

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL**2 February 2010****Attendance:**

Councillors:

Lipscomb (Chairman) (P)

Bell (P)

Busher (P)

Clear (P)

Gemmell (P)

Howell (P)

Jackson (P)

Mather (P)

Maynard (P)

Spender (P)

Worrall

Wright (P)

Deputy Members in attendance:

Councillor Ruffell (Standing Deputy for Councillor Worrall)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Pearson (Portfolio Holder for Environment)

Councillor Wood (Portfolio Holder for Planning and Access)

1. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Councillors Pearson and Wood declared personal and prejudicial interests, due to their involvement as Cabinet Members in actions taken or proposed in the Reports below.

However, the Panel asked the Cabinet Members, as Portfolio Holders, to remain in the meeting, under the provisions of Sections 21(13)(a) of the Local Government Act 2000, in order that they could provide additional information to the Panel and/or answer questions.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held 11 November 2010 be approved and adopted.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr Hutchison addressed the Panel on climate change issues as the Chairman of the Environment Group of the Winchester District Strategic Partnership

(WDSP) and as Chairman of the Winchester Action on Climate Change (WinACC).

In summary, he commented on the need for Winchester to achieve the benefits of a low carbon society as soon as possible and the Council's and WDSP's commitments to reduce the carbon footprint of the District by 20% by 2012. He therefore asked the Panel to scrutinise the plans, policies and resources that Cabinet would need to put in place to achieve this target, as set out in the "Minimum Conditions for Success" (Report CAB1917 refers).

In addition, Mr Hutchison explained the need for an additional post to promote sustainable transport; a more systematic approach to home insulation; greater expertise on the opportunities in the renewable energy sector and the need to better engage partners and the public in this process. He reported that the High Quality Environment Group had calculated that this work would require a total investment in 2010/11 of £150,000.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hutchison for his comments and explained that they would be considered further during the Panel's consideration of the Scrutiny Work Programme later on the agenda.

Councillor Tait also spoke during public participation to express his thanks to the Environment Team (in particular, Messrs Tidridge and Ingram) for their work mitigating the effects of Network Rail's bridge repairs in St Cross, Winchester.

4. **GRITTING OPERATIONS DURING THE SNOW OF JANUARY 2010**
[\(Report EN97 refers\)](#)

The Panel queried the responsibilities of Parish, District and County Councils with regard to grit bins and the Head of Access and Infrastructure agreed to clarify this matter for the Panel outside of the meeting. He also agreed to question the County Council on the possible effects that excess grit on the roads might have on highway drainage systems.

During its discussion, the Panel noted the excellent communications from both Winchester City Council and Hampshire County Council during the severe weather, which Members considered to be detailed and helpful. In particular, the Panel commended Mr Boardman of the City Council's Environment Team with regard communicating revisions to refuse collections. The Panel also expressed its thanks to the farming community for the valuable contribution they had made in helping to clear roads and assisting stranded drivers.

However, the Panel expressed its concern that so few of the District's pavements had been salted during the period of bad weather, and given the clear danger this presented to pedestrians, requested that the County Council reconsider its salting policy.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Report be noted.
2. That the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Access be requested to express to the County Council the Panel's concerns regarding the state of the pavements during the recent bad weather and request that the County Council re-consider its salting policy.

5. **NETWORK RAIL'S BRIDGE REPAIRS IN WINCHESTER**
(Oral Report)

The Head of Access and Infrastructure distributed to the Panel a background paper on Network Rail's work, which is available electronically [here](#).

During discussion, the Panel noted the importance of good communication to alleviate the effects of the bridge replacement and it was suggested that the schedule of works be distributed to all affected Ward Members.

In response to questions, Councillor Wood confirmed that that St Cross Road and Andover Road in Winchester would not be shut during the day simultaneously as a consequence of the works. He also commented on the difficulty of updating satellite navigation companies' mapping systems with road closure information, but that he would recommend that the Highways Authorities fully utilise traffic information boards so as to minimise disruption. Councillor Wood also commented on the probability of introducing temporary traffic lights at the bridge at Park Road, Winchester and that he would inform Ward Members of the Highway Authority's decision on this matter at the earliest opportunity.

The Panel also reminded Councillor Wood of the Railway Clauses Consolidation Act 1845, which could make the railway operator liable for compensation, mitigating the effect of the renovation works.

RESOLVED:

- That the Report be noted.

6. **MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**
([Report CAB1947 refers](#))

Councillor Wood explained that the National Park Authority would be governed by a board of 27, comprising of representatives from Parish, District and County Councils along with representatives appointed by the Government. A Member commented on the need for one of the representatives to come from the farming community, in recognition of their excellent work in contributing to the beauty of the area for many hundreds of years.

Councillor Wood explained that although the National Park had been designated as the Planning Authority for the area with effect from 1 April 2010,

the process of how planning applications were to be determined within the Park had yet to be finalised.

Councillor Wood explained that Cabinet had expressed Winchester's preference to retain a delegated decision making process, with the National Park determining major applications and authority to call-in decisions. He noted that the National Park would consolidate the different local planning policies of the 14 affected Local Planning Authorities. However, it was that much of the National Park's area was already protected by broadly uniform AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) policies.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

7. **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY OUTCOME: HIGH QUALITY ENVIRONMENT – QUARTER 3 2009/10 PERFORMANCE MONITORING UPDATE (EXCEPTIONS ONLY) – PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PLANNING AND ACCESS**
[\(Report EN96 refers\)](#)

During debate, the Panel asked questions on a number of subjects and, from the Portfolio Holders' responses, did not wish to highlight any concerns to Cabinet.

The subjects included financial variances, the delays in the Biodiversity Plan and Contaminated Land Strategy, staffing levels and flexibility of roles within the Planning Management Team, technical difficulties regarding parking payment machines, and the compensation of lost parking income as a consequence of the Tower Street renovations.

The Panel also discussed the effect of the new Park and Ride site and noted that this should lead to a reduction in long-term town centre parking, which would be further encouraged by the Council's ticketing and maximum length-of-stay policies. Councillor Wood added that as a result of the availability of additional Park and Ride spaces there would be a managed reduction in town centre car parking, provided that this did not harm economic prosperity. He explained that negotiations were continuing with the major employers in the Romsey Road area to maximise their use of the new facility, at a cost which was acceptable to the Council.

During debate on Councillor Pearson's responsibilities, a Member questioned the scientific basis of many of the climate change assumptions (quoting recent scandals involving the IPCC, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and scientists at the University of East Anglia) and he urged caution in pursuing Council policies aimed at tackling climate change. He also questioned the practicality of some alternative energy schemes, given the length of time many of them would take to re-coup their initial costs.

RESOLVED:

That the monitoring information in the Report be noted.

8. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (REPORT PS396 REFERS) AND MATTERS ARISING.**

The Chairman had proposed that, following the completion of the current Emergency Planning Informal Scrutiny Group, an Informal Scrutiny Group be established to consider "Planning for Climate Change," which was an issue recommended for scrutiny by the Audit Commission's paper, "Lofty Ambitions"/Fuel Poverty."

He suggested that the purpose of the Group would be to examine and gain a better understanding of how, through the Council's planning mechanism, the Council contributed to the green agenda and maximised the energy efficiency of new buildings. Through discussion, the Panel noted that this would extend beyond reviewing new Building Control Regulations and the previously identified need for in-house expertise on environmental matters, to considering and influencing emerging Local Development Framework policies.

It was agreed that the Chairman would meet with relevant officers to draft a terms of reference on 15 February 2010 and, subject to the Panel's approval of this via email, the first meeting of the Group would be held on 5 March 2010. However, the Panel requested that further consideration be given to the name of the Informal Group so that it better reflected its purpose.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Scrutiny Work Programme, as set out on the reverse of the agenda, and as extracted from Report PS396, be noted.

2. **That, subject to the approval of Principal Scrutiny Committee or Cabinet and endorsement of a satisfactory terms of reference, Councillors Lipscomb (Chairman), Bell, Busher, Clear and Jackson (Councillor Maynard deputy) be appointed to the Informal Scrutiny Group, as detailed above.**

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.10pm

Chairman