

Environment Overview Committee

Minutes of a meeting held at County Hall,
Colliton Park, Dorchester on 17 June 2015.

Present:

Daryl Turner (Chairman)
Hilary Cox (Vice-Chairman)
Richard Biggs, Andy Canning, Ronald Coatsworth, Mervyn Jeffery, Paul Kimber,
Mike Lovell, Margaret Phipps and John Wilson.

Peter Finney (Cabinet Member for Environment) and Robin Cook (Cabinet Member for Corporate Development) both attended under Standing Order 54 (1).

Janet Dover, County Councillor for Colehill and Stapehill, attended the meeting for minutes 80 to 82.

Bill Trite, County Councillor for Swanage, attended the meeting for minutes 83 to 85.

Officers attending:

Mike Harries (Director for Environment and the Economy), Steve Hedges (Group Finance Manager), Andrew Martin (Head of Dorset Highways), Peter Moore (Head of Environment) Matthew Piles (Head of Economy) and David Northover (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

For certain items, as appropriate:

John Alexander (Policy and Performance Manager), Mark Fortune (Strategy Officer), Mike Garrity (Team Leader), Dugald Lockhart, Senior Project Manager – Superfast Dorset Broadband, Mike O'Donovan (Technical Officer), Andy Shaw (Passenger Transport Service Manager) and Penny Syddall (Communications Team Leader (Superfast)).

Public Speakers

Linda Levi, local resident, minutes 71 to 73.

John Mahoney, local resident, minutes 74 to 76.

(Note: These minutes have been prepared by officers as a record of the meeting and of any decisions reached. They are to be considered and confirmed at the next meeting of the Environment Overview Committee to be held on **20 October 2015**).

Apologies for Absence

65. Apologies for absence were received from Peter Richardson and Mark Tewkesbury.

Code of Conduct

66. There were no declarations by members of disclosable pecuniary interests under the Code of Conduct.

Minutes

67. The minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2015 were confirmed and signed.

Terms of Reference

68.1 The Terms of Reference of the Committee were received and noted. Councillors asked what scope there was to review these and sought clarification of the

arrangements as Waste Disposal Authority now that the Dorset Waste Partnership had been established.

68.2 Officers confirmed that whilst the delivery of the waste disposal function had now been delegated to the Partnership, the Committee still had a role to play and it was still appropriate for them to be able to scrutinise arrangements.

68.3 Similarly the part that public health now played in the work of the Committee was discussed and it was felt that their Terms of Reference should be tailored to suit the functions of the Committee.

68.4 It was confirmed that there was scope for the Terms of Reference to be refined to better reflect what the Committee was now being asked to do and arrangements would be put in place to do this.

Vice-Chairman

Resolved

69. That Hilary Cox be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the year 2015/16

Public Participation

Public Speaking

70.1 There were no public questions received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21 (1).

70.2 There were no public statements received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21 (1).

Petitions

70.3 The Committee were informed that two petitions had been submitted for consideration, minutes 71 to 768 refers.

Procedure for Petitions - Petition entitled "Request for a Bus service for The Grove, Portland"

71.1 The Committee considered a report by the Head of Economy on the receipt of a petition containing 270 signatories, which requested a bus service for The Grove on Portland and asked the County Council to consider reinstating a service there.

71.2 The Head of Economy's report provided some context on the public transport arrangements for the Grove and why it was no longer served by a bus route. The report described what arrangements were available as an alternative to a regular bus service and set out a series of options available to the Committee on how they might wish to respond to the petition.

71.3 Linda Levi, the petitioner, considered that it was essential that a bus route be established to The Grove as a means of accessing education and employment opportunities as well as for access to public, retail and medical facilities. With the Youth Offending Institute, the Verne Prison and the Portland museum all being situated in that area, these all contributed towards the numbers visiting and their ability to access that part of the town.

71.4 She considered The Grove to be an isolated community especially for those without their own transport, that there should be more scope for access to the dial-a-bus scheme and the other community transport initiatives mentioned in the Director's report and that this should be better promoted. She also considered that the Island Community Action could have a part to play in what might be done to resolve this

71.5 The County Councillor for Portland Tophill supported the sentiments of the petition in that The Grove did suffer from social isolation and it was necessary for it to be served by a bus route. As, geographically, The Grove was very exposed, access to and from it was challenging in poor weather conditions and compounded the need for public transport provision. He too felt that the Island Community Action could play some part in delivering a solution and hoped that the availability of community transport could contribute to. He asked that the County Council work with the petitioner to address the issue and find a solution.

71.6 The Committee considered the merits of the petition and, whilst understanding why the arrangements now in place were necessary, expressed their sympathy with this particular situation. Accordingly, they considered that a meeting should be held with the petitioner in an attempt to satisfactorily resolve the issue.

Resolved

72. That the petition be noted and the petitioner notified of the decision to hold a meeting between the petitioner, the local County Councillor, relevant officers and any other contributory community group necessary in addressing the issue and in an attempt to resolve it.

Reason for Decision

73. In order to comply with the County Council's published scheme for responding to petitions and so as to enable local people to connect with local elected decision makers.

Procedure for Petitions - Petition entitled Askerswell Broadband Petition

74.1 The Committee considered a report by the Head of Economy on the receipt of a petition containing 113 valid signatories, requesting that the County Council make every effort to ensure that the Upper Asker Valley was provided with the vital broadband service it required at the earliest opportunity.

74.2 The Head of Economy's report provided some context on the arrangements for how Superfast Broadband was being delivered. It was considered that universal provision of Superfast Broadband was critical to the future economic and social prosperity of the county of Dorset. The Superfast Dorset programme aimed to deliver the most appropriate Superfast Broadband solution for communities, maximising benefits in a cost effective manner across the business and domestic community.

74.3 Officers explained the reasons why Askerswell found itself in the position it now did, the practicalities surrounding the rollout of the project implementation as well as the complexities of the funding and contractual arrangements. The report set out a series of options available to the Committee on how they might wish to respond to the petition.

74.4 John Mahoney, local resident, considered that fast reliable internet access was essential to economic, social and educational well-being and unfortunately, as it stood, Askerswell did not have that. There was disappointment that the village had not been included in the recent round of extensions announced as part of Phase 2 of the rollout. On behalf of Askerswell Parish Meeting he asked for a creative-thinking review of how Superfast Broadband could be delivered to the village. Whilst he was not asking for existing roll-out plans to be revised, he did seek engagement in the search for solutions. This included consideration of which exchange might best serve the community and in developing novel technical solutions, with the Parish Meeting being willing to contribute time and expertise to such a review.

74.5 The Committee were informed that Askerswell was a vibrant community, but could not be described as either isolated or remote. He understood that some particularly isolated communities might be hard to reach but did not consider that this necessarily applied to Askerswell. He considered that the petition amply demonstrated the overwhelming business and educational needs of the village and that their connectivity was vital in maintaining an active and thriving village community and its continued absence would be detrimental to this.

75.6 Officers confirmed that the County Council was committed to pursuing all technical and funding solutions possible and every effort was being made to maximise what might be achieved. Officers reaffirmed what investment the County Council, in partnership with district and borough councils, the Department of Culture, Media and Sports and BT, were making in fulfilling their commitment to rolling out broadband. They took the opportunity to explain in detail the practicalities of delivering the project, technicalities that were being faced by BT in achieving this, the processes involved in how the Programme was to be implemented and arrangements for delivering the contracts. They explained the basis on which the Programme was modelled and what criteria were taken into consideration.

75.7 It was confirmed that the Superfast Dorset Programme aimed to deliver the most appropriate Superfast Broadband solution for communities, maximising benefits in a cost effective manner across the business and domestic community. The current Superfast Dorset contract was designed to reach 97% of the premises in Dorset, including Bournemouth and Poole. Developments were being made all the time and the solutions that had now been found for both Lodgers and Uploders went a long way to demonstrating what could be achieved.

75.8. Some members asked for the costings associated with the provision of the rollout. In response, officers explained that the provision was a complex issue but essentially, as this was a commercial enterprise, costings were determined by procurement, with the County Council facilitating.

75.9 The County Councillor for Bride Valley considered that the provision of Superfast Broadband was essential to Askerswell to meet all of their needs. He considered connectivity to be vital in maintaining the vibrancy of the village and the petition clearly demonstrated this. He considered that, given the community's offer to be involved with finding a practicable solution, a Task and Finish Group should be established to see what might be achieved for the village.

75.10 The Committee then discussed the merits of the petition and agreed that, in principle, every effort should be made to facilitate the provision of Superfast Broadband to every community throughout the County. They acknowledged that this was being demonstrated by the County Council's continuing commitment towards this and recognised that universal provision of Superfast Broadband was critical to the future economic and social prosperity of Dorset.

75.11 Whilst they saw the merits of establishing task and finish group, they thought this should take into consideration all hard to reach communities. Officers agreed with this approach and welcomed the offer of local expertise in an attempt to satisfactorily resolve some of the issues raised and find a practicable solution. Councillors would be canvassed to serve on this group, and the County Councillor for Bride Valley expressed an interest in being involved.

Resolved

76. That the petition be noted and the petitioner notified that a meeting between officers and the petitioner be arranged, to include the local member, and that a Task

and Finish Group on Superfast Broadband Provision to Hard to Reach Communities would be established.

Reason for Decision

77. To accord with the Corporate Aim of Enabling Economic Growth, to facilitate the democratic process and to provide the ability to engage with local councils.

Forward Together for Environment and the Economy

78.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Environment and the Economy which provided an update on the progress being made on workstreams for the Directorate's Transformation Programme, the three elements of which were; the Directorate's restructuring, the Holistic Transport Services Review and the Highways Service Delivery Model.

78.2 Details of the good progress being made across the Programme were set out in the Director's report, together with the particular Service's focus for 2015/16. Heads of Service responded to councillors' questions about their particular service areas and what initiatives were in place so that services were delivered with greater efficiency. Improved technology playing a significant part in achieving this.

78.3 The benefits now being delivered as a result of the work undertaken by the PDP on Highway Vegetation Management demonstrated what could be achieved by this means.

78.4 Clarification was provided on how the Directorate's restructuring process was being managed, particularly with regard to displaced workforce. Officers proved an assurance that this was being managed as sensitively as possible and that every effort was being made to achieve this with the minimum of disruption to both service delivery and the individuals involved, whilst ensuring that necessary skill sets were maintained.

78.5 A key principle of ensuring that future focus was successful was to provide the opportunity for responsibility to be devolved as far as practicable to those delivering front line services as invariably they were best placed to understand the needs of particular communities.

78.6 The importance of Councillors being fully engaged in helping to deliver the changes was emphasised, both in terms of representing their communities and in ensuring that the Council's Corporate Aims were understood in communities.

Noted

Revenue Budget Outturn for 2014/15, including Forward Together and an Update on the Forecast for 2015/16

79.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Financial Officer setting out budget monitoring information as at the end of the financial year March 2015, which showed an overspend against service budgets for the County Council of £4,496,000.

79.2 For the Environment and the Economy Directorate, this represented an underspend of £408,000, or 1.2% of the budget for the year, with the details attributable to each cost centre being set out in the report. Officers responded to a series of questions on particular aspects of the report.

79.3 The Committee asked for more information on fleet services, specifically about route optimisation, fleet tracking and fuel consumption for their next meeting. Officers clarified what measures were already in place to address tracking and fuel consumption, and

agreed to update Councillors on route optimisation.

79.4 The Chairman referred to the possibility of councillors and officers jointly contributing ideas and thoughts electronically on how greater efficiencies might be achieved and more effective ways of working being realised. The Director confirmed that whilst this work was currently being developed, in the meantime, Councillors who wished to contribute specific ideas, could liaise with the Head of Service.

Noted

Planned Public Consultation on Two Draft Local Plans i) Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Draft Waste Plan; and ii) Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Draft Mineral Sites Plan

80.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Environment and the Economy which sought endorsement of the latest iterations of two emerging local plans for the purposes of public consultation, to take place between July and September 2015. The Committee noted that this was the final opportunity for the general public to comment on the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Draft Waste Plan and the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Draft Mineral Sites Plan.

80.2 The report set out what both plans were designed to achieve, the relationship with the planning process and what part the consultation process would play in this and how that would be carried out. Officers took the opportunity to elaborate on the practicalities of the plans and the needs which each would meet. Details of how the operational management of the plans would be delivered were summarised and site options were identified.

80.3 The County Councillor for Colehill and Stapehill sought clarification on the future of Wimborne Household Recycling Facility at Brook Road and on the effect mineral extraction would have on the site identified at Cannon Hill Plantation. Officers confirmed that there were no plans to withdraw any household recycling centres and that the site identified at Cannon Hill Plantation was merely an option to be explored further. Similarly consideration of a site to the south of Dorchester as part of the Waste Plan should remain in the Draft Plan so that the opportunity remained to discuss how it might be best used. Officers agreed to address concerns that West Dorset District Council had already allocated this land for a different use. Officers clarified that the minerals sites identified were purely options which provided scope for more detailed consideration at a later stage.

Recommended

81.1 That the Cabinet be asked to authorise officers to carry out public consultation on the Draft Waste Plan and Draft Mineral Sites Plan, anticipated to take place between 15 July and 23 September (final dates to be confirmed subject to agreement by Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole);

81.2 That the Cabinet be asked to authorise officers to make further editing changes, corrections and updates to the plan prior to the start of consultation.

Reasons for Recommendations

82.1 To progress the preparation of the Waste Plan in accordance with the adopted Minerals and Waste Development Scheme.

82.2 To support the Corporate Plan focus of enabling economic growth, in particular:

- work together with our partners to plan for business growth and maximise funding and investment.

- work in partnership to ensure the good management of our natural and historic environment.
- promote waste reduction, increase recycling rates and manage residual waste effectively.

Country Parks Performance

83.1 The Committee considered a report by the Head of Environment which set out the performance of the County Councils' two country parks at Avon Heath and Durlston. The key performance measures against which the country parks were measured were summarised in the report in terms of environmental quality, visitor experience, community engagement and financial performance.

83.2 Officers considered that the performance of each was broadly positive and that the financial issues of concern regarding Durlston in 2014 had largely been resolved and it was now seen to be paying its way. More was now being done to generate income wherever practicable and greater retail opportunities would go some considerable way to the parks remaining viable.

83.3 Councillors were conscious that there was a need for a balance between the parks being a commercial success and being a public asset to which the public had access and that this should be reflected in the way in which they were managed. Councillors asked officers to give consideration to accessing the AONB's initiative of Dorset Food and Drink wherever possible.

83.4 Another councillor suggested that consideration should be given as to how best to sympathetically illuminate the car park and pathway at Durlston, especially as it actively promoted evening functions.

83.5 The County Councillor for Swanage considered that the establishment of an informal Country Parks Liaison Panel, was in the best interests of the parks to ensure their success. He explained the Panel's composition of the group and what it did. Given that public health was now a County Council function, he considered that encouragement of the parks' use by GP's would bring health and wellbeing benefits. He asked that the Committee endorse the establishment of the Panel which would report direct to the Committee on activities and developments.

83.6 Councillors were pleased with the progress made over the previous year and how standards of excellence had been maintained and commended those involved in its success. Nevertheless areas for improvement had been identified and would be implemented accordingly. The Committee considered the two parks to be valuable assets to the County and were beneficial in playing their part in the health and well being agenda and access to the countryside.

83.7 The Committee endorsed the establishment of the Panel and both Hilary Cox and Janet Dover indicated that they wished to be involved in it.

Resolved

84. That progress being made with the County Parks' performance be welcomed and that the establishment of an informal County Parks Liaison Panel be endorsed.

Reason for Decision

85. To support both of the County Council's Corporate Aims.

Dorset Highways Performances 2014/15

86.1 The Committee considered a report by the Head of Highways which provided a summary of the performance of a range of services delivered within Dorset Highways during 2014/15, together with a table of performance indicators for a range of key highway services.

86.2 The report summarised the practical aspects of the service including street lighting, road safety, highway improvements, winter maintenance, road maintenance and parking and traffic management operations as well as customer feedback on their delivery and the financial position of the service.

86.3 Councillors were encouraged to see that the restoration of potholes had progressed significantly during the year, aided by the £6m Pothole Fund allocation and noted the significant savings achieved by the part night burn of street lighting. However some concern remained over perceived safety and security issues arising since the introduction of the street lighting initiative. Sight of the evidence from Dorset Police, which showed that there had been no increase in actual crime since part-night burn was introduced, would be appreciated by all members.

86.4 Councillors asked for information on road safety statistics, so that they might gain a better understanding and to see whether this required greater attention. Officers agreed to provide a report for the next Committee meeting.

Resolved

87. That the Highways Performance for 2014/15 be noted, information on crime rates, as set out in paragraph 86.3, be provided and a report on road safety be provided for the Committee at their next meeting.

Reason for Decision

88. To determine how road safety was being managed and what, if any, improvements could be made.

Corporate Performance Monitoring Report: Fourth Quarter 2014/15 (1 January – 31 March 2015)

89.1 The Committee considered a joint report by the Chief Executive and the Director for Environment and the Economy which contained analysis of the Council's progress against both of its corporate aims and presented the results of the monitoring of the County Council's Corporate Balanced Scorecard for the fourth quarter of 2014/15. Whilst the Scorecard summarised performance monitoring analysis across the whole Authority, there was a specific focus on those elements of the plan which were managed by the Environment and the Economy Directorate.

89.2 Officers reported on the performance measures for the Directorate and to what these were attributable. Detailed performance information for all of these measures was provided in the Appendix to the report. In particular there was a strong performance for the delivery of Superfast Broadband targets and for overall road conditions.

89.3 Councillors noted that, at the end March 2015, the majority of the 51 measures contained in the whole Balanced Scorecard had a 'green' rating.

89.4 Councillors' attention was drawn to a series of performance monitoring measures of note, what was being done to manage these and how these would continue to be assessed in the future.

89.5 The Committee asked for more information about youth unemployment and what measures were in place to address this to be included in the next report.

Noted

Questions from County Councillors

90.1 The County Councillor for Commons asked a question in relation to Park and Ride provision in Weymouth.

90.2 The question and answer is attached to these minutes as an Annexure.

Dorset Highways Maintenance Plan – Policy Review Panel

91.1 The Committee considered a report by the Head of Highways which sought approval of the establishment of a Policy Development (Review) Panel on Dorset's Highway Maintenance Policy Plan which was now considerably out of date and needed to be revised to reflect the Service's current maintenance policies and activities. The Plan would be complemented by an accompanying report with a series of recommendations and revisions to existing policies.

91.2 Officers explained that the purpose of the Policy Review Panel would be to consider the recommendations and revised policy to agree a revised final draft of the Highway Maintenance Plan, to present to the Environment Overview Committee in October 2015. This stood as the Group's Terms of Reference.

Resolved

92.1 That a Policy Development (Review) Panel on Dorset's Highway Maintenance Policy Plan be established to consider revisions to the Highways Maintenance Plan.

92.2 That the PDP comprise Hilary Cox, Paul Kimber, Mervyn Jeffery and two additional Councillors' to be identified.

Reason For Decision

93. In order to consider a series of recommendations and proposed revised policies to determine a final Highways Maintenance Plan.

Schedule of Councillors' Seminars and Events 2015

94. The Committee's attention was drawn to the Schedule of Councillors' Seminars and Events for the early months of 2015.

Noted

Environment Overview Committee Work Programme

95. The Committee considered and agreed its Work Programme for the rest of 2015 and noted the opportunity members had to add items to the Programme. Additional items for consideration by the Committee at their meeting in October 2015 included:-

- Road Safety, including Community Speedwatch,
- Route Optimisation,
- Park and Ride for Dorchester and Weymouth; and
- Real Time Passenger Information of Buses.

Noted

Outside Bodies and Member Champions

96. No comments had been received from councillors appointed to outside bodies relating to the Directorate or from Member Champions on this occasion. The Chairman considered that there might well be a more efficient way of providing this information in future.

Noted

Meeting duration: 10:00am – 12.45pm

Annexure

Question Under Standing Order 20(2)

Question from Margaret Phipps, the County Councillor for Commons, in relation to Park and Ride provision in Weymouth

Question

Due to a recent article in a local newspaper questioning costs & policy regarding Weymouth's Park & Ride facility, I think it would be prudent to have an updated report to the Environment Overview Committee as soon as possible and would be grateful for the Committee's views.

Answer/Response

Weymouth P&R Options

The Weymouth P&R was given 18 months of continued subsidy through Environment Overview Committee in January 2015, which allowed operation to continue in its current format until the end of summer 2016. This was to consider the operation in line with 6 key elements - the relevant 4 to Weymouth operation being:

1. Linking with Dorchester Hospital, other key partners and large organisations or clusters to encourage greater use.
2. Review the parking system at County Hall and all Dorset County Council sites to encourage utilisation of out-of-town sites and remove the incentive to park on campus.
3. Incentivise use of Park & Ride as workers car park for inter-town travel linking with existing service provisions.
4. Continue work with District and Borough councils to align Park & Ride with town centre parking strategies.

The work on these measures continues. However, in light of a Dorset Echo story 19 May 2015 this report provides an early indication of the changes possible.

Option 1 – Summer Only

Weymouth has ample stock for off peak operation and the Weymouth P&R on 98 days during the winter, actually created more movements into the town than it should have removed. Therefore the operation into Weymouth is not required between October and April inclusive. Further reduction is possible to reduce the service to purely key events and peak summer holiday use. The expectation would be approx. 70 days operation per year which would bring complications for availability of staffing, vehicles and the continued maintenance/security for the site.

Option 2 – Winter Operations [elements 1-3]

From October 2015 and to link with wider strategies to reduce parking concerns in Dorchester - specifically around Dorchester County Hospital (DCH) and Dorset County Council (DCC). A business case is in development for the staff, vehicles and operations to serve Dorchester for a pilot period. Discussions have taken place with DCC and DCH to link with travel action plans and the modelling data is in analysis to understand the actual benefits and options to ensure success.

Option 3 – Site Closure

The site will be outside of the planning condition at the end of summer 2015 and can therefore be closed without penalty through the planning process. It should be noted this will

not go unnoticed by both printed and visual media operators. The income from the summer offers a near breakeven income and expenditure, so no real implications for continuing until September. Further guidance will be required from Department for Transport as funders of the site and vehicles before this could happen.

Options 4 – Do nothing

The option to do nothing but the subsidy trajectory for breakeven will continue to mirror other operation and continue to require subsidy for a considerable amount of time. Patronage is increasing and it is expected that a minimum of 7 years is required to reduce this to manageable figure, if at all. With the evidence that 98 days of operation provide a net dis-benefit then this would not be a viable option.

Summer 2015 – A new way forward under Dorset Travel

Preparations have begun to improve the site offering and there are other elements due to be provided by the end of June:

- An improved service with marketing is being offered to the Seafood Festival. Working with the organisers to promote later opening, offering the opportunity to enjoy the festival and stay in Weymouth for the evening to enjoy hospitality. This will be replicated for all large events throughout the summer, especially the Carnival which is historically the only day when the site has reached full capacity.
- The site will be improved with a welcome to Weymouth & Portland feel and a large wall mounted map of what is available in Weymouth which is being replicated by Weymouth BID using our mapping.
- The site will be promoted as a centre for cycling. Allowing easy access to the 24 miles of traffic free cycling available across W&P. A large map of the cycling routes will be provided as well as free maps of the routes in Weymouth and Portland.
- A review of costs is underway and the timetable of services to seek savings from staff and fuel costs – although small there will be a compounded saving across all small tweaks.
- Measures are being introduced to inform users of the ease of access and the short time (7-10 minutes) to transfer to Weymouth Town Centre.

Conclusion

For any option to be considered there needs to be a link with the Weymouth Master Planning process [element 4]. The choice between bringing vehicles into the town centre and associated dis-benefits (noise, congestion, pollution and safety) need to be considered alongside a parking strategy.

Dorset County Council as operators of the site would look to intercept low occupancy vehicles with the P&R site and the Weymouth parking stock would be used for high occupancy vehicles. The benefit of this would allow 30 cars with 2 occupants in each to utilise one P&R bus rather than 8 cars with 7 occupants in each. As such as review of the parking charges and the way income is gained is under review to maximise the potential for use and income.

It is recommended that the P&R site continues for summer 2015 with minor tweaks to timetables and the operation. The key is to maximise the opportunity to remove vehicles from the town centre, considering the number of visitors to the area in the summer.

A full proposal would be provided to EOC outlining service changes and the impacts of the above measures for October 2015.