

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

17 MARCH 2009

Present :- Councillor Christopher Arnold (Chairman)
Councillors Nick Barlow, Mark Cory, Pauline Hazell,
Peter Higgins, Mike Hogg, Margaret Kimberley,
Kim Naish, Gaye Pyman, Nick Taylor and Julie Young

43. Minutes

RESOLVED that;

- i) The minute of the meeting held on 10 February 2009 was confirmed as a correct record.
- ii) The panel requested an update from the Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services, in respect of the ward newsletter article confirming the site of new dog bins in the ward, before the list of new sites was published and the information circulated.

44. Items requested by another member of the Council

Councillor Lewis addressed the panel, requesting that an investigation should take place concerning the planned removal of many of Colchester's rose borders and shrubberies. Councillor Lewis, speaking for both herself and Councillor Hardy, said they were concerned that this planned removal would include those borders that decorated war memorials, for example the memorial at the Albert Roundabout garden. Councillor Lewis later explained that she had received no response from officers this afternoon following her telephone and email enquiry.

Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources addressed the panel and explained that many Councillors have come forward and questioned the removal of borders at specific sites and therefore officers have been requested to suspend this ongoing work at these sites until further notice. Councillor Smith was unaware of Councillor Lewis's enquiries that afternoon, and apologised for the lack of response.

Councillor Arnold explained to the panel that given this work had formed part of a service decision and was not strategic, that he and Councillor Lissimore had agreed that the Finance and Audit Panel was the appropriate panel to deal with this issue of concern.

Following further discussions the panel resolved the following;

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Officer would invite the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Tourism and Diversity to attend the next meeting of the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Panel (24 March 2009) to discuss this issue of concern.

Councillor Nick Taylor (in respect of being a Councillor for Mile End) declared a

personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

Councillor Christopher Arnold (in respect of being a resident of Great Horkesley) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3) The chairmanship of this item was taken by deputy chairman, Councillor Kimberley.

Councillor Kim Naish (in respect of his occupation as a private hire operator) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

45. Referred items under the Call in Procedure

The strategic decision, reference RES-022-08 'In the capacity of Stadium owner recommended that the Weston Homes Community Stadium Travel Management Plan dated 10 December 2008 be approved by the local Planning and Highways authorities (Colchester Borough Council Planning Services and Essex County Council Highways Department), taken by the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Business on the 12 February 2009.

This decision was called in by Councillor Chapman, supported by four Councillors. The reason for the call in is that the decision has not given regard to the following principle of good practice 'having regard to due consultation', as stated in part 2, article 13.02 of the Constitution, specifically, the lack of consultation with adjacent Parishes Councils i.e. Boxted and Gt Horkesley, and with the ward Councillors for the adjacent ward of Fordham & Stour.

Councillor Chapman and Councillor Paul Smith, Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources attended the meeting for this item.

Councillor Chapman presented the case for the call in, expanding on the reasons given within the call in papers, but stressing this was not a political issue, but what he considered to be a need for clarification of the consultation areas. Councillor Chapman said the Travel Plan was a very good document, but as shown in paragraph 7.1 or the accompanying report, the Ward Councillors for Fordham and Stour did not form part of the consultation process, though as a neighbouring ward would be directly affected by travel plan procedures on Colchester United match days.

Councillor Smith in response said he would have preferred a dialogue between himself and Ward councillors prior to the call-in to try to resolve the issue beforehand.

Councillor Smith said the Travel Plan was not a once and for all process, but would evolve as issues are raised and considered, and referring to Appendix 4 of the Travel Plan that showed the composition of the Stadium Travel Plan Liaison Group, said this group would have the responsibility to consider, and endeavour to resolve such issues. Councillor Smith did not consider there had been a lack of consultation, with twelve local open meetings held to discuss the Travel Plan and any issues arising from

the discussions.

Councillor Arnold said the difficulties with the decision taken arose out of the change of administration in 2008, with the previous Portfolio Holder, Brian Jarvis informing the Ward Councillors for Fordham and Stour appropriately. Councillor Arnold spoke about specific problems with the current Travel Plan which have come to light during the first months of operation, for example, no signage for motorists visiting the stadium from north of the town centre (A134), the need to monitor small roads north of the stadium (off the A134) on match days e.g. Blackbrook Road, and no signage to alert motorists before matches to impending police diversions on match days.

Councillor J Young concurred with Councillor Arnold for the need for improved road signage on match days and understood the breakdown in the line of communication given that Brian Jarvis had not been the relevant Portfolio Holder since June 2008.

In response to Councillor J Young, Councillor Chapman said whilst he did not believe there was a need for himself to be involved a year ago, this had changed due to the problems that had manifested in the last few months.

Councillor Smith, in response to Councillor Hazell, said to extend the consultation period would delay the implementation of the decision, a time consuming process that would probably go beyond early summer and in breach of the S106 agreement.

Councillor J Young, acknowledging the need for the Fordham and Stour Ward to be represented on the Stadium Travel Plan Liaison Group (STPLG) proposed that the panel confirm the decision, but request the Portfolio Holder to arrange for the Fordham and Stour Ward to be represented on the Stadium Travel Plan Liaison Group.

RESOLVED that the panel confirmed the decision, reference RES-022-08 'Weston Homes Community Stadium Travel Management Plan' and requested that the Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources recommend to the Stadium Travel Plan Liaison Group that they include members of the Fordham and Stour Ward on their group.

46. Work Programme

RESOLVED that;

- i) The rolling work programme was noted.
- ii) The panel agreed to the deferment to a future meeting, the following two items,
 - i) The review of the work of the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning to an extra meeting, the date to be agreed, and
 - ii) The final report on 'New build Nuclear Power Station at Bradwell' to an extra meeting, the date to be agreed.

47. Waste prevention and recycling options appraisal report

Have Your Say

Mrs Paula Whitney addressed the panel saying she believed there was no option within the options appraisal report that fitted what Colchester needed, and even questioned the appropriateness of some of the options being put forward for discussion. Mrs Whitney urged the panel to consider the report by Mr. McManus on the cost of recyclables in line with the options appraisal report, and asked that the collection of food waste be addressed as soon as possible.

Waste prevention and recycling options appraisal report

Mr. Matthew Young, Head of Street Services, prior to his presentation on the quantitative aspects of waste collection and recycling, explained to the panel that this was the start of the waste to resources review, with the purpose and key measure to minimise waste to landfill and increase reuse, recycling and composting.

Mr. Young's presentation explained;

- At Colchester, the current level of total waste recycled and composted was 33% in 2007/08 and was likely to be between 36 and 37%
- Colchester's target was to reach 40% by 2010/11.
- All the top performing and top improving local authorities have introduced wheeled bin / boxes collections based on an alternate weekly collection basis.
- Rochford Council, since the recent introduction of food waste and wheeled bin collections have increased their recycling and composting rate from under 20% to over 60%.
- In 2007/08 the cost of waste collection in Colchester was £49 per household.
- The cost of waste collection in the East Midlands, the most successful area in the country in terms of recycling and composting rates, ranges from £50 to £84 per household.

Mr. Young concluded by saying he hoped the panel would endorse the Policy Review and Development Panel to recommend a task and finish group to examine all the issues, with cross party membership and consultation with local residents.

Councillor Arnold commented that whilst we had to accept that Colchester' had fallen behind in terms of recycling rates, it should not be forgotten that it was still an excellent performing Council in terms of the level of overall waste collected from each household.

Councillor J Young said that informing and educating local residents in waste collection and recycling was imperative to improving performance, and that it was essential that the local media contributed towards this aim.

Mr. Young confirmed to Councillor J Young, and later to other panel members, that a task and finish group would as part of its terms of reference, need to consider pilot studies on waste collection, visit and consult with excellent performing Councils, consider issues such as the suitability of wheeled bins for the older people, recycling at blocks of flats and large residential establishments, the types of different freighters that

would comprise the overall fleet and the costs involved with all aspects of collection.

Councillor Dopson, Portfolio Holder for Performance and Partnerships addressed the panel to confirm that she endorsed the thoughts of the panel, that reducing waste to landfill will be of greater importance than just upping waste recycling rates. Councillor Dopson said it was imperative to educate local residents and children at schools, on food waste and food separation, saying where education had been given in other places, e.g. Preston, it had shocked local people of the amount of food wasted, and resulted in an automatic reduction.

Councillor Dopson confirmed that as stated in paragraph 8.2 of the report, all options of waste collection would be considered, and as yet, no decisions have been taken regarding the introduction of any of the options.

RESOLVED that the panel:

- i) Noted the report 'Waste prevention and recycling options appraisal'.
- ii) Endorsed the recommendation of the Policy Review and Development Panel that a Task and Finish Group be formed to investigate in more detail the options for and to make recommendations on the future delivery of the waste and recycling service.
- iii) Requested that should a Task and Finish Group be agreed by the Cabinet, that this group considers the points raised by the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel within the minutes of the meeting of the 17 March 2009.
- iv) Requested the Cabinet to endorse all aspects of education (e.g. road shows in Wards and to Parish Councils that includes similar information as presented to the Panel) to be considered by the Task and Finish Group.
- v) Requested the Cabinet to ensure the Task and Finish Group considers the reduction in 'Waste Collected' as important as an increase in recycling rates when considering the options on waste collection and recycling.

Councillor Julie Young (in respect of being a Member of Essex County Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

Councillor Mike Hogg (in respect of his employment at Colchester General Hospital) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

48. Review of the work of the Portfolio Holder for Performance and Partnerships

Councillor Dopson, Portfolio Holder for Performance and Partnerships attended the meeting for this item and addressed the panel.

Councillor Dopson, in her first year as a Portfolio Holder said as a personal wish, how much an incoming Portfolio Holder would benefit from succession planning and training.

Councillor Dopson gave a presentation on the progress and successes in the work of the services that fall within the remit of her portfolio.

- Strategic Waste Issues and the continual involvement at the East Essex Joint Waste Committee, which she continued to attend on a regular basis and do what she believed was the best for the residents of Colchester.
- A visit to Preston as part of the ongoing work on food waste and collection, the launch of Colchester's Tastiest Leftovers and attendance at the Eco Schools Conference.
- Performance monitoring included People and Service Area targets and outputs, National Indicators as part of the Council's Performance Dashboard (to be introduced to the Intranet during 2009-10), working with local and county partners on the Local Strategic Partnership and Local Area Agreements.
- Community Services work on tackling deprivation, improving the lives of the elderly and vulnerable with greater access to welfare rights, community development via rural grants and overseeing community health projects as part of healthy living.

The economic downturn had resulted in a volatile waste recycle buying and selling market, resulting in some authorities stockpiling recyclates until the market picks up. Councillor Dopson was confident that Colchester would continue robust conversations with companies to ensure good collection rates to compliment our current separation procedures and without selling on to poor sale streams.

Councillor Dopson confirmed that there is an annual review by Colchester for grant funding, though the level of funding has reduced over recent years. The Colchester Community Voluntary Sector Partnership is responsible for the approval of grants and organisation members know the funding procedure. Notice of grants or withdrawal of funding is given in October of each year, six months before the funding takes effect, and if the funding ceases, the organisation is given three months statutory notice as part of the decision taken, though the Council will support the organisation in seeking funding from other sources. Councillor Dopson said the policy adopted was good though she believed the Council would benefit from the clarity gained by more discussions with the funded organisations. Councillor Dopson confirmed that ward councillors would be informed as work progresses on home insulation grant work in the New Town area.

Councillor Dopson confirmed to the panel that following on from the Schools consultation, she would respond to Essex County Council to try to get County to monitor and track the education of those children caught in the transitional period of change, a position later commended by Councillor Higgins.

Councillor Dopson confirmed her chairmanship of CYPSP (Children and Young People Strategic Partnership) Board that reports to the PSP (Public Sector Partnership) on 25 targets, with the focus of the partnership on pulling in resources to provide financial and expertise support to focus and help deliver on the targets. Councillor Kimberley,

speaking from experience, said the work of CYPSP could have faltered without the focus and hard work of staff within the Community Partnership service area of Life Opportunities. Councillor Dopson said she would welcome an internal review of the partnership working of CYPSP by the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel in 2009-10.

Councillor Dopson confirmed to Councillor Arnold that due to all her commitments so far she had been unable to attend a CALC meeting (Colchester Association of Local Councils), though she did receive the minutes from these meetings and was shortly to attend a meeting.

In terms of rural issues, Councillor Dopson also confirmed to Councillor Arnold some of the current rural work being undertaken, such as, Tiptree's engagement with the 'stop smoking' campaign, with a local GP working in partnership with Council officers to set up a group of local patients for monitoring, and if successful, to role out to other areas. Councillor Hogg was heartened by Councillor Dopson's view that the 'Sure-Start' initiative should be rolled out to other rural areas, given that since the Birch Sure-Start initiative had been introduced, the delivery had gone way beyond everyone's wildest expectations.

RESOLVED that the panel:

- i) Noted the responses from the Portfolio Holder for Performance and Partnerships and thanked her for attending the meeting.
- ii) Requested the Cabinet to consider for the future, that all incoming Portfolio Holders should receive succession planning and training.
- iii) Agreed to an internal review of the partnership working of CYPSP by the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel in 2009-10.

49. Review of the work of the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration

RESOLVED that the panel agreed to defer this item to a later meeting.

50. Responsibilities of the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods

RESOLVED that the panel noted the responsibilities of the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods in preparation for the next meeting.

51. Responsibilities of the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy

RESOLVED that the panel noted the responsibilities of the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Strategy in preparation for the next meeting.