
SCRUTINY PANEL A
INQUIRY INTO THE HIGHWAYS APPROACH TO ASSET MANAGEMENT
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 JULY 2010

- Present:** Councillors Ball (Minute number 6 only) (Chair), Kolker (Vice-Chair), Morrell, Odgers, Turner, Parnell and Thomas
- Also in attendance:** Councillor Dean – Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport
- Apologies:** Councillors Mrs Damani and Willacy

COUNCILLOR KOLKER IN THE CHAIR

4. **APOLOGIES AND CHANGES IN PANEL MEMBERSHIP (IF ANY)**

The Panel noted that in accordance with the provisions of Procedure Rules 4.3 and 4.4, Councillor Parnell replaced Councillor Willacy and Councillor Thomas replaced Councillor Damani, for the purposes of this meeting.

5. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (INCLUDING MATTERS ARISING)**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd June 2010 be approved and signed as a correct record. (Copy of the minutes circulated with the agenda and appended to the signed minutes).

6. **HIGHWAYS APPROACH TO ASSET MANAGEMENT INQUIRY**

The Panel considered the report of the Head of Policy and Improvement detailing information on the communication tool and community aspects of the highways approach to asset management as well as examining performance and providing information on the new Highways partnership. (Copy of the report circulated with the agenda and appended to the signed minutes).

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport was present at the meeting and with the consent of the Chair, addressed the meeting, providing Panel Members with background information and an overview on the highways approach to asset management. The Panel heard that :-

- there had been chronic under-investment in Southampton's road network over the past last ten years;
- in 2005 Southampton lost a bid for PFI credits due to them being greatly over-subscribed and the promised further round of bids did not materialise;
- Southampton had been one of the first authorities to have a Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP) and it was extremely important that the correct weightings were applied to the specific areas which were engineering-led;
- Tribal Consulting was then commissioned to produce a report to investigate the future of the highway service and had produced a wide range of options which suggested that the best way forward would be to have a business contract with a

public private partner and on 5th July 2010, a report was approved at Cabinet, awarding a business contract to the Balfour Beatty Group to deliver the Council's highways services;

- as there was a great deal of in-house local expertise the Council's highway staff would be TUPE'd across to Balfour Beatty;
- although there was a tight contract with Balfour Beatty in order to sustain upward funding, there was sufficient flexibility within it which would allow the Council to contract an external provider for any major special projects outside of the contract; there were also penalty clauses within the contract;
- Balfour Beatty is a world-class infrastructure services business and were confident of achieving all their service level agreements with the Council.

COUNCILLOR BALL IN THE CHAIR

The Transformation and Performance Manager and Public Realm Manager provided the Panel with information on the Communication Toolkit used and the community perspective of the service provision.

The Panel noted that :-

- there had been improvements on the highways web pages which had been simplified and made fit for purpose with roadworks, utility repair work and traffic congestion highlighted and made as public as possible;
- the highways department had been participating in a MORI survey, 'Keep the City Moving' annually and in the last year was the only local authority that had improved in all areas; this had resulted in the Council being invited to talk at the National Conference;
- funding has been increased by £3-6m over the last few years
- the highways had a very able Communications Officer who handled complaints and was a good ambassador for the Council;
- as a result of the recession people's behaviour had changed and this had resulted in more people cycling than driving cars;
- 20% of Utility repairs were of an unacceptable standard and the Street Works Manager and team of inspectors monitored any possible hazards and the ongoing problem with utility companies;
- Important pieces of work underway were:
 - (i) improving cycle and pedestrian lanes; and
 - (ii) investigation of utility road works not properly reinstated to their original condition, not properly guarded or lit.
- the developers involved with the building of the two new Academies (subject to approval from the Department of Education) would be required to provide funding for cycle and pedestrian paths by way of S106 agreements, and future funding opportunities could be to get developers to help pay for road improvements by way of S106 agreements;
- the M27 network to Dock Gate 20 was now recognised as a route of national importance but was not regarded as a strategic road and therefore the local authority was responsible for its maintenance; although discussions were being held with Government, there was no obligation on ABP to contribute to repairs to public roads and it was suggested that the Cabinet Member, in conjunction with the Scrutiny Panel, write to the Secretary of State pointing out the unjustness of the situation; a Park & Ride Scheme would not be viable until the number of car

parks and on street parking in the City was reduced in the city; sites have been identified and protected in the core strategy;

- the tactile material used in pavements was being investigated to ascertain if it was being used appropriately;
- the Street Works team would investigate the gas works in Swaythling High Street; and
- a system had been implemented to improve the quality of street signs.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the report of the Head of Policy and Improvement, the overview provided by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport and the comments and presentation received from the Transformation and Performance Manager and Public Realm Manager, along with the ideas and suggestions contributed by Members of the Panel, be placed in the register of evidence of the Inquiry into the Highways Approach to Asset Management; and
- (ii) that a further meeting be scheduled on 29th July in order to agree recommendations and draft a report for consideration by the the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at the meeting on 19th August 2010.