire and nationally. Therefore it was agreed that such questions would be collated by the scrutiny officer and forwarded to the representative of Natural England for an indepth response.

52. **CARBON MANAGEMENT**

The Director of Property, Business and Regulatory Services presented to the Committee an update on work ongoing since the County Council signed-up to the 10:10 campaign. Members heard:

(Take in presentation)

- That interesting proposals are coming forward from the coalition government around carbon management.
- That Boiler Emission Controls, from which the 3% needed for the 10:10 campaign reduction will come, have now been fitted ready for the 2010/11 winter season.
- That the landlord repair and maintenance programmes may not be as full as hoped, due to financial restraints in the current economic climate.
- That the biggest challenge faced by the County Council in reducing carbon is behavioural change amongst staff members. A recent pilot in Mottisfont Court has shown that carbon emissions can be reduced by between 5-12% without the need for expenditure.
- That the cancellation of the Building Schools for the Future programme has meant thinking around carbon reduction in schools will have to be more innovative. Smart meters will still continue to be rolled out across sites.
- That Hampshire County Council is very keen to look at the possibilities around selling energy onto the grid. Research is being carried out into photovoltaic energy.
- That the Carbon Management Plan is flexible and will be revised and monitored every year.

In response to questions, Members heard:

- That the Council will be retaining the Castle Avenue buildings, and will fit them with Boiler Emission Controls.
- That a feasibility study is currently being conducted into how photovoltaic energy can be created by the Council.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee receive the final carbon reduction data submission to the 10:10 campaign when available.

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53. **COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVIES**

The Committee monitored it's recommendation from July 2010 in relation to Community Infrastructure Levies, and were presented with a letter from the Leader of Hampshire County Council. Members heard:

(Take in letter)

- That Following the recommendation made by the Select Committee in June 2010 regarding Community Infrastructure Levies, a letter had been forwarded by the Leader to the Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (CLG). This letter has requested a meeting between CLG and Hampshire County Council in order to discuss alternatives to the Community Infrastructure Levy.

RESOLVED:

That the Environment & Transportation Select Committee are informed of the response received from the Rt Hon Eric Pickles.

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54. **HIGHWAY WORKS SCRUTINY**

The Committee agreed at its June 2010 meeting to scope the topic of 'the co-ordination and regulation of all works on Hampshire County Council's highways' for scrutiny review.

The proposed review would concentrate on three areas of works:

- a) To measure the effectiveness of Hampshire County Council's current methods of co-ordinating and regulating all works, to include communication with external organisations.
- b) To assess the models used by comparative local authorities to co-ordinate and regulate all works, including the procedures used by those excavating the highway to inform the local street authority of their plans, and the level of inspection levied by the local street authority on the reinstatements of completed works.
- c) To explore the merits of using an alternative means of co-ordinating and regulating all works on Hampshire's highways.

The review would seek written evidence from selected stakeholders, to include utility companies, comparative

authorities and the various departments involved in works within both the County and District Councils.

The Committee agreed that the scrutiny review group would number six Members. Under proportional representation rules, this group would be made up of four conservatives and two liberal democrats.

RESOLVED:

That the proposal for the scrutiny review of 'the co-ordination and regulation of all works on Hampshire County Council's highways' is agreed.

55. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chief Executive presented the Committee's forthcoming work programme for 2009-10.

(Take in work programme)

RESOLVED:

That the Committee's Work Programme be approved, subject to the issues raised at this meeting.