

Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 12 November 2014 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Sue Gray (Chair), Tom Kelly (Vice-Chair) and Oliver Gerrish (Substituting for Martin Kerin) and Robert Ray (Substituting for Roy Jones)

Apologies: Councillors Roy Jones, Martin Kerin and Simon Wootton

In attendance:
David Bull, Director of Planning and Transportation
Matthew Essex, Head of Regeneration
Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Ann Osola, Head of Service

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

9. Minutes

The Minutes of Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 30 July 2014, were approved as a correct record subject to following amendment:

Item 4, pg10

Members queried as to whether the council had liaised with residents and shop owners within Grays as to the proposed increase charge for parking and if this could be included within an update report brought back to the Committee.

10. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business, however the Chair asked Members to note the Minutes from the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees meeting which took place on Monday 27th October 2014.

11. Declaration of Interests

There were no such declarations.

12. Call-in to Cabinet Decision 01104315 Investment in Highways Lighting

Councillor Gledhill thanked the Chair for allowing him to speak in Councillor Little's absence; he briefly introduced the reasons for the call-in and highlighted questions for officers. Key points to note were:

- That three years ago the conservatives party put forward LED lighting as a suggested saving which was agreed within the budget plan, then it appears at Cabinet in August 2014;
- There are 7,000 light bulbs and poles within the borough that are over 30 years old, would these be replaced at the same time;
- If the light bulbs required to be replaced, what would the impact be on residents. Could it involve closing roads or would cherry picker be used;
- Following the trail of LED lights down London road, the lights appear brighter had residents been consulted or spoken to;
- Would all of the light bulbs need to be replaced or could the council be flexible and replace half of the light down a road;
- How effective would the LED lights in fog and other bad weather;
- Within rural area, should the lights appear brighter, could cause accidents
- The report didn't mention the transformation of the project or whether it was being included within new contracts moving forward;
- Should roads that do not require lights, would the council be able to turn these lights off;
- Had officers spoken with other Local Authorities regarding LED lights or the flexibility of turning lights off

In response the Leader of the Council made the following comments:

- That if Members of Overview and Scrutiny wanted to look in more detail at the investment into highways lighting, he was happy for them to do so;
- That all of the questions suggested could have been asked previously at Cabinet or to officers or himself since the Cabinet meeting;
- A survey had been undertaken to seek the views and concerns of residents;
- The project itself was to replace the light bulbs not the poles;
- The council had been working with other Local Authorities including Southend and Essex were also looking to work with the Thurrock;
- That it was prudent for Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet to be involved in the budget setting process as the Council could not afford to wait before taking action if the required budget savings were to be achieved before the next financial year.

The Head of Transportation and Highways addressed the Committee and notified Members that the LED lights had been being used widely and tested by other Local Authorities. Members were informed that the council was working to cut cost and remain efficient, in order to meet budget costs for 2016/2017 officers were focusing on LED lights for street lighting.

Members were informed that officers were intending to keep any disruption to an absolute minimum and will consult with residents as to when works will be taking place.

The Director of Planning and Transportation advised Members that last year LED lights were fitted outside of the council building and yet no complaints had been received. He continued to inform Members that other Local Authorities had installed LED lights and through all the tests carried out nationally flickering wasn't an issue.

Councillor Gledhill, expressed concern that the discussions with officers were not open and transparent and the information not provided within the report that went to Cabinet in August. He continued to inform the Committee that scrutiny should take place before a decision is taken not after it.

Members enquired as to whether any complaints had been received throughout the trail of LED lights throughout the borough. The Director of Planning and Transportation informed Members that he hadn't looked at complaints within much detail, however; he assured the Committee that if any complaints or concerns had been raised he would be aware of them.

Councillor Kelly queried officer's plans to implement LED lights within the borough. The Head of Transportation and Highways explained that a business case had been produced to give officers 6 months to find a contractor and to outline the lights that need to be replaced first for enable to saving to be made in the new financial year. She further informed Members that moving forward LED light were more reliable and the trail of 500 lights within the Thurrock were still being monitored.

Councillor Gerrish felt that it was not necessary for this decision to have called-in, however he agreed that the Committee should be updated with the details behind the decision.

Councillor Ray informed the Committee that there had been LED lights in Aveley for the last 7months and he was impressed with them.

A vote was undertaken in respect of the call-in recommendations, whereupon, one Member voted in favour of referring the recommendation to Cabinet for reconsideration, and three Members voted to reject the call-in. The Chair declared that the call-in was lost.

RESOLVED:

That the Call-In be rejected, for the reasons as outlined above.

13. Community Transport Report

The Director of Planning and Transportation introduced the report and informed Members that following the decision of the Committee at the July 2014 meeting to hold a Task and Finish Group to investigate community

transport the Review Panel met on Wednesday 29 October and was Chaired by Councillor Tom Kelly.

Members were notified that it was agreed that a one-off funding of £50,000 for this financial year was made available conditional on a business plan being provided to the council for the future of TransVol and that as the Director of Planning and Transportation he would meet with the Directors of Children's and Adult Services to consider invest-to-save funding to bring the total up.

The Committee were advised that officers were working with TransVol and were putting them in touch with officers within different departments who could assist with advice and offer them possible additional contracts.

Officers informed Members that at the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees meeting which took place on Monday 27th October 2014 TransVol agreed a £10,000 reduction within its funding grant.

Members asked Officers to keep them updated of the progress and any developments.

RESOLVED:

That the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. **Note the Community Transport Review Panel report attached at appendix 1.**
2. **Agree the recommendations contained within the report at appendix 1, following which a report will be referred to Cabinet.**

14. European Union Funding Programmes

The Head of Regeneration introduced the report to the Committee explaining that all countries within the European Union receive funding by way of grants and other programmes. Some of the largest programmes are the ERDF and ESF programmes which typically have wealth creation, employment, skills and business support as their primary goals. The new ERDF and ESF programmes are currently being shaped through Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) including the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) which covers Thurrock, Southend and Medway Unitary Authorities and Essex, Kent and East Sussex County Councils.

Members were advised that typically these programmes were developed at National level and so it was very rare to be able to support the development of the programmes from their outset.

It was anticipated that nearly £180m of ERDF and ESF funds would be allocated to SELEP. The Committee were informed that the SELEP had agreed a number of objectives for the programme to cover including:

- Innovation
- Supporting businesses
- Supporting the shift to the low carbon economy
- Education, skills and lifelong learning
- Reducing social exclusion

During discussions Members were notified that Thurrock had already run a low carbon business programme which had been offered out to greater Essex. It was further noted that officers were working with partnerships such as Thames Gateway South Essex, to ensure that any issues and opportunities within Thurrock were reflected. Members were informed that the European funding streams were also being used to support businesses and jobs for local benefit.

Members enquired as to whether the project was good value for money, officers informed the Committee that at this stage no projects had been developed but that steps would be taken to assess the value for money of projects as they emerged.

It was queried by the Committee as to whether the funding could be invested into addressing broader issues such as public health; Officers explained that the programmes were relatively prescriptive in what they could be used for and the major focus of ERDF and ESF is on business support, employment and skills. However, it was noted that there was a well documented link between employment and general health.

RESOLVED:

Members are invited to review progress and comment on the priorities identified for the new European Growth Programme.

15. Grays South and Rail Station Regeneration

The Head of Regeneration introduced the report to Members explaining that a report was due to go to Cabinet on 17 December 2014 outlining the Council's work to secure the replacement of the Grays level crossing with a boulevard underpass as part of a wider programme seeking to also close the level crossings at Stanford Le Hope, East Tilbury and Purfleet.

Members were notified that subject to Cabinet's approval at its December meeting, the council would be working in partnership with C2C and Network Rail to secure the land required to develop the boulevard underpass according to the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding which had been agreed between the Council and Network Rail. The Committee were informed that Network Rail had taken on ownership of the project and would be funding and leading the design work. Officers would be working closely with Network Rail to ensure that the scheme being developed accorded with the Council's expectations and would be required to sign off key stages.

It was discussed that officers were aware of concerns from residents, however officers confirmed that they would speak with residents and local businesses. The Council was in the process of appointing a surveyor to lead the discussions with property owners and businesses affected by the proposals and that, where possible, efforts would be made to relocate businesses while works were being carried out.

Members enquired as to the final design for the rail station as lifts may enable hiding places which could cause a problem. Officers informed the Committee that the design wasn't final and it required more detail and discussions. There was also the possibility of using ramps instead of lifts for disabled access.

RESOLVED:

Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the progress in developing the project and to comment on the next steps for progressing the project detailed in section 3 of this report.

16. Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview & Scrutiny Committee 2014-2015 - Work Programme

Members discussed the work programme for the municipal year and the following reports were agreed:

- An Update report be received on the Investment on Highways Lighting – 21 January 2015

The meeting finished at 8.40 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk