

**To:** All Members of the County Council  
All Chief Officers

**cc:** Environment officers )  
Officers named for action ) e-mail  
Committee Section )

**From:** COUNTY SECRETARY'S  
DEPARTMENT

**Ask for:** Nikki Patient  
**Ext:** 25560  
**My Ref:** /np  
**Your Ref:**

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**ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
19 MARCH 2002**

**MINUTES**

**ATTENDANCE**

**MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

J E Anderson, S A Batson, M V Bayes, N K Brook (Chairman), R N Copping,  
D J Drake, M Green, S Jones, H M Saunders, I Simpson

**Also present:**

Executive Members: D A Ashley (Community Information & Development), D B Lloyd (Best Value),  
I E M Tarry (Environment)

Other Members: S B A Giles-Medhurst, R Mays, D T F Scudder, G F Wenham, C J White

**CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**(i) Membership changes**

**Maria Green** had replaced **Brian York**

**(ii) Environment Channel Launch**

The Chairman reported that the Environment Channel on HertsDirect was due to be launched on 28 March 2002. The channel would bring together news and information on the environment, not just content from the Environment Department, but on a wide range of topics that the public might expect to find there.

Anyone who wished to see a preview of the new channel was invited to contact Dave Golledge, Gateway Projects Manager (Environment) to arrange a session.

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 22 January 2002 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the amendment of the Executive Member's response to question one so that the words 'hourly service' were excluded and the sentence amended to read, 'In contrast, the Monday to Saturday service between Birchwood and QEII runs five direct services in the eight-hour period.'

**PUBLIC PETITIONS**

None

**QUESTIONS**

- 1) **Stephen Giles-Medhurst** asked the Executive Member for Environment, Iris Tarry, the following question:

*"Given the Executive Member for the Environment's answer to my question at the Environment Scrutiny Committee on 22 January, can the Executive Member please up date members of Committee on the long running saga - dating back to 1985 - to have Tanners Hill, Leavesden adopted as public highway and what progress has been made with getting final agreement from the health authority over the section 278 agreement and adoption?"*

**Iris Tarry** replied:

*"I am pleased to report that since my last update to Environment Scrutiny Committee on 22 January 2002, significant progress has been achieved.*

*The County Council has received a letter from solicitors acting for NHS Executive, the contents of which would lead me to believe that there are no longer any matters of principle outstanding between HCC and NHS Executive. Steps are now being taken to finalise the agreement.*

*The member for Central Oxhey will no doubt recall that the NHS Executive also needs to conclude an agreement with Three Rivers District Council before the matter can be totally finalised as far as residents are concerned. I believe that this element is also progressing."*

**Stephen Giles-Medhurst** asked the following supplementary question:

*"I thank the Executive Member for the information provided. County Councillor Paul Goggins and myself have had a meeting with officers about this but were not told about the letter mentioned in your reply. Can I have an assurance that the Executive Member will ensure that the members involved will be kept informed."*

**Iris Tarry** replied:

*"The letter referred to in my answer, above, was only received by the County Council on Friday, 15 March, and I have not yet seen it myself. The appropriate members can have the details as soon as I have seen the letter."*

- 2) **Stephen Giles-Medhurst** asked the Executive Member for Environment, Iris Tarry, the following question:

*"Given the Executive Member for the Environment's answer to my question at the Environment Scrutiny Committee on 22 January regarding the transfer of the Watford Highways Agency to Herts County Council can the Executive Member please up date members of Committee on the progress of ensuring a smooth transfer and ensuring that there is no delay in any highway schemes for the benefit of Watford residents?"*

**Iris Tarry** replied:

*"Officer negotiations have been continuing with Watford Borough regarding the termination of the highway agency arrangements. This has now paved the way for me to meet with member colleagues at the Borough to discuss any points of detail that need to be agreed before finalisation of new working arrangements between the two authorities. This meeting has been scheduled for 25 March and I will write to members of the Scrutiny Committee informing them of the outcome."*

**Stephen Giles-Medhurst** asked the following supplementary question:

*"I hope that the Executive Member will have a fruitful meeting with the appropriate members. Would the Executive Member reiterate to Watford Borough Council her previous assurance that the transport schemes in the County Council budget for the next year would be progressed by the County? I also ask that the Executive Member raise with Watford Borough Council their failure of to spend money allocated for projects this year, such as the £180,000 allocated for the flood relief scheme in Water Lane."*

**Iris Tarry** replied:

*"Trying to arrange a date to meet with Watford Borough has proved very difficult. A meeting has now been scheduled for 25 March but it has not yet been possible to send out an agenda; Mike Palmer is pursuing this vigorously. I will attend the meeting with confidence and am willing to discuss all of the issues. If there are specific issues that you wish to raise, if you send them to me in writing, I will take these into consideration."*

## **PART 1 ('OPEN') BUSINESS**

### **1. TRANSPORT OPERATIONS BEST VALUE REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING**

[Officer contact: Rob Smith, Integrated Transport Services Unit Manager  
Tel: 01992 556118]

- 1.1 The Committee considered this report in response to the request of the Resources, Prosperity, Partnership and Consultation Select Committee in July 2001, that each Committee should monitor the implementation of the relevant Best Value Reviews.
- 1.2 The Committee were advised that the Audit Commission had conducted a Best Value Review of Transport Operations in December 2001. The report of their findings, which included recommendations, had been published that day. Charlie Watson, Director of Environment, thanked Clare Kaye, Assistant Chief Executive, for her support during the Audit Commission's inspection.
- 1.3 A member asked whether it was possible for adults to use spare places on school buses. The Committee were advised that this was possible where transport was provided by a standard bus service. However, it was against regulations to allow the paying public to use buses that had a specific contract for home to school transport.

1.4 In response to a member's question, the Committee noted that all buses were required to have mobile telephone contact with their base. This would enable drivers to report any delays. It did not, however, allow for real time information to be available to the public because of problems with collating the information.

#### 1.5 Conclusions

- 1) The Committee welcomed the Audit Commission Inspectors' report, which found that the Transport Operations service was 'good' with 'promising' prospects for improvement. However, some disappointment was expressed that some of the recommendations were not able to address the problems that had been identified.
- 2) The Committee encouraged development of the strategy for the involvement of users and were concerned to ensure that all parts of the potential bus using community were involved.
- 3) The Committee noted that there may potentially be some issues that it would like to consider scrutinising at a later date once the implementation had bedded in.
- 4) The Committee supported the recommendations of the Audit Commission Best Value Review on Transport Operations and recommended that Cabinet approve them for inclusion and implementation as part of the improvement plan.

Charlie Watson

Charlie Watson  
Nikki Patient to note

Charlie Watson  
Dave Roberts to note

## 2. **VEHICULAR TRAFFIC AS IT AFFECTS RURAL ROADS (U & C ROADS) AND VILLAGES**

[Officer contact: Mike Younghusband, Head of Sustainable Transport Projects  
Tel: 01992 556010]

- 2.1 The Committee considered this report in response to a request from Ian Simpson that the Committee should scrutinise vehicular traffic as it affects rural roads (U and C roads) and villages. Ian Simpson had refined the subject for scrutiny and circulated a sheet (as attached) which set out his proposed parameters.
- 2.2 Charlie Watson, Director of Environment, reported that there was considerable public interest in the issues raised. The Committee noted that a new contract for roads maintenance would be starting in October 2002 and that this may provide an appropriate opportunity to alter any standards as a result of scrutiny.

#### 2.3 Conclusions

Following debate, the Committee agreed that a Topic Group should be set up to scrutinise operational issues related to the maintenance of rural roads, particularly concentrating on the environmental damage caused by vehicle erosion of edges and verges, and the working of drainage systems. Traffic management and safety issues would also be considered.

Charlie Watson  
Mike Younghusband  
Nikki Patient to note

The Director of Environment was asked to prepare a briefing paper for the Topic Group to assist in refining the scope of the scrutiny and the means to undertake it.

It was requested that the Topic Group report back quickly to the Committee.

**REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL**

No items were reported to the County Council.

**Andrew Laycock**  
**County Secretary**