

GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Wednesday, 9 March 2011 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 11.30 am

Present:

Voting Members:

Councillor David Nimmo-Smith – in the Chair

Councillor Nicholas P. Turner (Deputy Chairman)

Councillor Anne Purse

Councillor Pete Handley

Councillor Charles Mathew

Councillor John Tanner

Councillor Zoé Patrick (In place of Councillor David Turner)

Councillor Tim Hallchurch MBE (In place of Councillor Michael Gibbard)

Councillor Don Seale (In place of Councillor Keith Strangwood)

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillor Ian Hudspeth

By Invitation:

Officers:

Whole of meeting

Liz Johnston, Peter Day (Minerals and Waste Policy Team Leader) and Martin Tugwell (Deputy Director of Environment & Economy - Growth & Infrastructure)

Part of meeting

Agenda Item

Officer Attending

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting [, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting/the following additional documents:] and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports [agenda, reports and schedule/additional documents] are attached to the signed Minutes.

1/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Apology from	Substitute
Cllr Roger Belson	-
Cllr David Turner	Cllr Zoe Patrick

Cllr Michael Gibbard	Cllr Tim Halchurch MBE
Cllr Keith Strangwood	Cllr Don Seale

2/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE

(Agenda No. 2)

Cllr Charles Mathew declared an interest as Councillor for Eynsham.

3/11 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE

(Agenda No. 3)

Speaker	Item
Ms Julie Hankey (Chairman of OUTRAGE)	4. Call in of Cabinet Decision of 16 February 2011 on the Minerals and Waste Development Framework
Dr Fred Wright (speaking in a personal capacity)	
Cllr Steve Good (West Oxfordshire District Councillor and Northmoor Parish Councillor)	

4/11 CALL IN OF DECISION BY THE CABINET - OXFORDSHIRE MINERALS & WASTE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: CORE STRATEGY - PREFERRED MINERALS STRATEGY

(Agenda No. 4)

The Scrutiny Committee had before it the report of the Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Growth & Infrastructure) to Cabinet on 18 February 2011 together with the draft minutes of that meeting.

Ms Julie Hankey (Chair of Outrage) spoke in support of the call in being referred back to Cabinet for further consideration. Ms Hankey felt that the decision had not taken into account the cumulative impact of gravel extraction at existing sites and urged the Committee to consider the impact on small village communities near the sites. In response to a question from Cllr Nicholas Turner, Ms Hankey confirmed that she had spoken on this subject to the Scrutiny committee on 6 October 2010 and had circulated a note in advance of the Cabinet meeting on 18 February. In response to a question from Cllr Don Seale, Ms Hankey re-stated that the impact would be felt in a small number of communities and that Cabinet should have considered more carefully spreading the extraction and impact across the County.

Dr Wright spoke in support of the call in being referred back to Cabinet for further consideration. He felt that the current proposal did not properly take into account that most gravel demand will be in the South of the County and so would increase the amount of heavy traffic needing to cross the Thames. Dr Wright confirmed that he

had sat on the Working Group on this issue and that this issue had previously been discussed by the working group.

Cllr Steve Good (West Oxfordshire District Councillor and Northmoor Parish Councillor) spoke in support of the call in being referred back to Cabinet for further consideration. Cllr Good felt that the current proposal did not fully address the issue of crossing over the Thames. Cllr Good also felt that the current tonnage requirement is too high. In response to a question from Cllr Nicholas Turner, Cllr Good confirmed that he had fed this back to Cllr Mathew who attends the Working Group meetings. In response to a question from Cllr Handley, Cllr Good felt that more enforcement of routing agreements would mitigate the situation slightly.

At this point the Chairman called Cllr Ian Hudspeth (Cabinet Member for Growth & Infrastructure) to the table. The Chairman indicated that the focus of the committee's discussion should be if there were any material concerns over the Cabinet decision, based on examining the evidence that Cabinet had before it.

Cllr Charles Mathew spoke in support of the call in being referred back to Cabinet for further consideration as he has material concerns about the policy decision. Cllr Mathew felt that the policy is unsustainable as it concentrates extraction on the North of the River Thames, when most need for gravel will be in the South of the County. Cllr Mathew stated that he understood the need for gravel extraction, but that concentrating extraction in the areas proposed would have too great an impact to be considered sustainable.

Cllr Anne Purse spoke in support of the call in being referred back to Cabinet for further consideration. Cllr Purse felt that the proposed policy was better than it had been in the past but she felt that a great burden was being placed on West Oxfordshire and that she could not support it due to the environmental and countryside impacts of continued extraction in these areas.

Cllr Pete Handley spoke in support of the opportunity for the Scrutiny Committee to carry out its "check" function. Cllr Handley felt that the tonnage levels had been set too high and that routing agreements need to be strongly enforced.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Growth and Infrastructure confirmed that he was satisfied that Cabinet had had all the relevant information and that the decision had been based on that information. He believed that the decision was sound. There are some difficulties around routing traffic and enforcement, as well as a high extraction tonnage requirement. Cllr Hudspeth said that he was in the process of trying to negotiate a lower tonnage. In response to a question from Cllr Mathew, the Cabinet member indicated that he would feed back to Government that any funds from the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund should be fed back in to local areas, in support of localism. In response to Cllr Purse, Cllr Hudspeth confirmed that Cabinet members were well aware of the impacts of gravel extraction on the countryside.

The Scrutiny Committee received a presentation from officers that explained the context for the decision; details of the work that had been undertaken to finalise the proposed strategy and the next steps needed to finalise the strategy before submission to Government. Officers confirmed that work had already been undertaken to derive a local assessment of need and the new tonnage figures were based on this.

Cllr John Tanner raised the issue of using recycled materials instead of newly extracted gravel, Officers responded that recycled materials are used where possible but are not an infinite resource and so cannot be the whole solution.

Cllr Nicholas Turner questioned how the issue of crossing the Thames had been discussed by Cabinet. The Officers confirmed that the process of choosing sites was based on a number of criteria, including transport planning, how likely sites were to become available during the life of the plan, environmental issues and sustainability.

Cllr Ian Hudspeth confirmed that he and the Cabinet would like to see a lower tonnage requirement and have built a clear evidence base to support the lower figure.

Cllr Don Seale agreed that a lot of consideration needs to be given to the effect on local people. There are three key issues that should be born in mind by the Cabinet when finalising the strategy

- The issues of routing traffic related to gravel extraction, in particular the impact this can have on local communities.
- Enforcement of both new and existing routing agreements. In particular, the difficulties involved when routing large vehicles across the Thames.
- The gravel extraction tonnage requirement should be re-negotiated with central Government to avoid unnecessary environmental and community impacts

Cllr Seale proposed that the Committee agree they have no material concerns over the Cabinet decision, but that they would like to ensure the Cabinet Member and Cabinet bear in mind the above points when making any decisions post-consultation.

Cllr Nic Turner again questioned whether these issues had been previously addressed to Cabinet, Cllr Mathew agreed that they had.

The Committee voted 5 votes to 4 in support of the proposal by Cllr Seale not to refer the decision back to Cabinet as they had no material concerns about the decision. The Committee also agreed that the Chairman should write to the Cabinet Member to ensure the Cabinet bear in mind the concerns raised in the discussion at the meeting.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing