

INTEGRATED PLAN 2012/2013 – REPORT OF THE ENTERPRISE, GROWTH AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

To: County Council

Date: 21st February 2012

From: Enterprise, Growth and Community Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Electoral Division(s) All

Purpose: To report the outcome of the Committee's scrutiny of the Cabinet's proposals for the overall Council Integrated Plan for 2012/13.

Recommendations: The Council is asked to:

- Consider the Committee's report in its deliberations on the Integrated Plan 2012/13.
- Amend the proposed Environment Services priority regarding 'managing congestion' to 'improving mobility'.
- Reinstate the 'Environmental Implications' section within reports to Cabinet.

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1. SCRUTINY OF INTEGRATED PLAN 2012/13

1.1 The Committee met on Wednesday 8th February 2012 and questioned the following Members and officers about the Cabinet's proposals for the Council's Environment Services within the Integrated Plan 2012/13:

- Councillor Ian Bates, Cabinet Member for Growth and Planning
- Councillor Steve Criswell, Cabinet Member for Community Infrastructure
- Alex Plant, Executive Director: Environment Services
- Graham Hughes, Service Director: Strategy and Development
- John Onslow, Service Director: Infrastructure Management and Operations

1.2 The Committee's comments need to be read in conjunction with the Council's Integrated Plan 2012/13, which provides both the context and detail on the proposals. The following commentary is restricted to those issues on which the Committee has specific concerns or comments to make or that they consider should be highlighted for the Council's attention. The minutes of the meeting provide a full record of the deliberations.

2. ENVIRONMENT SERVICES PRIORITIES

Managing Congestion

2.1 The Committee focussed on the priority regarding 'managing congestion' and noted that governance and planning arrangements were being developed with South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council, and that the Council would also seek to involve East Cambridgeshire, Fenland and Huntingdonshire District Council's in the future. Resources would also be applied through Local Transport Plan funding. It was also noted that the Cambridge and Market Town strategies aimed to manage congestion and its environmental impacts.

2.2 A Committee Member commented that it would be more effective to develop an overall strategy to improve mobility around the county, with sub sets focussed on the needs of different areas of the county. The Committee agreed that improving mobility, rather than managing congestion, would be a more appropriate priority for Environment Services and recommended that the Council should amend the priority accordingly.

Environment

2.3 Members queried why the Environment Services priorities do not include explicit reference to protecting and maintaining the natural environment. In response, Cabinet Members explained that their approach was to embed and integrate environmental matters across all services, so that it becomes a part of day to day activity rather than an issue to be specifically prioritised in some parts of the Council.

- 2.4 The Committee then challenged how environmental issues would be factored in the decision making process given that the mandatory section in Cabinet reports regarding 'Environmental Implications' had been removed. Members felt that this section was a useful means of ensuring that Officers considered environmental implications when making policy proposals and Cabinet Members therefore had relevant information to assist them in making an informed decision.
- 2.5 Some Members, in particular, stressed that they do not feel that the Cabinet's policy of embedding environmental responsibilities across the Council is working, citing carbon reduction and biodiversity as examples.
- 2.6 The Committee believes that the Council should be mindful of the environmental implications of potential policy changes and therefore recommend that the 'Environmental Implications' paragraph is reinstated in Cabinet reports.
- 2.7 However, the Committee were pleased to note that the Cabinet are intending to develop a new Environment Strategy and intend to contribute to this through exercising their 'overview' role.

Protecting Vulnerable People

- 2.8 Some Members expressed concern that the Council was at the point of removing subsidies for bus services that would have a disproportionately negative effect on vulnerable people. They felt that the Cambridgeshire Future Transport (CFT) project is unproven as a means of filling the gaps left by the withdrawal of subsidies.
- 2.9 Other members thought CFT needed more time and expertise to carry out the task that it aims to achieve.

3. CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

- 3.1 Members noted that Environment Services has responsibility for managing a number of very significant contracts, such as the Waste Private Finance Initiative (PFI), Street Lighting PFI and the Highways Contract. However, the Committee raised concerns about the levels of expertise and capacity of the Service to manage these contracts effectively. The Committee will monitor contracts such as these closely over the coming months.

4. NORTHSTOWE

- 4.1 Members discussed the Cabinet proposals to take a £25 m equity share of developments at Northstowe. Some Members felt that this would be a positive move, enabling the Council to shape the development around community requirements. However, one Member felt strongly that the Council should not borrow funding to facilitate the proposed investment, as he stated that it is inappropriate for the Council to purchase land when well managed regulatory control could ensure the development was appropriate and that in addition the timing was inappropriate given the capacity issues on the A14.

5. IMPROVING COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE PUBLIC

5.1 Members noted that Cabinet Members and Officers expressed a commitment to improve public involvement and communications generally across all service areas. Committee Members welcomed this commitment as they believe that communications are not as effective as they could be.

6. HIGHWAYS FUNDING

6.1 Members discussed the proposed additional capital investment of £90 m in the county's roads, pavements and cycleways, which they welcomed. However, one Member noted that whilst this would reduce the rate of decline in the condition of the highways, it would not reverse it. This point was acknowledged by the Cabinet Member and Officers.

7. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

7.1 Members considered how performance information was presented in the Integrated Plan. One Member recommended that the baseline position should be included with the targets for the period of the Integrated Plan to enable comparisons to be drawn.

Source Documents	Location
Agenda and reports of the Enterprise, Growth and Community Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 8 February 2012	Room 116, Shire Hall Cambridge