

TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL

MINUTES OF A MEETING of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on Tuesday 18 December 2012 at 4pm in Conference Room K, 2nd Floor, The Civic Offices, Portsmouth.

(NB These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting which can be found at www.portsmouth.gov.uk).

Present

Councillor Caroline Scott (Chair)
Phil Smith (arrived at 4:45pm)
Sandra Stockdale
Luke Stubbs

Eleanor Scott, Cabinet Member for Environment & Community Safety
John Ferrett, Opposition Spokesperson for Environment & Community Safety.

Officers

Richard Lee, Environmental Health Manager

31 Apologies for Absence (AI 1).

No apologies had been sent.

32 Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2).

No interests were declared.

33 Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2012 (AI 3).

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on 27 November 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

34 Air Quality in Portsmouth (AI 4).

Councillor Eleanor Scott, Cabinet Member for Environment & Community Safety, asked the panel to note the following points:

- The council employs only one officer to monitor air quality and report to DEFRA. This work is overseen by the Environmental Health Manager who is also responsible for many other council duties. The two officers carry out their duties extremely well.
- Although the responsibility for monitoring air quality lies with the Environment portfolio, all are responsible for delivering solutions.
- Political leadership is essential to improve air quality.
- Few local authorities in England have met their nitrogen dioxide objectives.
- She is pleased that this important issue is being looked at by another group of councillors.
- There is no unanimous agreement regarding the causes and affects of air

pollution.

- Some parts of the USA are currently looking at how to improve air quality whilst balancing the need to encourage economic growth.
- The main cause of air pollution is traffic, HGVs and shipping. Traffic management is not within the Cabinet Member for Environment & Community Safety's remit.
- All new vehicles are fitted with more efficient emission controlling technology.
- Thanks were given to the opposition spokespersons for supporting every action that the Cabinet Member has taken to reduce the carbon footprint.

The Environmental Health Manager explained that a DEFRA grant of approximately £20,000 was recently withdrawn.

Councillor Eleanor Scott explained that this had had a significant on the small air quality team. The administration had been informed of this growth pressure but no funding was available due to the austerity measures. Therefore, the Cabinet Member used part of the under spend created by bringing forward the dry, recyclables to cover the air quality deficit and a three year maintenance contract was introduced for the air quality monitoring equipment. Air quality has not been mentioned in the budget proposals so far this year.

In his role as Spokesperson for Environment & Community Safety, Councillor John Ferrett asked the panel to note the following points:

- He was recently appointed as opposition spokesperson for this portfolio.
- He works for Propect, a trade union that represents members who work for BAE that operates in the Dockyard.
- There has been an improvement in air quality nationally despite an increase in traffic. He assumed that this was probably due to more efficient cars and more efficient use of fuel.
- Although work was recently carried out at the entrance of Trafalgar Gate to alleviate traffic congestion, more could be done e.g. staggered arrival and leaving times for naval base staff.
- It is important to balance the needs of commerce and the environment.
- According to reports, more people would use public transport if it were cheaper, more accessible and more reliable. However, it is a private company and the council has limited influence on how it operates.
- Something needs to be done about the price mechanism. It is important to ensure that bus travel is accessible for all ages particularly young people who may have limited incomes.
- The council should provide an incentive to encourage use of the park and ride facility.

In response to a question from the panel, the Environmental Health Manager explained that climate change pollutants affect the climate's health and air quality pollutants impact human health.

The Environmental Health Manager put forward the following suggestions to improve air quality in the city:

The panel:

1. Continues to support the delivery of the Council's statutory responsibilities to review and assess the quality of air in Portsmouth.
2. Recommends the further development of the Council's strategies to improve the quality of air we breathe, working towards compliance with the National Air Quality Objective and beyond.
3. Recognises the importance of breathing clean air and the enormous negative impacts upon health and the huge economic costs of failing to deliver our responsibilities.
4. Appreciates that Portsmouth is the main area within the 'Portsmouth Conglomerate' which has been provided with an extension from the government to achieve compliance with the NAQO and acknowledges the possible financial penalties of failing to comply.
5. Endorses the strengthening of the existing joint working partnerships to deliver cleaner air.

Councillor Phil Smith entered the meeting.

Traffic management is essential to improving air quality.

The possibility to ask the developer to contribute or offset the negative affect of their development on air quality.

Councillor Eleanor Scott asked the panel to note the following points:

- As the responsibility for public health has been transferred to local authorities, it would be appropriate for this service to take on responsibility for the cost of improving and monitoring air quality.
- Many individuals are trying to live greener lives by insulation, recycling etc.
- The government's Green Deal is on the horizon but it will probably not benefit the poorest residents. E.g. one of the proposals is to offer 25 year loans to replace old boilers however, the lifespan of the boiler is only 10 years.
- Park and Ride should be free if possible to ensure usage and political leadership is required.
- It is difficult for the council to balance the need for cycle lanes and other measures to encourage more sustainable travel with other priorities.

In response to questions from the panel, Councillor Eleanor Scott explained the following points:

High levels of nitrogen dioxide are an indicator of poor air quality and consequent ill health. She suggested that the responsibility for air quality and alcohol interventions work be transferred to the public health team that has recently moved to the council.

It would be counterproductive for the government to pass on fines to local authorities for not meeting the air quality objectives when it needs to encourage industry and safeguard employment.

Some schemes, e.g. Combined Heat and Power help improve air quality nationally, but in the areas that they are located the air quality is actually worsened. The Cabinet Member assured the panel that she would only support measures that were beneficial locally.

Under the City Deal parts of the motorway may be adopted. This will have a significant implication for air quality management and will involve Gosport, Fareham and Southampton.

As part of the contract with Veolia, all power generated by the incinerator is sold to the National Grid. In future, any heat generated from new or retrofit schemes will be used in the city if possible. A feasibility study was carried out into the potential for retro-fitting Hampshire's three Energy From Waste plants including the one at Copnor.

The recycling facility is now powered by domestic waste that is burnt at the incinerator.

A review in 2006 showed that shipping only contributes approximately 5% of air pollutants.

In response to questions from the panel, the Environmental Health Manager explained the following points:

Ships change diesel when entering the port. Following a complaint from a member of the public about thick, black smoke being emitted from a ship the Environmental Health team worked with Brittany Ferries to identify improvements that could be made and subsequently the smoke was cleared up.

If the current trend of increasing levels of nitrogen dioxide continues, the local authority will not meet the objectives set by the government. It is not known whether the European Union (EU) will take any action when this is reported.

Engine efficiency due to advances in technology has improved significantly but has now levelled off.

The council wants to encourage visitors to the city, but more traffic increases air pollution.

It is very difficult to analyse trends over short periods of time, therefore the impact of the recent traffic management scheme at Velder Avenue needs to be reviewed constantly.

The EU has the authority to impose fines on the government for not achieving the air quality objectives. It has been suggested that these could be passed on to local authorities proportionately. Some local authorities have met their objectives.

As reported in the news article that was circulated to members, it was recently

reported that residents in Winchester have complained to the European Commission about the high levels of nitrogen dioxide in the city.

The council is responsible for the road network in the city. There are no Air Quality Management Areas by the motorway.

As it's an island, traffic has to enter and exit the city by only three routes.

The meeting concluded at 5:15pm