

ITEM 4

Time commenced 6.00 pm
Time finished 9.20pm

PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION 19 JANUARY 2009

Present: Councillors Poulter (Chair),
Banwait, Batey, Dhindsa, Harwood, Holmes, Lowe and Repton.

In attendance: Councillor Care

51/08 Apologies for Absence

None received.

52/08 Late Items Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

53/08 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

54/08 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2008 and the special meeting held on 24 November 2008 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

55/08 Call-In

There were no items for call-in.

Responses of the Council Cabinet to any reports of the Commission

57/08 Duffield Road Bus Lane

The Commission received a minute extract from the Council Cabinet meeting held on 16 December 2008. It informed Members that the Cabinet had considered the report of the Commission on the proposed Duffield Road Bus Lane and the proposed safety improvements that had been suggested. The Commission noted that the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community had been asked to consider the

recommendations of the Commission and would be drafting a report to a future meeting. The Chair asked the Assistant Director – Highways and Transport for an update on the report. Ms Durrant stated that this was in the early stages at the moment. Members asked the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation if any of the suggested safety issues had been addressed. The Cabinet Member stated that some improvements had been actioned but others because of their nature took more time to implement.

Resolved

- 1. to note minute extract 163/08 Planning and Transportation Commission – Duffield Road Bus Lane; and**
- 2. that the Chair and Vice Chair liaise with the Director of Regeneration and Community regarding the drafting of the report.**

Items for Discussion

58/08 Draft Revenue Budget Consultation

The Commission received a Draft Revenue-Budget from the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community. Ms Durrant stated that several issues were putting pressure on the Department. The economic downturn had led to a loss in revenue from building and development control fees and charges and also from public car parking fees. The other main issue was the highways maintenance contract. The Director informed the Commission that car parking revenues alone were down £750,000 which was around a 20 per cent loss. The Commission asked why this shortfall was so pronounced and if this was linked to the opening of the Westfield Centre. The Director said that the City Council was not the alone experiencing losses in car parking revenues and that the problem was nationwide.

Councillor Repton asked for clarification of the finance surrounding

- S92 Home to school transport – changes to bus services,
- S93 Reduction in other supported home to school transport bus services and
- S94 Removing remaining supported home to school transport bus services.

He expressed concern that by removing this service the Council would cause a great detriment to the school children of the city. The Assistant Director – Highways and Transport provided Councillor Repton with a summary of the potential savings that the proposals would bring. She went on to say that the department could carry out an impact assessment of who would be affected the most by the cost cutting measure if required. The Director of Regeneration and Community stated that these were only budget proposals and officers did not have the capacity to provide detailed impact assessments on each issue. Councillor Harwood said that the participation in the supported home to school service was not widespread and that it could not be warranted as a service to the whole city when only St Benedict's School had seriously taken up the scheme. The Chair asked for clarification of the direct impact on St Benedict's School. The Assistant Director – Highways and Transport stated that currently 220 pupils use the scheme. The Officer informed the Commission that

the proposed end of the discretionary scheme would only affect primary school children who lived under two miles away and secondary school pupils who live under three miles away, as those with longer distances had a statutory entitlement to free travel.

Resolved that:

- A. i) The Commission express to Cabinet its major concerns about the proposed removal of discretionary home to school transport; and**
- A. ii) The Commission recommend to Cabinet that no further action should take place without a full impact assessment and consultation with the stakeholders involved.**

The Assistant Director – Highways and Transport reported that the planned footway maintenance programme had been put on hold since October 2008. The Chair questioned if any footway works had been carried out since that date. The Officer stated that at the beginning of the year the department identified that there would be a problem and halted the programmed set of footway works. Officers had identified that more money needed to be allocated to the reactive works. Capital funding of £250,000 was transferred into the revenue budget to compensate for this which had been spent on repairs. However, productivity had not matched the funding available and the finance allocated for the reactive works had been completely spent. The Cabinet Member stated to the Commission that all Members had been informed of the change of focus to the reactive works from the programme of scheduled repairs. Councillor Holmes expressed concern that if the programmed works were neglected this would have a knock on effect to the reactive works and exacerbate the problem. The Cabinet Member assured the Commission that this would not happen as extra funding would be available in 2010/11 and 2011/12 and by then the productivity of the Council's maintenance contract firm would be at optimum capacity.

The Assistant Director – Regeneration provided the Commission with an update on the service developments and pressures affecting Building and Development Control. Service pressures were reduced to £75,000 and further improvements were planned. However, he stated that staffing resources could only be reined in so far before it has a detrimental impact on service delivery as Building Control has statutory requirements to meet.

The Assistant Director – Highways and Transportation informed the Commission of the planned savings by capitalising part of the surface dressing programme to the Local transport Plan, LTP, and fund district centres from public realm budget and to capitalise T&T schemes against LTP to create revenue capacity. The first planned saving is by funding works from the capital budget instead of using revenue. The Commission expressed concern that this would create problems for the future and funds would not be available for capital projects if required. The Cabinet Member assured the Commission that this was effective use of the budget available to officers. The Officer informed the Commission that the second saving was a continuation of the same policy.

The Commission next considered savings identified as reductions in the provision of:

- Horticultural maintenance and grass cutting;

- The weed killing programme;
- Sign and road marking maintenance; and
- Gully cleaning.

The Cabinet Member stated to the Commission that savings could be achieved by reducing the frequency of the maintenance and cleansing programmes and only cutting the edge of grass verges and leaving the rest as hay meadow. Councillor Holmes expressed concern that reducing grass cutting near road junctions and traffic islands could have serious safety implications for motorists and obstruct their views of hazards.

B Resolved that the Commission recommend to Cabinet that any reductions in front line services should be carefully considered and preferably kept to a minimum.

The Assistant Director – Highways and Transportation updated the Commission on potential savings in the Council's Road Safety and School Travel Plan. Officers were currently reviewing the vacant posts in the enforcement section of the department to see if the way the service is delivered can be reworked.

C Resolved that the Commission recommend to Cabinet that any impact on frontline services be kept to a minimum by focussing any cut backs on backroom aspects.

The Commission considered savings earmarked for engineering projects relating to land and highways drainage and bridge maintenance. The Assistant Director – Highways and Transportation explained that these projects are considered small scale works and had been allocated funding in the revenue budget but instead finance will be drawn from the capital budget.

The Assistant Director – Regeneration briefed the Commission on a proposed new charge for pre-planning application advice to potential developers. The Officer stated that this charge would only apply to the larger developments and fees would be decided after officers have researched neighbouring authorities' pricing schemes. The Commission were reassured that this charge would only apply to bigger developments.

The Commission then considered a reduction in funding to a Council supported bus service. The Assistant Director – Highways and Transportation informed Members that currently the Council provides a variety of supported services including; volunteer groups who can hire a vehicle, a weekly service visiting the city centre and a district shopping centre (also known as 'dial a bus'), a bookable health visit bus and transport to Derby County Football, which are all under review. The Chair expressed concern that these were again front line services which would have an impact on the population of the City. He queried which routes would be considered in the reduction programme. The Officer stated that the No.111, 19, 17 and 17A would be kept. The City Council would look to stop services such as No.9, 35 and the No.29 (as it is only runs on a Sunday). The Council would also seek to withdraw funding from the B1, B2 and 61 services as the areas served had been bolstered by additional routes set up by Arriva. The Assistant Director went on to add that in terms of the community provision the 'dial a bus' service would be kept but would instead visit the City centre

and a district shopping centre on alternate weeks. This would in turn mean that services to smaller groups would be cut such as the bus routes to the football home matches.

59/08 Capital Budget 2009 – 2012

The Assistant Director – Highways and Transportation informed the Commission that there was not yet a hard copy of this report as it was not the normal time to receive a Capital Budget report. The Officer stated that the work programme for the Local Transport Plan would be taken to Cabinet on 17 March. Although is later than normal officers wanted to have a firm idea of the budget position before committing to any projects. The officer asked the Commission if it would be able to have a special meeting to feed their comments into this work programme proposal.

Resolved that the Chair and Vice Chair arrange a suitable meeting(s) to comment on the LTP budget proposals before being taken to Cabinet.

60/08 Draft Review of Mainstream School Contract Service Provision

The Assistant Director – Highways and Transportation provided the commission with an update on the review of mainstream school contract service provision. The Officer informed Members that phase one of the review was now complete and provided the Commission with a breakdown of the current usage of the facility by each school involved. The review would now move into the second phase which would evaluate if any services could be amalgamated into a single bus as many services were operating 74 seat buses with as few as only seven passengers. The Council would also seek to consult with the schools involved on any proposals they wish to put forward. But the Officer could not guarantee a widespread consultation as her officers' free capacity was limited. Councillor Repton again expressed concerns about the ending of these services which he believed would have a large impact on St Benedict's School's 720 users of the service. He stated that the traffic and safety around the school would become a severe problem if the Council chose to end the service. He felt it was his duty to contact the school and inform them of the proposals if the authority had not done so in 36 hours. The Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community informed the Councillor that this was an unrealistic deadline. He stated that he would liaise with Councillor Repton but could not commit to his timescale for contacting the school.

Resolved to a) note the progress update and b) note that Councillor Repton and the Director of Regeneration and Community would liaise regarding St Benedict's School.

61/08 Derby Roads: Highways Maintenance Term Contract

The Assistant Director – Highways and Transportation gave a presentation to the Commission on Derbyroads – Highways Maintenance Term Contract detailing the

key areas of work covered by the contract and performance indicators tracking their progress. This included an Action Plan matrix as had been requested at the 4 November meeting of the Commission

Resolved to a) note the progress presentation and Action Plan b) and request a further update at the June meeting of the Commission.

62/08 Work Programme – Interface between Neighbourhood Working and Highways and Transportation

The Commission received a report of a meeting of the Sub-Group of Members appointed by Minute 28/08. An external review was to take place and the Sub Group agreed should be considered as integral to the Commission's work. The co-ordination officer explained this had the effect of altering the timescale of the review which will now continue into the next municipal year.

Resolved to receive report of the Sub Group.

63/08 Retrospective Scrutiny

There were no items identified.

64/08 Council Cabinet Forward Plan

There were no items were identified.

65/08 Matters referred to the Commission by Council Cabinet

There were no items.

MINUTES END