

Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on 7 August at 3pm in the Civic Offices.

(NB These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting).

Present

Councillors Caroline Scott (Chair)
Margaret Foster
Richard Jensen
Jim Patey

Also Present

Councillor Terry Henderson.
Bill Murphy, Highways Manager.
Clive Rankin, Clean City Manager.
Charles Stunell, Former Head of Transport and Street Management.
Jane Di Dino, Scrutiny Support Officer

25 Declarations of Interest (AI 1).

No interests were declared.

26 Apologies for Absence (AI 2).

Councillor Fuller sent his apologies.

27 Minutes of Last Meeting (AI 3).

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 24 July be agreed as a correct record.

28 Review of the City Council's Contract with Colas (AI 4).

Councillor Foster expressed concern that one side of Queen Street seemed to be being omitted from the cleaning schedule, bins along the dockyard front are often overflowing and that the shoreline is not being cleaned as well as it used to be.

Clive Rankin, the Clean City Manager explained that both sides of Queen Street are cleaned very early in the morning. The contract stipulates that Colas must ensure the streets are clean but does not detail how this is to be achieved. This area and the dockyard have a very heavy footfall and consequently the condition of the streets can deteriorate very quickly. He is aware that there have been occasional problems at the junction Queen Street and Anglesey Road. He also said that there have been occasional problems on the grass areas along the sides of Queen Street, which are the responsibility of the leisure service.

Mr Rankin informed the Panel that people are using bins more regularly. After receiving the Panel's request he had inspected Queen Street and the Dockyard and found that some of the bins contained bulky material, which means that they tend to fill up more quickly. Colas is aware of this issue and has provided larger

temporary bins and increasing the frequency of emptying when necessary. On the seafront in Summer the bins can be emptied every 30–40 minutes. Colas conducts several inspections a day throughout the city and will clean the streets and empty the bins as often as necessary. Colas is responsible for cleaning the shoreline to the water's edge. On the Dockyard area there is a private fishing club whose area is not Colas' responsibility.

If necessary, the Council could deploy street scene enforcement officers to enforce the litter dropping laws in the Dockyard. However, the Council must balance the need for enforcement with visitors' experience of the city.

In response to questions from the Panel, Mr Rankin clarified the following points:

If the Council decided to increase the number of bins, it would have to make a variation to the contract and there would be a cost implication for their maintenance and emptying by Colas. However Colas will install additional bins, without cost to the Council as part of their cleansing strategy.

The Gold Zone Project was added onto the existing category system aimed at raising the prominence of the city's primary and secondary shopping areas. The city is divided into a range of categories based on the use of the area (commercial activity, heritage, highway, residential and district shopping areas).

He regularly reviews comments made in The News and on its blog and has found that the Council is rarely criticized about a lack of cleansing and that the blame is directed towards the persons dropping the litter.

In order to sweep residential roads, they must be clear of parked cars but parking is very important to residents in Portsmouth. It is important therefore to achieve a balance. The city is the most advanced in the UK for street cleaning programme. In some parts of the USA, parking is authorised on alternate sides of the road every week in order to facilitate cleaning.

Colas carries out a weekly clean as well as deep cleans at no extra cost to the Council.

Mr Rankin is aware of the need to continually review the issue to ensure that all areas are being adequately cleaned.

The long-term contract gives more stability to the Colas staff, enabling them to have pension plans, training programmes as well as the time to review and improve their methods.

Portsmouth City Council is in the top 25% of comparable local authorities for cleanliness. These national benchmarks have been in use for 10 years and a marked improvement can be seen after the introduction of the PFI contract. The survey methodology was changed this year with the 100s of indicators being replaced by one set.

Mr Stunell reminded the Panel that there would be a cost involved if the Council decided to upgrade the category of an area. The contract is only concerned with

the outcome (i.e. clean streets) but does not specify how often bins are emptied or streets cleaned.

Councillor Foster informed the Panel that she had noticed a marked improvement in the cleanliness of the city and especially in her ward.

The Chair commented that some shopkeepers do not want bins outside their premises.

<Mr Rankin left the meeting>

The Chair reported that on 3 August she had made a further visit to Old Portsmouth to examine the new lighting columns and paving, this time guided by Councillor Henderson. She had made the following observations:

On the East and West side of the High Street some pink granite kerbs were replaced by concrete.

In St Nicholas Street there was a significant difference between the new and original lighting columns.

In there was a mixture of tall and shorter lighting columns.

In Highbury Street the spacing of lighting columns is irregular.

She concluded that the overall affect is very odd.

On her previous visit, she had visited different streets.

She wondered what had happened to the original lighting columns.

In response to questions from the Panel, Mr Stunell clarified the following points:

The High Street is part of the A3.

Guards had been fitted on some lights to prevent light streaming into residents' windows.

Councillor Terry Henderson was invited to give his views on the PFI contract and raised the following points:

The Clean City Team provides a first class service and has responded very quickly to his queries in the past.

He does not see the benefits that the contract has brought to the city. In his opinion, all the areas should be in the highest category.

The resurfacing of some roads and not others in the same area has led to some areas of Portsmouth looking very poor.

Worthing's streets are immaculate and it does not have a PFI contract in place.

It was only after a year of lobbying by Councillor Henderson that two new bins were installed in the area next to Clarence Pier.

RESOLVED that:

- **Panel members be invited to arrange individual guided tours of Old Portsmouth with Councillor Henderson.**
- **The Clean City Manager provide a sample category system to the Panel.**
- **The PFI Contracts Manager be asked to respond to the concerns raised at this meeting.**
- **Mr Thompson's letter be circulated to the Panel.**

Councillor Jensen informed the Panel that he lives in Old Portsmouth and that although he likes the new light columns, he was disappointed with the works overrunning by approximately 16 weeks.

The Chair agreed with Councillor Henderson that the resurfacing of some roads and not others that are close by has led to a patchwork-like effect, which is not aesthetically pleasing.

Mr Stunell explained that the contract stipulates that all A roads, most classified roads and a % of non-classified roads are to be resurfaced. Accordingly, Colas assessed the condition of all the roads and prioritised their resurfacing. The rest of the roads will be resurfaced during the rest of the contract. All the roads must be left in a good condition at the end of 25-year contract. Safety and function are the only considerations for the work.

The Scrutiny Support Officer reminded the Panel that at its April meeting, Councillor Riches had reported that the Friends of Old Portsmouth Association had been fully consulted about the programme for replacing the light columns. She had also noted that she had not received any complaints regarding the new paving.

RESOLVED that that Old Portsmouth's Neighbourhood Forum consider looking into this issue.

Forward Work Plan (AI 5).

- 29 The Chair informed the Panel that the Scrutiny Management Panel would be considering the 2009/10 scrutiny work programme at its September meeting. The Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel would soon be considering the draft cycling strategy but it did not have any other items awaiting review.

RESOLVED that suggestions for future reviews be passed to the Scrutiny Support Officer.

The Chair informed the Panel that she had received a letter from Mr Thompson at the start of this meeting regarding this review. This would be circulated to the Panel for consideration. She reminded Mr Thompson, who was in the public gallery and that he could contact the Transport and Street Management Team

directly to discuss his concerns.

RESOLVED that copies of Mr Thompson's letter be circulated to members for comment.

30 Date of Next Meeting (AI 5).
1st or 2nd September 2009.

The meeting closed at 4pm.