



**REGENERATION, ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND
COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY AND
PERFORMANCE PANEL**

DATE: 15th DECEMBER, 2004

**Agenda
Item No.**

6a

TELECOMMUNICATION WORK GROUP

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr M Longhi – (Environment)
Cllr A Andrew – (Regeneration)
Cllr M EPitt – (Housing and Community Safety)

Summary of report:

- This report is to update the panel to request that the groups recommendations be considered

Background papers:

- Notes of Telecommunication Working Group, and pro-forma

Reason for scrutiny:

- To carry out a review on Telecommunication Masts

Signed:

Lead Member Telecommunication Working Group: Councillor A Johnson

Date: 15th December, 2004

Resource and legal considerations:

- Any changes to the process may require changes to the council constitution. A review of the constitution is currently being undertaken

Citizen impact:

- Successful scrutiny will contribute to improving the Council's performance and service delivery to service users and other stakeholders.

Environmental impact:

- Successful scrutiny can assist in shaping policy changes to make environmental improvements

Performance management:

- Scrutiny is an important and integral part of the Council's performance management framework, and can challenge, review and advise on service delivery, council activity and policy and improve results.

Equality Implications:

- All citizens with a relevant interest in a matter will have the ability to contribute to the deliberations of a scrutiny panel, when considering a "call in". Scrutiny members can engage with a wide range of service users, partners and other organisations to maximise the benefit of scrutiny.

Consultation:

- The review impacts on a number of the council pledges for the Vision 2008

Contact Officer:

Debbie Breedon – Scrutiny Officer
Tel. 01922 652074
namea@walsall.gov.uk

1 Background

- 1.1 At a meeting of the scrutiny panel on 22nd September 2004 members received a presentation from Mr John Grant and Mr David Elsworthy the subject being Telecommunication Masts. The focus of the presentation was on public health fears and current planning regulations. Following the presentation the scrutiny panel resolved to establish a work group to review telecommunication masts.
- 1.2 The working group has met on three occasions and carried out research to progress the review.
- 1.3 At its meeting on 2nd November 2004 the scrutiny panel received feed back from Councillor Johnson, who advised the panel that the working group were considering joining other authorities to lobby government through the local government authority relating to permitted development rights. She further advised the panel that the working group were currently carrying out desk top research relating to the alleged health care implications.
- 1.4 The working group at its meeting on 11th October 2004 considered a range of documents and advise, as follows:-
 - Good practice in other authorities
 - Leaflets informing citizens about telecommunication masts
 - An outline of the information contained in the Stewart report a comprehensive report on the health implications which resulted in no proven cause or link being attributed to telecommunication masts and health risks.
 - Planning policy guidance information (PPG8)
 - Telecommunication masks situated near hospitals and on schools, members discussed with officers nationwide, the huge amount of research being carried out on this topic and agreed the best way forward would be to use the research available, to invite experts to the working group, and to invite the mobile phone operators to give members opportunity to discuss the commercial view and the give an overall balanced view to the review of telecommunication masts.

2 Report of the Working Group held on 1st December 2004

- 2.1 The workgroup recently met on 1st December 2004. Members and officers once again brought forward the research information they had collated since the last meeting. Members noted the partnership working arrangements set out in PPG8 and the necessity within the guidance for operators to hold pre-application discussions with school governing bodies when considering installing telecommunication masts, on schools. Research of good practice in authorities had revealed that some authorities issue guidance notes to the mobile phone operators with applications forms which clearly states that the school governing body should be consulted. Members agreed to draft a guidance note to schools governing bodies be included in the planning

application pack when the application is for telecommunications masts is on or near schools, and submit it to the next Working Group.

- 2.2 When considering a number of leaflets and information documents prepared by other authorities' members found the department of health guidance leaflets to be the most comprehensive document available and felt it essential not to spend time 'reinventing the wheel'. It was agreed to recommend to the scrutiny panel that the Department of Health information leaflets are made available at all reception areas, schools and group rooms and that the Walsall Council Web Site be updated to include a direct link to the leaflet on the Department of Health Web Site.
- 2.3 The working group having established that operators should hold pre-application discussions with school governors when considering the erection of telecommunication masts on or near schools. It was suggested to invite a representative of SERCO to the next working group meeting to raise their awareness of this issue and to suggest that an item on agendas for future school governor meetings be included to raise school governor's awareness.
- 2.4 Officers advised the working group that a draft letter to the Local Government Association would be submitted to next meeting of the Regeneration, Environment Housing and Community Safety, Scrutiny and Performance Panel. The letter would support the Local Government Association's positive actions to addressing the current planning policy guidance in respect the committed developments rights being removed in telecommunication masts application. The recommendations in the letter should also request the upgraded Telecommunication equipment's appearance be more amenable to the area of installation.
- 2.5 Finally the working group considered arranging an event in March/April an exhibition to raise public awareness and to invite mobile phone operators to join the Council to inform the citizens about mobile phones and telecommunication masts.

3 Purpose of briefing

- 3.1 Telecommunications masts working group wished to advise the scrutiny panel of the progress being made in relations to the review of telecommunications masts, and to note the work towards informing School Governors of the need to be consulted. Highlighting the need to prepare guidance notes to operators, when they are making applications to install telecommunication masts/equipment in close proximity of or on, school buildings; and to agree a number of recommendations made by the working group.

4 Recommendation

- 4.1 To recommend to Cabinet that a letter of support be sent to the LGA indicating Walsall MBC's support of the lobby for removal of permitted development rights

which allow mobile phone operators to erect telecommunication masts below 15 metres in height without planning permission.

- 4.2 To agree that the Department of Health information leaflets be made available at reception areas, schools and to members group rooms. The purpose of the distribution is to inform the citizens of Walsall of the health implications of telecommunication masts.
- 4.3 To agree in principle to the exhibition stand in spring 2005 to raise public awareness and to provide information to the citizens of Walsall about mobile phone and telecommunication masts.
- 4.4 To note the progress of the work group to receive further updates at its next meeting.