



Committee and Date
Environment & Services Scrutiny
Committee
[formerly Protecting & Enhancing our
Environment Scrutiny Committee]

29 July 2013

Item

3

Public

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PROTECTING AND ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 18 MARCH 2013

5.00 pm to 7.00pm

Responsible Officer Martin Stevens

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Present: Mr P Adams, Mr J E Clarke, Mr J B Gillow OBE, Mr R Hughes, Mr V J Hunt (Chairman), Mr J M W Kenny, Mr C J Lea, Mr A J Walpole and Mr L Winwood.

Mr S Jones (Portfolio Holder) and Mr D G Lloyd MBE (Local Member – Petition) was also in attendance.

42. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Andrew Bannerman. Mrs Beverley Baker substituted for Mr Bannerman.

43. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

44. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2013 be confirmed as a true and correct record.

45. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Mr Michael O'Conner had served notice that he wished to speak on the item regarding the Shropshire Way.

46. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Members' questions.

47. PETITION

The Chairman stated that the petition read as follows:-

'Petition for a Crossing on St Martins Road, Gobowen. Many parents have been concerned since the Lollipop man retired, it has become apparent that the safety of our children is at risk, in December a little girl was very nearly hit by a car since then many parents have been worried. Therefore we propose that a crossing to be put in place for our Children's safety.'

The Chairman stated that he was pleased to have Cllr David Lloyd in attendance at the meeting, who had initially received the petition on behalf of the Council. The road concerned also fell within his Electoral Division. Mr Lloyd stated that there was a need for a defined crossing since the resignation of the lollipop man. A high number of vehicles were still exceeding the speed limit on the road.

Mr Malcolm Titley, speaking on behalf of the petitioners, stated that the area in question was an accident waiting to happen. At a time when children were being encouraged to walk to school the problem required expedient resolution. The Police were in agreement, that there needed to be a solution to the problem and the petition had 762 signatures.

The Team Manager for Operations and Community Safety stated that school patrols had become part of her remit in July of last year. When the school patrol man had retired last year, there had been difficulty in recruiting a replacement. The position had been filled temporarily but was now again vacant. In response Mr Titley responded that they were looking for a permanent highway engineering solution.

The Portfolio Holder thanked Mr Titley for the petition. He stated that there was clearly an issue that needed to be resolved. He had just agreed a new Speed and Safety policy and the problem on St. Martin's Road would be the first issue to be considered under the new policy. An appropriate design for engineering works would have to be completed, taking into account accident figures, traffic and pedestrian numbers and local concerns. He fully accepted that there was an issue and would raise the matter as a priority with the appropriate Officers of the Council, with the aim of works being completed within the next financial year.

A Member stated that the issue needed to be addressed expediently. He also suggested that a walking bus could help matters in the short term. The Chairman stated that whilst walking buses could have benefit, it was difficult to find volunteers and appropriate cover. Another Member questioned the status of the safer routes to school initiative, which needed to be driven forward.

The Team Manager for Operations and Community Safety stated she would ensure that pedestrian surveys and traffic counts would take place. The data collection would help inform engineering works, but it was clear that no engineering works would be able to take place until the Summer. A Member

stated that without engineering works, a crossing could be as dangerous as there not being one.

Cllr David Lloyd thanked the Portfolio Holder for attending. He was pleased that the Portfolio Holder had suggested an engineering solution to the problem. The volume of traffic in the area was increasing by the day. He stated that he was happy with the Portfolio Holder's response and hoped that there would be prompt and effective action.

RESOLVED: That the Committee endorses the Portfolio Holder's response to the petition, to gather appropriate data in the area with the intention of then carrying out appropriate engineering works under the new Speed and Safety Policy within the next financial year.

48. THE SHROPSHIRE WAY LONG DISTANCE FOOTPATH

The Countryside Access Manager stated that the Shropshire Way Project had commenced in 2007. The Council has been able to secure funding from external sources. The project supported local tourism and the route had been altered in order to take in special places. There was now a whole series of circular walks. The Shropshire Way was supported with web based info, podcasts and guides. There were a number of benefits to the County including health and well being and increasing volunteering. The Council were currently working on securing further external funding and were hoping to extend the Shropshire Way around the Shrewsbury area. When further funding was secured there was an intention to develop the Shropshire Way further in the Market Drayton and Bridgnorth area.

The Chairman invited Mr Michael O'Conner to address the Committee. Mr O'Conner stated that he had read the report in the Shropshire Star highlighting the fact that the Shropshire Way was going to be discussed at the Committee. The Shrewsbury River Group had been promoting walking following the river Severn and he expressed a desire to work with the Shropshire Way Team.

A Member asked about the use of way markers on the Shropshire Way. Jim Stabler in response stated that they were in use and that they had been designed so they were always facing the right way up. Members stated that Geo Cashing, mobile phone interactivity and publicity were all positive initiatives to encourage use of the Shropshire Way. The countryside of Shropshire was one of the county's great assets.

49. THE SHROPSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST

The Director of the Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Mr Colin Preston gave a short presentation on the Shropshire Wildlife Trust. He stated that the Trust was formed in 1962 and now had a membership of over 10,500 members. The Trust directly managed over 2500 acres of nature reserves. It was financed by individual giving, grant aid and commercial activity.

There were 600 wildlife sites in Shropshire but there was a loss of 2% per annum. The Trust had recently given some funding to the Shropshire Way. He stated that Climate Change would put pressure on the Shropshire environment

and it was important to address the question of how the countryside could be made more resilient. Mr Preston cited some statistics which showed the benefits of outdoor recreation on general health. 90% of people experienced an improvement in self-esteem following an outdoor walk.

He stated that the Environment Agency had determined that 90% of the rivers were not in a favourable condition. By 2026 the EU had stated that all rivers should be in a favourable condition. The Trust had invested £250,000 for the purpose of improving the condition of rivers in the County.

The Trust working with the Council had begun to restore areas of landscape within the County. They were also buying up part of the Stiperstones.

Mr Preston stated that it was very important to think of how the planning agenda affected the countryside. It was important that there was a good dialogue with planners, and data making to help make the right decisions. He cited a good example of the Wildlife Trust working together with the Council on the Boat House in Ellesmere. With commissioning taking on an increasingly important role within the County it was important to address how the trust could work with Council and maximise skills. Data sharing where appropriate was imperative particularly when looking at planning. It was important to release the community potential and he cited the example of 150 companies in Telford being part of an Environment scheme.

A Member asked about the future of Ash Trees given the disease that had been spreading. In response, Mr Preston stated that within a generation they were likely to disappear.

The Environment and Sustainability Manager stated that the Council had a legal duty to take into account environmental issues when addressing planning applications.

Members suggested that a representative from the Wildlife Trust should speak to the Local Joint Committees throughout the County. The Chairman stated that it was clear that smarter working was the way forward and education of Members on environmental matters was important.

The Chairman thanked Members for their contribution to the Committee, as it was the last meeting before the Council elections. He was pleased that the Committee had made a difference in a number of areas. Mr Gillow stated that the Committee had been the most interesting and enjoyable Committee he had been on in the last four years and thanked the Chairman for his contribution. Mr Gillow stated he was retiring from the Council after over 30 years in Local Government. The Chairman thanked him for his service to Local Government.

50. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 10 June 2013 at 5pm.

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....