

## **ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

Monday 4 January 2010 at 6.00pm

### **Panel Members Present**

Councillor A. Harris (Chair)  
Councillor D. Anson (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor C. Bott  
Councillor R. Carpenter  
Councillor K. Phillips  
Councillor D. Shires  
Councillor B. Tweddle  
Councillor M. Yasin

### **Portfolio Holders Present**

Councillor T. Ansell – Transport  
Councillor M. Flower – Environment

### **Officers Present**

Jamie Morris - Executive Director (Neighbourhood Services)  
Keith Stone - Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)  
Andy Ody – Grounds and Street Cleansing Manager  
Steve Pretty - Head of Engineering & Transportation  
Daniel Carins- Economic Regeneration Officer  
Colin Teasdale – Performance and Scrutiny Officer

### **50/09 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Douglas-Maul.

### **51/09 SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting

### **52/09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

There were no declarations of interest or party whip for the duration of the meeting

### **53/09 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved

That minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2009 be approved as a true and accurate record

### **54/09 PROGRESS OF THE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT WORKING GROUP**

The Chair introduced the briefing note providing an update on the work of the integrated transport working group including interim recommendations (annexed) and invited the Portfolio Holder to provide the Panel with an update of progress against these recommendations.

The Portfolio holder informed the Panel that the Council was in discussions with Centro

regarding Bradford Place and that he had asked Centro to work with the working group on their proposals. In response to a question the Portfolio holder confirmed that he had now received assurances that Centro would not be releasing any press releases without first consulting with the Council to check for factual accuracy.

Members raised concerns regarding the coordination of some bus service timetables and also the cost of using them, in particularly the fact that a cheap return fare was available from one part of the borough but not others. It was suggested that Centro be invited to a future meeting of the working group to discuss these issues.

Some Members also voiced concerns over the gritting of bus routes in the recent inclement weather. The Portfolio Holder informed the Panel that whilst all major bus route were gritted the decentralisation of public transport meant that bus companies could now run buses wherever they liked and it was not possible to grit every route due to limited resources. He added that the Winter Plan, which detailed which roads would be gritted had been presented to all group rooms for consultation and in response to Members who said they had not seen this detail in full offered to resend a copy of the gritting schedule to all members.

## **RESOLVED**

### **That**

- 1. Centro be invited to a meeting of the Integrated Transport Working Group to answer Member queries in relation to bus schedules and charging.**
- 2. That a copy of the winter gritting schedule be circulated to all Members for information.**

## **55/09 REPORT OF THE STREET CLEANSING WORKING GROUP**

Cllr Anson presented the Street Cleansing Report as lead member of the working group and thanked other members and officers for their involvement. He informed the Panel that in addition to this report the working group also hoped to undertake visits to Greenstar and also to another local authority to observe best practice.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment welcomed the report and informed Members that a number of the recommendations contained within it had already been included in the Cabinet budget proposals and had asked officers to look into others. He informed the Panel that he hoped to present an action plan on implementation to their March meeting.

In response to a query regarding the recommendation to hold a 6 month trial for graffiti removal on private land, it was clarified that the reason for the working group suggesting 6 months was that this would be just sufficient time to be able to carry out the trial in each of the LNP areas. The Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services) informed the panel that they had reached agreement with Virgin Media regarding the removal of graffiti from utility boxes whereby Virgin Media would supply the materials and Council officers would carry out the work.

In response to a Member query regarding the cost of Consultant to look at street cleansing and possible duplication with the work of the Panel, it was confirmed that the original estimated cost had been £15k but that invoices received so far amounted to only £8k so they expected to come in well under budget. Officers clarified that whereas the Working Group had led on a policy and strategic view of street cleansing; the consultant was looking at the operational and management side and as an external specialist was able to bring a lot of comparative data from work elsewhere with him. The Portfolio Holder for Environment commented that from the work he had seen to date, the consultant did appear to offer value for money and complimented the work of the Members.

A Member queried progress against recommendation 9 of the report relating to responsibility for litter removal from the river near to Bradford Place. Officers confirmed they were trying to establish ownership of the land and would chase to progress this action.

In response to a Member query relating to fly-tipping, the Grounds and Street Cleansing Manager commented that there were a number of different powers at their disposal, including installing barriers or CCTV, however there were resources issues to all these approaches. The Executive Director (Neighbourhoods) reminded the Panel that they would be receiving a report to their March meeting relating to enforcement on private land.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel endorse the report of the Street Cleansing Working Group.**

## **56/09 CARBON MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME**

*Cllr K Phillips left the meeting during discussion of this item*

The Economic Regeneration Officer introduced the report to the Panel and delivered a presentation (annexed) summarising the background to the action plan contained in the report. He explained that the draft Carbon Management Plan would be presented to Cabinet in February for approval and that the Panels views were being sought prior to this to feed into the Cabinet report.

Members made a number of comments regarding public safety concerns relating to dimming or turning off street lights. Officers confirmed that whilst switching off street lights had been trialled in other areas, the decision had been taken not to pursue that in Walsall due to safety concerns but they were looking at trialling dimming street lights in some areas. The Portfolio Holder for Environment confirmed that public safety was of paramount concern so they would use this approach only where traffic flow and speed allowed.

Members asked a number of questions related to how carbon emissions could be

calculated accurately to which officers explained that this was straight forward in some cases (such as heating bills based on meter readings) but in other areas educated scientific estimates had to be made (such as staff commuting which was based on census data.)

Members debated the overall impact that Walsall could have on what was a global issue but concluded that regardless of any debate as to the environmental impact, the fact that the plan would reduce energy costs meant it was worth supporting, particularly in the current difficult financial climate. They also agreed to monitor implementation of the plan once it had been finalised and approved

## **RESOLVED**

**That the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel:**

- 1. Support the Carbon Management Plan**
- 2. Monitor implementation of and progress against the Carbon Management plan**

## **57/09 WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10**

The Chair commented that he was pleased with the work undertaken so far by the Panel and the achievements it had made but commented that there was a need across all scrutiny panels to maintain a proactive and focussed work programme. He suggested that the Panel may wish to consider items around road safety, traffic congestion and pollution control and requested that officers bring a paper to their March meeting with further details on these three items for members to consider in more detail how they could approach them and develop a clearly defined scope. .

## **RESOLVED**

**That officers bring a paper to the meeting of 9 March 2010 outlining possible areas of work for the Panel, to include road safety, traffic congestion and pollution Control.**

## **58/09 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 19 January 2010

*The meeting terminated at 7.40pm*