

AT A MEETING
- of the
TELECOMMUNICATION MASTS
WORKING GROUP
held at The Council House, Walsall on
Tuesday 16 August 2005 at 6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor A Johnson (Lead Member)
Councillor I Shires

OFFICERS PRESENT

David Elsworthy
Debbie Breedon

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest identified at the meeting.

ACTIONS FROM THE REGENERATION SCRUTINY MEETING
6 JULY 2005.

Debbie Breedon advised that she had met with policy officers regarding the request of the scrutiny panel for consultations by the citizen's panel to be undertaken. She advised that unfortunately that would not be possible at this time and explained that the citizen's panel 2004/5 had only been a pilot scheme. The Pilot had consisted of three pieces of consultation and the report back on the Citizens Panel had recently been submitted to the Community Organisation Scrutiny Panel. She confirmed that the citizen's panel would be established for municipal year 2005/6 with 1500 citizen's being consulted on a variety of issues.

The group agreed that public opinion had been taken into account in the initial scoping of this work group and that members had taken into consideration the controversial issues raised by the public, such as, health concerns and the appearance of telecommunication masts.

Members agreed that in hindsight it would have been better to include consultation with the public at the beginning of the review and this would be a learning point for future regeneration scrutiny reviews.

REPORT OF THE TELECOMMUNICATION MASTS WORKING GROUP

David Elsworthy introduced the report. Members were advised that the draft report had been circulated and considered at Regeneration Panel on 6 July, however, it was felt that further work to sharpen up the findings and recommendations was required. Members agreed to go through the document paragraph by paragraph and make amendments accordingly.

The following amendments and additions were suggested: -

- Front page – the font Regeneration, Environment, Housing and Community Safety be reduced and the title of the document ‘The Enhanced Mobile to Telecommunication Masts’. In addition it was suggested that a symbol for scrutiny be inserted to the front graphic squares.
- Page 6 following paragraph 1.3 - that an additional paragraph be added ‘reasons for the review’. Members felt it essential to include why it was decided to look at telecommunication masts in particular sighting the public interest, the controversial issues, such as, health, the appearance of telecommunication masts and public debate that surrounded each application for a new telecommunication mast.
- Page 7 paragraph 3.3 - members agreed to take out the underlining of the provision priorities and to exchange numbering for bullet points to make the document visually more appealing.
- Page 15 paragraph 5.1 – first bullet point in addition to all and written evidence presented by David Elsworthy members requested that the sentence be extended to state that it was about planning, health and technical information related issues.
- Page 17 – an additional paragraph be inserted following paragraph 6.3, use of council buildings. Members felt it important to draw from the telecommunications event held at Bescot Stadium the request by mobile phone operators for members to consider the use of council buildings and council land for the siting of telecommunication masts. Members felt this may be an area for cabinet to explore the development of a policy at councils and to improve the council’s revenue to local areas. Officers agreed to formulate a paragraph and insert into the document along the lines of the members request.
- Page 18 paragraph 6.6, roll-out programme - members requested an additional paragraph outlining the role of local neighbourhood partnerships and their influencing of the roll-out programme for the siting of additional telecommunication masts.
- Page 20 appendix 1 – delete strategic review of disability working group and insert telecommunication masts working group.
- Page 20 appendix 1 – at the bottom of the page insert a statement; full details of the list of documents and information to be considered can be found at public libraries, the council’s one stop shop and an electronic version can be located by the council’s website. www.walsall.gov.uk.

In addition to the amendments listed above, members requested officers to check and amend grammar where necessary.

The working group agreed for the amendments to be made by officers as requested and that the final document be submitted to Regeneration, Environment, Housing and Community Safety at its meeting on the 15 September 2005.

RECOMMENDATION ACTION SHEET

Debbie Breedon submitted a table of recommendations which outlined the action required, who would take that action, the date it was required by and the progress position: -

(see annexed).

David Elsworthy advised members that the recommendations should follow the order of findings. Members agreed that the document should be re-ordered and made additional recommendations and amendments to the draft document before them.

- Additional recommendations:
- Recommendation to cabinet that cabinet should consider the feasibility of instigating a council policy on the use of council buildings to site equipment and the potential use of 50% of revenue to capacity build local neighbourhood partnership funds for use in the local neighbourhood area.
- Recommendation that local neighbourhood partnerships include an item on their agendas to consider the roll-out plan for telecommunications equipment to give them an influencing role of preferred site options. In addition to invite mobile phone operators to the meetings of local neighbourhood partnerships to give a presentation on the types of equipment to enable members to gain a greater understanding of alternative equipment and its usage.
- Amendment to paragraph 5a – that recycling officers be encouraged to liaise with mobile phone operators and businesses to develop recycling initiatives in Walsall.
- Amendment to paragraph 7 – in addition to the draft recommendation that Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council join any local government association lobby relating to the effect of telecommunication equipment on health or the planning policy guidance.

Officers agreed to take the recommendations, amendments and additions made by members and amended draft document to be submitted to Regeneration, Environment, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel on the 15 September.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 7.20p.m.