

GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Monday, 25 June 2012 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at Time Not Specified

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor David Nimmo-Smith – in the Chair
Councillor Nicholas P. Turner (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Anne Purse
Councillor Patrick Greene
Councillor Pete Handley
Councillor Charles Mathew
Councillor G.A. Reynolds
Councillor John Tanner
Councillor Anthony Gearing (substituting for Councillor Michael Gibbard)
Councillor Jenny Hannaby (substituting for Councillor Alan Armitage)

Officers: Giacomo Esposito, Scrutiny Officer

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports are attached to the signed Minutes.

67/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS (Agenda No. 1)

Councillor Alan Armitage sent his apologies and nominated Councillor Jenny Hannaby as a substitute.

Councillor Michael Gibbard sent his apologies and nominated Councillor Anthony Gearing as a substitute.

Councillor Rodney Rose, Deputy Leader of the Council, sent his apologies.

Councillor Hilary Hibbert-Biles, Cabinet Member for Growth & Infrastructure, was unable to attend the meeting due to a recent family tragedy. The committee sent its deepest condolences to Councillor Hibbert-Biles.

68/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE (Agenda No. 2)

No declarations of interest were made.

69/12 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

Some minor amendments were made to the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd April, after which they were approved and signed.

Councillor Patrick Greene reiterated his request for an update on the issue of trains running underneath railways bridges that are subject to electrification.

Martin Tugwell, Deputy Director, Growth & Infrastructure, apologised for the delay and undertook to provide an update on the matter.

The committee agreed that opportunities to travel to relevant venues be explored for future items, particularly for those concerning the county's key growth zones.

Martin Tugwell stated that he had recently met with the Chief Executive of the Earth's Trust, and that a future session for the committee with the group may be useful.

Councillor Charles Matthew expressed concerns that the county council's contract for the Ardley waste centre was creating a conflict of interest by ignoring the council's existing commitments.

Martin Tugwell undertook to provide an update on the matter.

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th May were approved and signed.

70/12 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE

(Agenda No. 4)

There were no requests to speak to or petition the committee.

71/12 MASTER PLANNING IN OXFORDSHIRE

(Agenda No. 5)

Daniel Round, Cherwell Strategy & Infrastructure Manager, Environment & Economy joined the meeting.

Before commencing the item on master planning in Oxfordshire, Martin Tugwell provided the committee with an overview of relevant issues concerning the directorate.

There was a discussion about the current status of the Kidlington recycling centre.

Martin Tugwell explained that an unresolved issue around securing the land was having cost and time implications that threatened the feasibility of current proposals. He said that alternative proposals were being considered which built on the current

household waste strategy, however, he emphasised that no decision had yet been made.

Councillor Matthew expressed concerns that this issue had been visible at the planning stages of the proposal.

Martin Tugwell and Daniel Round updated the committee on the county council's approach to master planning work in Oxfordshire. Officers outlined the purpose of master planning for an area, the opportunities presented by undertaking this work, the principles underlying the council's master planning work, and the current position of the council's master planning work in Oxfordshire.

Members praised the approach outlined, saying that it offered an opportunity to look at the bigger picture when planning for an area. However, members also emphasised the importance of the implementation stage that came after any master planning work. They added that it was crucial that lessons were learnt from any work undertaken, particularly as these could then feed into a blueprint for the county's future master planning work.

Martin Tugwell responded that one key lesson learnt had been the need to reduce the length of the planning process, and that master planning for an area helps to tackle this issue by promoting joint working across key partners.

Councillor Pete Handley suggested introducing staggered time zones for the major employers in the county as a way of reducing traffic congestion when people travel into and out of work.

Daniel Round said that officers would consider this when developing transport strategies for the key growth areas as part of an overall master plan.

Members stressed the need for master planning work to consider those areas between the county's major concentrations of growth, otherwise they risked becoming over congested.

Martin Tugwell acknowledged this point, saying that it underpinned the council's jobs-led approach to growth and highlighted the importance of delivering the county's key infrastructure projects.

The committee stated the importance of including members at an early stage in the master planning process in order to allow their input into key decisions.

Daniel Round responded that the master planning approach enables input from all key stakeholders at the very early stages of planning. It also allows for discussions to take place on an overall direction of growth for an area before decisions are made on individual applications.

The committee agreed that an item on the council's partnership working in relation to Oxfordshire's infrastructure priorities and the levy be brought to a future meeting.

72/12 POLICY ON ROAD ADOPTION

(Agenda No. 6)

Mark Kemp, Deputy Director, Highways and Transport, and Jason Sherwood, Principal Engineer, Highways and Transport, provided the committee with an explanation of the current legal framework and some of the issues this presents the Highway Authority with in terms of road adoption.

Members expressed their frustration at the length of time it takes some developers to adopt a road.

Officers shared members' frustration, explaining that the law prevents the county council from forcing developers to offer up roads for adoption within their developments. However, officers added that there were other mechanisms available to them to help speed up the process, and that they were continuing to improve their use of these alternative methods as well as exploring other options. Officers also emphasised the important role members can play in pushing through the adoption of a road.

Councillor John Tanner left the meeting at 12:00.

The committee agreed that a paper on road adoption consisting of two parts be brought to a future meeting; the first half outlining how the county council can work to improve the situation within existing legislation, the second detailing proposed changes to the current legal system in order to inform the Cabinet so that they could lobby the LGA to consider raising the matter with central Government.

73/12 SUMMER ROAD WORKS

(Agenda No. 7)

Mark Kemp and Colin Bailey, Highways and Transport Asset Manager, Highways and Transport, outlined the programme for carriageway and footway maintenance for 2012/13 financial year, and explained the methods the county council employs when assessing these assets and developing the maintenance programme.

Members sought clarification regarding county council policy on compensation and liability for accidents on its roads. It was agreed that the matter would be further discussed as an item at a future meeting.

Councillor Handley asked for a copy of the criteria the county council uses when inspecting its highways and carriageways.

Mark Kemp undertook to provide this information to Councillor Handley.

74/12 CLOSE OF MEETING

(Agenda No. 8)

The meeting closed at 13:00.

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..... in the Chair

Date of signing