

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 10 March 2015.

PRESENT: Councillor G J Bull – Chairman.
Councillors M G Baker, I C Bates,
Mrs B E Boddington, Mrs A D Curtis,
J W Davies, D A Giles and G J Harlock.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R S Farrer, Ms L Kadic, M C Oliver and R J West.

65. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4th February 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

66. MEMBERS INTERESTS

Councillor I C Bates declared a non-disclosable non-pecuniary interest in relation to Minute No 14/69 as Chairman of Cambridgeshire County Council's Economy and Environment Committee.

67. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Notice of Key Executive Decisions which was published on 11th February 2015 was received and noted.

68. EAST COAST MAIN LINE CROSSING CLOSURES

The Panel considered, with the assistance of a report by the Head of Development (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) proposed East Coast Main Line crossing closures. Members were informed that it was Network Rail's intention to close all vehicular and pedestrian crossings along the route in order to operate at a higher line speed. The funding had not yet been secured for the scheme so if went forward a bid would be submitted to government. The works on the London to Doncaster section of the line were expected to take three years running from 2017 to 2020. An updated plan for the crossing closure at The Offords was circulated to Members.

The Chairman sought clarification as to whether the scheme was part of a package of works. It was confirmed that it was split into two sections; namely London Kings Cross to Doncaster and then Doncaster to Edinburgh.

The Panel queried whether the work on the level crossing closures and on the A14 could be coordinated and construction undertaken at the same time. It was confirmed that this was not possible as the two schemes would be delivered utilising different Statutory provisions.

Regarding the updated plan for The Offords, a Member asked if the measurements of the roundabout had increased. It was confirmed that the plan did appear to show a different measurement from that originally stated but clarification of this would be sought. Councillor Mrs B E Boddington stated that she was pleased with the amended plan for The Offords.

A question was raised about use of the Loves Lane crossing. It was reported that the highest use appeared to be by dog walkers at weekends. It was recommended that the crossing should close as it was one of the fastest points on the line. A Member stated that the proposed diversion was not practical as it went through a factory yard. However it was confirmed that the County Council were seeking to segregate the right of way as part of planned development for the Wintringham Park site.

Following a question from a Member, the Panel were informed that all roads built by Network Rail would be offered to the County Council for adoption. Network Rail would retain responsibility for bridge maintenance.

There was concern that the closure of The Offords level crossing would result in increased traffic levels. It was confirmed that it was expected that when the crossing closed and current delays were removed, there might be an increase in local traffic flows but not to a level that would cause undue concern.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the work undertaken to date to improve the rail network including the removal of all crossing points while providing alternative access for vehicular, pedestrian, cyclist and equestrian traffic be noted,
- (b) that the proposed scheme leading to the submission of a Transport & Works Act application be supported, and
- (c) that the revised draft plan for The Offords level crossing replacement be endorsed.

(At 7.14pm, during the discussion of this item, Councillor I C Bates took his seat at the meeting.)

69. A14 PROGRESS REPORT

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Development (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel was updated on the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme.

The Panel was informed that the Council was a Tier 1 stakeholder and as such was not required to make a formal representation in order to appear at the proposed Examination in Public. However the Planning Inspectorate had asked the Council to make a representation. A copy of the Council's representation could be found in Appendix B to the report.

It was confirmed that in addition to the outstanding issues currently being negotiated as contained in Appendix B, the issue of legacy of the scheme remained outstanding. In addition to building a road, there was the environmental impact of the proposed scheme to consider, including the planned borrow pits where selected construction materials would be extracted.

Details of the route improvements were described to the Panel after which a Member asked about the future proofing of bridges in terms of future traffic growth. In response it was confirmed that the bridges were future proofed in design terms until 2036. It was difficult accurately to predict traffic levels beyond that timeframe. The proposed junction at Bar Hill would accommodate traffic from the proposed Northstowe development.

Concerns were raised about the provision of adequate signage for motorists to ensure that the right routes were utilised. The Panel were informed that signage was still to be decided, however it was understood that the contractors for the proposed scheme would be appointed this month in order to meet the planned construction timetable. Details of the scheme, including signage, would form part of the detailed design discussions.

A Member asked who within the Council was responsible for assessing the noise impacts of the proposed scheme. It was confirmed that the Head of Community Services, Chris Stopford, was the relevant Head of Service. Those directly affected had potential compensation rights and rights to be protected from noise. However, it was also confirmed that there were some residential properties which, while they were affected, this was only considered to be to a minor degree and within acceptable limits under current EU standards.

In response to a question relating to the availability of funding for the scheme, it was confirmed that the Treasury had already committed the funding for it. In addition, a number of Councils within the scheme had agreed funding contributions of £100m and signed agreements were now in place covering this sum.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Council's continued engagement with the Development Consent Order process relating to the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme and efforts to seek to reach agreement on the remaining outstanding matters as highlighted in Appendix C of the report be noted,
- (b) that the Relevant Representation at Appendix B for sign-off by the Executive Councillor for Planning & Housing Strategy and the Corporate Director (Delivery) by the stated deadline be endorsed and,
- (c) that the Cabinet be informed of the Panel's comments on progress relating to the A14 project based on the contents of the report by the Head of Development.

(At 7.30pm, during the discussion of this item, Councillor Mrs B E

Boddington left the meeting.)

70. HUNTINGDONSHIRE DESIGN GUIDE - UPDATE

Members received a verbal update on the Huntingdonshire Design Guide from the Planning Service Manager (Policy), Mr P Bland. They were informed that the Design Guide was being piloted in a new format. It was designed not to be printed but, instead, to be viewed on laptops and tablets. This was deemed to be the most appropriate way of reaching the community and stakeholders. In addition, there would be an saving on printing costs.

Members were informed that Mr M Huntington, who would be leaving the Council at the end of the month, had produced the Guide. One of its features was the use of high quality pictures to demonstrate good and bad planning design. The text was simple so that it could be easily understood. The document was interactive and there were links to different areas of the document. It was hoped that the Guide would help Members and the public with designing properties. The document would be subject to consultation in the near future. The Panel commended the work of Mr Huntington.

A question was raised regarding the status of Tree Strategy and the Design Guide in the planning process and enforcement of them. In response it was confirmed that the Design Guide would be a supplementary planning document and would be enforceable. The Tree Strategy did not have the same status but Officers were looking at whether aspects of it might be adopted as a supplementary planning document.

71. WORK PLAN

The Panel received and noted a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained details of studies being undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for Social Well-Being and Economic Well-Being.

The Panel were informed that other higher priorities meant that work on developing Waste Collection Policies had paused. Dates for completion of this work would be allocated in the near future.

72. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS

With the assistance of a report by the Democratic Services Team (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel reviewed the progress of its activities since the last meeting. In doing so the Panel agreed to remove the Tree Strategy from the work programme.

Members were informed that a date for the Flood Prevention Working Group was in the process of being set. The Working Group would look at the Draft Cambridgeshire Flood and Water Supplementary Planning Document as well as investigating the role of Internal Drainage Boards.

The Panel noted that in the next couple of weeks a new work programme would commence on Litter Policies and Practices. It was

also suggested that the Panel might have an input into Civil Parking Enforcement.

73. SCRUTINY

The Panel received and noted the latest edition of the Decision Digest (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). A Member asked if the Social Media, Networking and Blog Policy covered Members. The response was that it did and the policy was available to view on Modern.gov. The policy was introduced following receipt of a number of social media related complaints by the Monitoring Officer. It was stressed that the policy was designed to protect Members.

Chairman