

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: Julia Harries

Ext: 25563

My Ref: /jh

Your Ref:

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
25 JUNE 2002

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

J Anderson, S A Batson, M V Bayes (Vice-Chairman), N K Brook, R N Copping,
D J Drake, S Jones, H M Saunders, C J White (Chairman), B A York

Also present:

Executive Members: R I N Gordon (Children, Schools and Families), I E M Tarry (Environment)

Other Members: N E Agar, M Green, D T F Scudder, G F Wenham

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 19 March 2002 were confirmed as a correct record.

PUBLIC PETITIONS

None

QUESTIONS

- 1) **Brian York**, asked the Executive Member for Environment, **Iris Tarry**, the following question:

"Given the ongoing recruitment difficulties of School Crossing Patrol Staff (with a projected underspend of £37,000 in last year's budget) will the Executive member increase pay considerably to encourage suitable persons to apply to do the job?"

Iris Tarry replied:

"I too am concerned by the difficulties that have been encountered over many years in the recruitment of School Crossing patrols. These staff play a really significant role in assisting the County Council in securing a safer environment for our children and, as a result, encouraging them to walk to school.

Members will be aware of the very extensive action taken by the Road Safety Unit to encourage people to come forward to fill the vacancies. However, they may not be aware of the results of exit interviews and discussion with current staff. These emphasise that the key barriers to recruitment are concerns about the image of the job, driver abuse and the physical dangers associated with or perceived as being part of the daily duties undertaken by crossing patrols.

Additionally, a proportion of people undertaking this role qualify for some form of benefit and have indicated that increased salaries could lead to equivalent losses to these benefits.

Salary levels in Hertfordshire over many years have compared favourably with all other authorities in the East of England. However, recently Essex County Council has increased its basic pay rates but at this stage it is too early to say whether this is proving effective in providing a significant response to its similar recruitment problems. An equivalent increase in salary costs to Hertfordshire would cost approximately £75,000 per annum.

I have therefore asked the Director to liaise with his colleagues in Essex in order to assess the results of their monitoring exercise over the coming months and before considering whether such an option should form part of this year's budget setting process.'

Brian York asked the following supplementary question:

'If we do find that the Essex pay rise does lead to significant improvement in the recruitment position, would we consider doing something similar here?'

Iris Tarry replied:

'I can give no definite answer at present, but we would consider something similar in next year's budget if Essex is successful.'

2) **Robert Gordon** asked the Executive Member for Environment, Iris Tarry, the following question:

'Will the Executive Member give her response to the proposal by train operating companies to alter the conditions of the Network Card by imposing a £10 minimum fare on weekdays and outline the action taken by Council to resist the proposal?'

Iris Tarry replied:

'I am extremely concerned by the loss of the Network Card, as its withdrawal directly conflicts with our TravelWise aims of encouraging the use of passenger transport for leisure journeys, rather than use of the car.'

The £10 minimum fare now being imposed by the companies effectively means that for most the previous one third reduction on off-peak Travelcards to London will no longer be available.

The Director of Environment, several weeks ago wrote to Hertfordshire's train operators, expressing concern on behalf of the County Council.

The train operators in their responses, however, have stressed that they are introducing other reduced fares to encourage leisure travel and are working with our officers and the bus companies to promote integrated travel and rail commuting to key employment centres in the county. They have also stressed that the Card will still be available at weekends and on Bank Holidays.

Nevertheless we have asked all Herts MP's to lobby the Minister and to urge the Association of Train Operating Companies to adopt a more equitable policy which safeguards peak revenue without impeding leisure travel in Hertfordshire.'

Robert Gordon asked the following supplementary question:

'I am pleased with the prompt and appropriate action by the Executive Member in this matter. However, given the importance of public pressure in obtaining the right outcome, will the Executive Member raise the profile of her campaign still further by issuing an early press release supported by appropriate background briefing?'

Iris Tarry replied:

'Yes'

PART 1 ('OPEN') BUSINESS**1 TOPIC GROUP REVIEW OF TRAVELWISE STRATEGIES**

[Officer contact: John Sykes, Principal Engineer
Tel: 01992 556117]

1.1 The Committee considered a report setting out the recommendations of the Topic Group following their review of the TravelWise Strategies.

1.2 Conclusions

- 1) The Committee congratulated the Topic Group on a very good and helpful piece of scrutiny.
- 2) The Committee endorsed the recommendations proposed by the Topic Group and asked the Director of Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member, to secure their implementation in liaison with other Directors.
- 3) The Committee wished to draw particular attention to the following issues:
 - (i) All schools should be encouraged to have Home to School Travel Plans; members could play an important part in this, and the Plans could be on the Education Forum agendas
 - (ii) Any review of Home School Agreements should consider recommending inclusion of a commitment to TravelWise issues.
 - (iii) The Walking Bus scheme, which has been successfully pioneered in Hertfordshire, should be further developed, whilst recognising it relied on the voluntary and consistent involvement of parents.

Charlie Watson

2 TOPIC GROUP REVIEW OF MINOR RURAL ROADS

[Officer contact: Mike Younghusband, Head of Sustainable Transport Projects
Tel: 01992 556142]

2.1 The Committee considered a report setting out the recommendations of Topic Group following their review of operational issues associated with minor rural roads.

2.2 Conclusions

- 1) The Committee endorsed the recommendations proposed by the Topic Group and asked the Director of Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member, to work with the Rural Strategy Group to secure their implementation.
- 2) The Committee recognised that the recommendations had budgetary implications and would need to be introduced progressively.
- 3) Maintenance of rural roads should be sympathetic to retaining their rural character.
- 4) The role of the Police in enforcing weight restrictions was crucial and needed further research. The Chairman of the Committee agreed to follow this up with Hertfordshire Police Authority.

Charlie Watson

3 SPEED CAMERA - 'NETTING OFF' PROJECT

[Officer contact: Wendy Broome, Head of Community Safety
Tel: 01992 556813]

3.1 The Committee considered a report requested by Brian York regarding the speed Camera 'netting-off' project.

3.2 It was noted that copies of the final document, including the Operational Case, would be made available to Committee members when finalised in July and prior to consideration by the Cabinet.

Charlie Watson/
Mike Palmer

3.3 Conclusions

- 1) The Committee supported the greater use of speed cameras as an important component of the County Council's concern to secure a 'Safer Hertfordshire'.
- 2) It was emphasised that the aim of the project was improved safety through decreased speed, not income generation.
- 3) The Committee wished to bring this subject back for scrutiny at a future date when there had been enough time to evaluate the effectiveness of the approach.

Charlie Watson/
Mike Palmer/
Nicola Hayden

3.4 Comments to Cabinet

The Committee supported the submission to the Department for Transport for the 'Netting-Off' of fines based upon a robust 'Operational Case' for the establishment of a joint unit, and recommended that the Cabinet should urge the Department of Transport to revise the ruling on cameras located for environmental reasons where there was a good case.

Dave Roberts

4 JOINT MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

[Officer contact: Ray Greenhall, Head of Waste Management
Tel: 01992 556160]

4.1 The Committee considered a report requested by Brian York giving details of progress made in developing a Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Hertfordshire.

4.2 Conclusions

- 1) The Committee welcomed the public's support for the Waste Management Strategy and thanked the Executive Member for her very considerable achievement in securing the preparation of the Strategy in partnership with the District Councils.
- 2) The Committee recognised that there was further work to be done, maintaining positive relationships, to establish formal agreements on waste volumes.
- 3) There needs to be a clear separation between the Waste Management Panel and the waste planning functions of the County Council.
- 4) There was an urgent need for the County Council to pursue its own responsibilities in developing waste markets, making contractual arrangements for providing facilities, making decisions on residual waste, planning for sites and financial modelling.
- 5) The inherent conflict in planning to make facilities viable for increased waste volume whilst aiming to increase recycling was recognised.

4.3 Comments to Cabinet

- 1) The Committee endorsed the principles set out in the Strategy.
- 2) The Committee asked the Executive Member to develop a detailed County Council implementation programme through discussion with the Waste Panel, including issues such as:
 - details of a financial model to replace recycling credits
 - contractual arrangements for procuring new facilities
 - tendering process for comparing new and differing technologies

Dave Roberts

- the need for formal partnership arrangements to ensure timely introduction of new infrastructure
- the management of Household Waste sites
- to establish a Waste Planning Panel in order to bring forward a Review of Hertfordshire's Waste Local Plan.

5 LIGHT POLLUTION AND CONSERVATION AREAS

[Officer contact: Paul Donovan, Senior Planning Policy Officer
Tel: 01992 556294]

5.1 The Committee considered this report in response to a request from Mary Bayes that the Committee should scrutinise light pollution and its impacts upon Conservation Areas.

5.2 Conclusions

- 1) The Committee asked the Director of Environment to use the opportunity presented by new contracting arrangements to ensure that our own installations always sought to minimise pollution.
- 2) Members would be included in the development of the emerging Good Practice Guide through a small Topic Group, size and membership to be agreed by Group Spokesmen outside the meeting.
- 3) A report on the wider issue of street lighting would come to the Committee for scrutiny at a future date.

Charlie Watson

Charlie Watson

Charlie
Watson/Nicola
Hayden

REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

Item 1 - Topic Group Review of TravelWise Strategies

Julia
Harries/Nicola
Hayden/Ron
Coxall

Andrew Laycock
County Secretary