

ENVIRONMENT AND ACCESS PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE**22 October 2003**Attendance:

Councillors:

Bailey (Chairman) (P)

Bidgood (P)
Busher (P)
de Peyer
Fothergill
Hatch (P)Mather (P)
Merritt
Nunn (P)
Verney (P)
Wright (P)Others in Attendance:Councillor Beveridge (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Access)
Councillor Cook (Portfolio Holder for Environment, Economy and Development)

1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATON

There were no questions asked or statements made.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 8 July 2003 (numbered 176-187) be approved and adopted.

3. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted its work programme as set out by the Principal Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet and noted that reports on the South Downs National Park, Planning Enforcement Workload, and the Compliance Monitoring System should have been included. In addition, the Committee requested that it should receive reports on traffic management at its next meeting.

In regard to the Committee's in-depth reviews, the following additional Members were appointed to the Parking Review Informal Group: Councillors Busher, Bidgood and Wright. Therefore the complete membership was: Councillors Busher, Bidgood, de Peyer, Mather, Merritt, Verney and Wright. It was agreed that the papers for this Group would be sent to the whole Committee but, at this stage, no date was set for the first meeting.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet and Principal Scrutiny Committee be requested to note the above amendments to the Committee's Scrutiny Work Programme and membership of the Parking Review Informal Group.

4. **REVIEW OF CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL CONCESSIONS**

(Report EA11 refers)

The Committee received the recommendations from the Informal Group that had reviewed the Concessionary Travel Concessions.

The Director of Development Services explained that the Informal Group had been concerned about the calculation of the half-price bus fare by MCL Transport Consultants. Following a recent meeting with MCL, he was unable to add any further details to those at Appendix 3 of the report. He therefore stated that the City Council's Audit Team would continue to investigate this matter and report back to a future meeting of the Informal Group. Members also suggested that a representative from MCL Transport be invited to attend a future meeting of the Informal Group.

Some Members were concerned that a change to the conditions of the travel tokens scheme had meant that taxi drivers were unable to exchange the tokens for cash at the City Offices. This had made some drivers reluctant to participate in the scheme and therefore adversely affected the travel options of those entitled to the tokens. The Director of Finance stated the change had been implemented following an earlier audit review, so that payments were correctly recorded and went through the creditor system. He added that it was possible to make BACS payments directly into the driver's bank account. However, it was agreed that this issue should be re-considered by the Informal Group.

Members also requested that the wording "severely disabled" in recommendation 8 be re-examined, as many of those in receipt of this benefit would not consider themselves as such. Subsequent to the meeting, this was changed to "refer to the definition contained in the Transport Act 1985 (as amended)."

RESOLVED:

1. That the officers produce a questionnaire, to be scrutinised by the Concessionary Travel Informal Group by early January 2004, that can be issued with travel concessions to establish where and how the travel concessions are being used and to report back to this Committee when enough useful information from these questionnaires has been collected.

2. That, on receiving information from the questionnaires regarding the use of travel tokens, the Informal Group meet to investigate the issue of local travel tokens and National Travel Tokens.

3. That Cabinet be recommended that the current £7 handling charge for travel tokens be discontinued for those persons over 80 years of age, at an additional cost to the Council of £15,515 as a growth item.

4. That information regarding the calculation of the value of the half fare bus pass within Appendix 3 be noted and that representatives of MCL be invited to attend a future meeting of the Informal Group.

5. That, on receiving information from the questionnaires regarding the use of travel tokens, the Informal Group meet to investigate the feasibility of extending the removal of the handling charge to those under 80 years of age and how travel tokens are cashed.

6. That it be noted that in 2010 the Government intends to raise the eligibility of the pension age for both men and women to 65 years, and that this *may* require a further review of the travel concessions offered by the Council.

7. That Cabinet be recommended to continue to offer free fare bus passes for those who are registered blind regardless of their age.

8. That Cabinet be recommended to continue to offer travel concessions to disabled persons who are eligible to receive travel concessions under Section 93 (7)(d)-(eg) of the Transport Act 1985 (as amended by the Transport Act 2000), regardless of their age.

5. **PLANNING ENFORCEMENT WORKLOAD JULY-SEPTEMBER 2003**

(Report EA10 refers)

The Committee welcomed the improvements made in regard to the Planning Enforcement workload and the Director of Development Services answered questions on the report.

Specifically, it was requested that future reports to the Committee should contain comparisons with previous years, that anomalies with the ward lists be corrected, and that enforcement cases should be highlighted in Appeals reports.

RESOLVED:

That the Enforcement Workload change and performance (July-September 2003) be noted.

6. **DEVELOPMENT SERVICES PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT 2003/4**

(Report EA7 refers)

Members noted the key performance indicators and, in response to questions, the Director of Development Services explained that the CAPS Map Access system would be available to Members and the public from December 2003.

Members also recommended minor changes to the format of future reports including the deletion of column 2 on the Best Value Performance Indicators chart (Appendix two).

A Member questioned how realistic the targets were and how much achieving some of them would cost. The Director explained that some of the 100% targets, such as those relating to Tree Preservation Orders, were essential to try and achieve 100% targets and that failure to respond within the set time could lead to the loss of important trees. Other long term targets of 100% were part of the Council's priorities (e.g. Customer Care Charter).

RESOLVED:

1. That the performance outcomes against the Business Plan actions and performance indicators be noted, including the ICT/e-government initiatives and key priorities.

2. That the estimated performance against the 2004/5 Planning Delivery Grant criteria for the grant award be noted.

7. **DEVELOPMENT SERVICES BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

(Report EA8 refers)

Members discussed the report and in response to questions, the Director explained that the high printing costs for the Local Plan was because the plan was reproduced in its entirety at each stage and that it was corporate policy for the printing to be managed in-house.

RESOLVED:

That the budget monitoring against the Service and Subjective Summaries for April to September 2003/4 are noted, together with variances.

8. **DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT BUDGET 2004/5**

(Report EA9 refers)

The Director explained that, as part of the budget process, each of the Performance Improvement Committees had been asked to consider proposals for growth and savings, levels of fees and charges and reserves within its area of interest, to help the Council achieve its corporate aims.

The Committee discussed and agreed the proposals for growth and saving items as set out in the report. However, in regard to the saving from a 2% reduction in the overall Traffic and Parking budget, Councillors Mather and Wright requested that their names be recorded in the minutes as abstaining from the decision to approve such savings.

Members discussed in detail the proposed saving of £150,000 by reducing the annual contribution to the parking major maintenance reserve from £200,000 to £50,000 per year. The Director of Finance explained that this reserve had built up to £1.3m principally for the refurbishment of the Friarsgate multi-storey car park. However the proposed re-development of the Broadway/Friarsgate area, which included the car park, had led the Council to delay any major works pending a decision on its future. Following discussion, the Committee agreed to recommend this saving to Cabinet, but requesting that it was ring-fenced for transport related activities. Councillors Mather and Wright requested that their names be recorded in the minutes as voting against these savings, as they argued that consideration should be given to re-surfacing and re-opening the top floor of the car park.

Growth items were for Concessionary Travel and Engineering Development Control staff, totalling £85,000 in all.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet be recommended to agree the revenue growth bids of £85,000 and savings of £312,000, as detailed in section 3 of the report, of which the savings of £150,000 from the parking maintenance reserve should be ring-fenced for transportation issues.

2. That Cabinet be recommended to approve the proposals for fees and charges as detailed in Section 5 of the report.

3. That the balances and forward programmes for reserves detailed in Section 6 of the report be noted.

4. That proposals for the use of the Planning Delivery Grant award detailed in Section 4 be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.00pm.

Chairman