



ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 JANUARY 2009

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2009/10 TO 2012/13

MINUTE EXTRACT

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Highways, Transportation and Waste Management, the Director of Community Services and the Director of Corporate Resources concerning the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2009/10 to 2012/13. A copy of the report marked 'B' is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr. N. J. Rushton CC, the Cabinet Lead Member for Highways, Transport and Waste Management, and Mrs. R. Camamile, the Cabinet Support Member for Environmental Issues within Community Services.

Arising from discussions the following points were raised:

Community Services – Revenue Budget

- (i) The restructuring of staff within Environment and Heritage Services was virtually complete and had resulted in the removal of 20 posts. Of these, 10 members of staff had either retired or been made redundant.
- (ii) Planning Officers were already engaged in consultation on the LDFs. Should additional work arise from the emerging LDFs, work priorities would be reconsidered. It was noted that an additional £500,000 had been allocated from corporate underspend to cover costs arising from work carried out related to the proposed eco-town at Pennbury.

Community Services – External Funding

- (iii) The items in Appendix H were listed as 'subject to confirmation', on the basis that, whilst letters had been received offering grants, contracts had not yet been signed;

Community Services – Capital Programme

- (iv) There was no detailed information listed for the years 2010/11 onwards for the capital programme, as, following the reduction in capital receipts, the previous commitments in the Capital Programme were being reviewed in the context of a new cash limit of £300,000 per annum.

Highways and Transportation - Revenue

Roundabout sponsorship

- (v) The predicted annual income was £100,000. The agreements were for more than one year, so there was, as yet, no indication that any of the sponsors would be pulling out of the scheme.

Highways and Transportation – Growth

Grass Cutting

- (vi) The additional growth of £300,000 in response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review Panel was welcomed. It was noted that the Director of Highways, Transportation and Waste Management had recently written to all district councils offering them the opportunity to work with the County Council and fund additional urban cuts. Members would be advised of responses received;

Tree Planting

- (vii) The previous decisions of the Cabinet which had resulted in an increase in tree planting was to be welcomed. However, the Committee was keen to ensure that there was sufficient capacity in the Forestry Department to survey the trees and within the Highways Environmental Maintenance Budget for carrying out any necessary maintenance work.

Highways and Transportation – Efficiencies

Winter Maintenance

- (viii) The County Council gritted a relatively high proportion of the County's roads (45%) as compared to other authorities. Savings were being delivered through the use of a new product for salting – 'safecote', in which the salt was mixed with molasses, enabling it to stick better to the road surface, operating more effectively and reducing damage done to vehicles and plant life on the verges. Further savings were accruing through the use of salt barns to store 'safecote' reducing losses of approximately 10% due to supplies being washed away.

Highways and Transportation – Capital Programme

Transportation

- (ix) It was noted that confirmation had now been received from the Department of Transport of the LTP settlement for 2009/10;
- (x) The additional investment for Category 3 & 4 footways was welcomed.

Waste Management - Growth

Diversion from Landfill

- (xi) There had been discussions with Leicester City Council regarding the possibility of diverting waste to the Ball Mill. However, due to the contractual constraints in City Council's PFI agreement, it had not been possible to progress this;
- (xii) It was noted that reduced levels of waste were being produced in the current economic climate. However, any savings that might arise from this were likely to be offset by the reduction in the demand and price paid for recyclable material.

Waste Management – Efficiencies

Waste Strategy Implementation

- (xiii) The £700,000 saving had accrued because of better than expected progress in the procurement process for the long term waste treatment facility.

Waste Management – Capital Programme

Recycling & Household Waste Sites

- (xiv) The three sites mentioned in paragraph 22 of the report were at different stages and it was hoped to begin work on them before the end of the year.

Other Issues raised but not covered in the report

Personalised Travel Planning

The Committee was advised that whilst Leicestershire has one of the best bus networks in the County it did not score well in satisfaction surveys. The concept of 'personalised travel planning' had been trialed in other parts of the County and this had led to improved and more easily accessible information on bus and other forms of travel, which had resulted in increased bus patronage and improved satisfaction with the public passenger transport service. The suggestion was made that the County Council might wish to adopt similar arrangements.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the information now provided be noted;
- (b) That the Cabinet be requested to satisfy itself that there is sufficient capacity in the Forestry Section of Community Services Department to

carry out survey work and sufficient funds in the Environment Maintenance Budget to undertake the necessary maintenance of the additional trees planted as a result of previous decisions.