

INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday 23 October 2002 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Mallinson (Chairman), Councillors Crookdake, Dodd, Hodgson B, Martlew, Wilson (as substitute for Councillor Glover).

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor G Prest, the Infrastructure Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder also attended the meeting.

IOS.92/02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Mrs Rutherford, Mrs Parsons and Glover.

IOS.93/02 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (including declarations of the Party Whip)

Councillor E Mallinson declared a personal interest in accordance with the City Council's Code of Conduct for Members in respect of any items relating to Cumbria County Council, in particular Waste Collection and Street Works Review as she was a Member of the County Council.

IOS.94/02 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2002 were approved as a correct record of the meeting, and could be signed by the Chairman at the next meeting of the Committee after they had been published in the Minute Book.

Further to Minute IOS.81/02 (c), the Highways and Environment Manager confirmed that it was acceptable that a written note be displayed in the windscreen in absence of an official parking disc.

A Member commented that she had not received feedback from Officers on specific comments she had made at the meeting. The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer commented that Members can specifically ask for a response from an Officer, in which case the Member is provided with a written response. In addition, Officers who attended the meetings have access to the Minutes of these meetings.

IOS.95/02 THE FORWARD PLAN

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer presented Report TC.203/02 highlighting the Forward Plan (1 October – 31 January 2002) issues which fell within the ambit of this

Committee.

With regard to KD.077/02, the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer advised that the Development Brief for the Cosmo would not be submitted to this Committee, but the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of this Committee had been involved in the process in relation to this Brief.

With regard to KD.084/02, there was some discussion on when the Cumbria Rural Regeneration Company would be set up. The Infrastructure Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder stated that at this stage it was uncertain as to how many District Council representatives would be on the Rural Regeneration Company. There had been suggestions that there may only be 2 District Council representatives from across the whole Cumbria County. The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer advised that the Cumbria Rural Action Zone and Rural Regeneration Company would be the subject of a report to a future meeting of this Committee.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Forward Plan (1 October to 31 January 2002) issues which fell within ambit of this Committee be noted.

(2) That the Executive should be asked to make every effort to establish the exact number of District Council representatives who would be on the Rural Regeneration Company and how they will be selected.

IOS.96/02 WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer presented an Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2002/03 which took into account matters scheduled to be dealt with by this Committee.

In response to Members' questions, the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer provided details of the work which would be done to prepare the Members for the meeting on 13 December 2002 to discuss the Tourism Subject Review. The Chairman of the Cumbria Tourist Board would be present at that meeting and Members suggested that it would be appropriate to have available the amount the Council contributes to Cumbria Tourist Board.

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer advised that he would meet with the relevant Officers and use previous comments of the Committee in relation to Tourism, to put together a briefing for members which would be circulated to them in advance of the meeting.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Work Programme be noted.

(2) That the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer provide a Briefing Note for members of the Committee in advance of the meeting to be held on 13 December 2002.

IOS.97/02 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – TOTAL WASTE COLLECTED

Councillor Mrs E Mallinson, having declared a personal interest, remained in the meeting and spoke on this item.

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer submitted Report TC.206/02 outlining the Council's performance on Best Value Indicator BV.84 which is "the number of kilograms of

household waste collected per head". He commented that although the Council's performance in relation to a number of other waste management indicators had been good, the total amount of waste collected last year had increased by 5%, and therefore missed the target which has been set (there had been an average national increase of around 3%). Carlisle's performance in 2000/01 had been the worst of the "family group of authorities", and in the bottom quartile of performance for all authorities.

Within Cumbria no authority was doing particularly well on this indicator and Carlisle was at around the County average. The recent Best Value Inspection of Waste Management which had been good overall, had noted that waste minimisation was an area in which the Council was not performing well, and concluded that a more strategic approach was required.

The Head of Environmental Services commented that this was a peculiar Performance Indicator in that it was very difficult for a Local Authority to control how much rubbish individual householders put out for collection. In addition, the Indicator related to all waste put out for collection, including items which were put out for recycling and which were subsequently recycled by the Council. It did not differentiate between waste which ends up in a landfill site and waste which was recycled.

He continued that comparisons with other authorities in relation to this indicator were problematic. The City Council's calculation was based on the weight of waste collected by the Council's vehicles, weight of waste deposited at County Council Civic Amenity Sites within the Carlisle area, and weight of waste collected through street sweeping operations. Other authorities, including adjoining authorities to Carlisle, did not include in their figures the weight of waste collected from Civic Amenity Sites. He advised that the Waste Management Officer at the County Council had different figures for each authority based on household collections and Civic Amenity Sites, which showed Carlisle's performance to be better in relation to other authorities in Cumbria.

Members then raised the following issues/questions which were discussed by the Committee:

(a) What were the reasons for the continued increase in the amount of household waste collected?

The Head of Environmental Services commented that a large part of the increase could be attributed to the Council's special collection of bulky waste items, such as 3 piece suites, fridges etc.

The Council collected these free of charge and when the original contract for collection of these items was let it was on the basis of 6,000 being collected annually, however last year there had been 10,000 collections. Part of the reason for this increase was low interest rates and the "feel good factor" resulting in people being able to replace household items and furnishings and throw out the old ones.

(b) Had consideration been given to charging for the collection of bulky waste items?

The Head of Environmental Services commented on the experiences of other Councils such as Worcester and Copeland, who had introduced charges for special collections. The experience of Worcester had been that there had been an increase in fly tipping and an increase in the amount of waste being

deposited at Civic Amenity Sites, which would still be included within the overall Performance Indicator figures for total amount of waste collected. He advised that Copeland's experience could be monitored over 12 months, to help to inform any future decision by the City Council, but that at this stage the free collections would continue within Carlisle.

(c) What efforts were made to recycle goods which were collected as special collections of bulky goods?

The Head of Environmental Services advised that when they receive phone calls to collect goods, they try to establish if the furniture could be recycled. If so callers can be referred to Impact Housing Association's Centre 47, where there is a furniture recycling and refurbishment operation which provides training and employment opportunities for young people.

(d) Is all the waste which householders put out for recycling included within the Performance Indicator on the number of kilograms of household waste collected per head?

The Head of Environmental Services confirmed that all waste put out by householders for collection and all waste deposited at the Civic Amenity Site was included in the number of kilograms of waste. This included glass, cans and garden waste put out as part of the Recycling Pilot Scheme, and all other materials which were deposited at recycling bins in the Civic Amenity Site. The Indicator therefore took no account of the measures being taken by the Council to recycle waste.

The Portfolio Holder added that the Council does not put any limitations on the amount of waste it collects from households. Householders in the Pilot Scheme are being given the opportunity to recycle, but these collections were still included within the total number of kilograms of waste collected.

Members commented that the authority had a duty to collect waste and that the Council could be seen as performing well, in that it was collecting all waste put out by householders, thereby reducing the amount of fly tipping.

(e) What measures are being taken to promote waste minimisation as part of the overall consideration of waste management by the Council?

The Head of Environmental Services advised that reports would be going to this Committee and the Executive in December on options for waste management in relation to a County Wide Waste Strategy. Consideration would be given to a number of options including improved recycling and incineration, although incineration was recognised as a very emotive issue.

With regard to the promotion of waste minimisation, it was suggested that this would be more beneficial if it was undertaken at a County wide level. However, in addition to the waste minimisation method being promoted to householders, there was a need for producers to take some responsibility. The amount of packaging which is included with goods should be reduced by producers, and in relation to white goods retailers should be encouraged to collect all goods and recycled where appropriate.

Members commented on experience of other European countries and

suggested that new legislation was what was required in this area.

The Chairman advised that she had received a leaflet entitled "Make Waste Work" from Cumbria Waste and asked that a co-ordinated approach should be adopted throughout the County.

(f) Have the Council been successful in securing any of the Government money available for recycling?

The Head of Environmental Services advised that the Council had failed in its first phase bid, but that it had submitted a second phase bid which was for the capital element of recycling i.e. the provision of green boxes and wheeled bins to every suitable property in Carlisle and Eden. This was different from the original bid in that it would include only properties which were accessible by refuse collection vehicles and had gardens. However, even if the funding for this capital element was covered there would still be a revenue implication in respect of the collection and composting of the recycled material.

g. What happens If the Council is not successful in securing any of the Government funding?

The Head of Environmental Services advised that if the Council is not successful in securing any Government funding for recycling, it would not be possible to extend the recycling initiative beyond the pilot project. In addition, there would still be the cost of approximately £350,000 for the next financial year to continue the Pilot scheme.

The Portfolio Holder commented on the allocation of Government funding and stated that it would be fairer if every local received some funding. The Council would like to be able to extend the Council Pilot Recycling Initiative throughout the whole Council area, but this would be dependent on Government funding.

Members commented that they would like to see Landfill Tax monies being allocated to local authorities to assist them with their waste recycling efforts.

RESOLVED - (1) That the following recommendations be made to the Executive and to be taken on board by the Head of Environmental Services in his report on Best Value Review of Waste Management:

- a. To ensure that this Local Authority is judged on a like-by-like basis in terms of targets on the number of kilograms of household waste collected, the Audit Commission be asked to ensure that all authorities are operating to the same statistical standards.
- (b) That the Government be lobbied for legislation to put the onus on producers of goods to be responsible for waste arising. In particular, outlets for electrical goods should be responsible for collection and disposal of white goods. Legislation should also be put in place to reduce the amount of packaging which comes with all different types of goods and which ends up as waste.
- (c) That pressure be put on the relevant body to change the Best Value Indicator on the number of kilograms of household waste collected per head as

it is not a meaningful indicator and does not take into consideration the Local Authority's recycling efforts.

(d) That Government funding be sought to help meet the Government targets for the collection and recycling of waste. If Government funding is not available, the Pilot Recycling Scheme will still have to continue at the cost to the Authority of approximately £350,000.

(2) That the Head of Environmental Services be asked to come back to the January meeting of the Committee with a Draft Action Plan to improve the Council's performance, including timescales, targets, any costs involved and proposals for funding the same. The Committee meeting in December would consider a report on Waste Management and could amend requirements for the Action Plan at that time if necessary.

IOS.98/02 STREETWORKS REVIEW - BACKGROUND REPORT TO

Councillor Mrs E Mallinson having declared a personal interest, remained in the meeting and spoke on the item.

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer submitted Report TC.205/02 providing background information and posing questions which would enable the Streetworks Review to be scoped and the next steps determined.

At the last meeting, the Committee had agreed that they wanted to explore the following aspects of Street Works:

General Issues

- Public dissatisfaction with the disruption caused to road users
- Developing Best Practice in all aspects of Streetworks
- The Level of co-operation between Capita dbs, Cumbria County Council and Carlisle City Council on these matters
- The funding available for road maintenance in Carlisle

Type of work carried out

- Prioritising the repair work carried out (reference to community prioritisation)

Arranging for the work to be done

- Realistic level of co-ordination and co-operation between different utilities
- Realistic level of co-ordination and co-operation of road maintenance and utility work
- Information available to the public about when and where works are to take place

Practical aspects of the work

- The consideration shown to particular users whilst work is being carried out eg disabled people and pedestrians.
- The Standard of repairs

The Highways and Environment Manager was in attendance at the meeting and answered Members' questions in relation to specific aspects on the issues outlined above. He advised that Mr David Sheard, Area Support Manager (Carlisle) for Highways Network Management would be appropriate to invite as the Cumbria County Council representative, but that Members may feel that it is important to have a representative of Capita at the meeting.

In discussion and with assistance from the Highways and Environment Manager, the Members produced the following questions to ask the Cumbria County Council and Capita representatives when they attend the Committee:

- (a) In conjunction with the City Council, the County Council and the Carlisle Transport Advisory Group, can progress be made to have one phone number which all members of the public can contact in relation to Streetworks.
- (b) If this one number was in operation, explain what would happen after a call is received by the telephone operator ie what is the process for directing complaints or comments to the relevant body?
- (c) What is the current situation with OMNE and in particular the number of the reinstatements which have not been done to a satisfactory level?
- (d) When work is carried out or repairs done by utility companies, what is the process for inspecting the reinstatements and ensuring that they are done to a satisfactory level?
- (e) Could there be joint co-operation between the County and City Council with the utility companies to minimise disruption to the area?
- (f) The County Council system for scoring bids for schemes under the Structural Maintenance Scheme for street improvements does not seem beneficial to urban areas, could this scoring system be changed?

The Highways and Environment Manager also answered a number of questions from individual Members relating to responsibility for inspection and repair of pavements. He commented that some pavements came within the remit of the County Council and some the City Council and he provided details of the inspection and safety repairs process. He also provided further information to Members on co-ordination by utility companies of major repair works, procedures for inspecting and repairing highway lighting faults and queries in relation to a number of specific locations within the City Council area.

A Member raised a query about who was responsible for the area between High Bridge and the back Penrith Road, whether it was Carlisle City Council or Eden District Council. The Highways and Environment Manager undertook to provide a written response to the Member involved and copy this to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

RESOLVED - (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer arrange for Mr David Sheard from Cumbria County Council and a representative from Capita to attend the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 23 January 2003 or the next available meeting after that if they are unable to attend on that date.

(2) That the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer and Highways and Environment Manager work up a list of questions based on the questions and suggested areas outlined above and circulate them to Members in advance of the Committee meeting.

(The meeting finished at 12.10pm)