



ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2007/08 TO 2009/10

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Highways, Transportation and Waste Management, Director of Community Services and the Director of Corporate Resources concerning the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2008/09 to 2010/11. A copy of the report marked 'B' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussions the following points were raised:

Community Services – Revenue

- i) The £45,000 included as growth last year for the Developer Contribution Officer was for one year only. The post would now be self funding as a result of the increased level of Section 106 monies being obtained from developers.

The Committee would receive a report on the progress made in co-ordinating the County Council's activities as regards to developers' contributions. Discussions were currently underway with District Councils regarding co-operation.

- ii) The Department was exploring the possibility of providing planning services in the specialist areas of minerals and waste for neighbouring authorities.
- iii) The growth at paragraph 46 was to ensure that resources were made available for a regime of bridge inspections.

Highways and Transportation – Revenue

- iv) The proposed efficiency savings would not adversely affect services to the public. Some members however expressed their concern about the potential effect on services of achieving the proposed level of efficiency savings. In the light of this the Committee requested a report on contract monitoring and asked that the concerns of members be drawn to the attention of the Scrutiny Commission.
- v) Under current arrangements the responsibility for maintenance of highway verges rested with the County Council whereas litter picking was a District Council function. The concerns now expressed by

members about the lack of co-ordination of these activities were recognised and the Cabinet Lead Member agreed to report these to the Cabinet..

- vi) Discussions were on-going with District Councils regarding the co-ordination of grass cutting and verge maintenance and a progress report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee. It needed to be recognised that, as these activities are subject to contractual arrangements, progress on future collaboration may only be possible when contracts came up for renewal.
- vii) The Department was mindful of the on-going maintenance costs when designing planting on roundabouts.
- viii) It was highly unlikely that additional resources would be made available to maintain grade 3 and 4 footpaths. Consideration would be given within the overall funding envelope to possible re-alignment of resources to begin some work but this could affect other maintenance schemes.
- ix) The Winter Maintenance Service is scheduled to be reviewed under the efficiency programme. That review would address the effect of climate change on future needs. It should however be recognised that there were significant fixed costs involved with winter maintenance and that the scope for savings in the near future may be limited.
- x) Flooding was recognised as an issue that needed to be addressed. However it was important to recognise the complex set of relationships between agencies and the different responsibilities of each.
- xi) The charging regime for skip permits was now in place and the charging regime for scaffolding would be in place by the end of March.

Highways and Transportation – Capital

- xii) The concern about limited resources for Minor Works Schemes was noted. It was unlikely additional resources would be made available but a commitment was given to review priorities within the programme to enable some minor works schemes to be undertaken.
- xiii) The £340,000 for 'outside city bus corridors' was aimed at working with the City Council to improve bus routes into the city. The money would be used to improve road markings, road layouts and bus stops.
- xiv) Discussions were underway with developers to agree an early buyout of their Section 106 obligations in relation to the Birstall Park and Ride site. If these negotiations are successful, the County and the City Councils would then consider contributing additional funding to ensure that the park and ride was operational by 2010. Discussions were also

in hand with Glenfield Parish Council on progressing the Park and Ride site on the A50.

- xv) The concerns raised by members about the design of the A447/B585 junction at the Bull in the Oak were noted. The situation was being carefully monitored and a report would be submitted in six months' time on the impact of recent revised changes to the road layout.

Passenger Transport

- xvi) The arrangements for charging for denominational transport would be in place by September 2008. Arrangements were also in hand for payments to be made by direct debit.
- xvii) The County Council was not responsible for the bus linking East Midlands Airport to Leicester City but details of usage would be obtained for the Spokesman of the Committee.

Waste – Capital

- xviii) The priority was the upgrading of the Sileby site but this was subject to land acquisition. If that proved difficult it may be necessary to progress the other schemes which were not dependent on land acquisitions.

RESOLVED

- a) That the information now provided be noted.
- b) That the Cabinet be asked to explore with District Councils the co-ordination of grass cutting and litter picking on highway verges as this offers opportunities for efficiency savings and improved service provision.
- c) That the commitments given by the Cabinet Lead Member to consider possible re-alignments of existing budgets to undertake minor works and, if possible, some works on grade 3 and 4 footpaths, be welcomed.
- d) That the Scrutiny Commission be advised of the concerns expressed by some members regarding the proposed efficiency savings and the scrutiny of such saving proposals.
- e) That the Director of Highways, transportation and Waste management be requested to submit a report to a future meeting on contract monitoring.