



Committee and Date

Environment and Services
Scrutiny Committee

18 November 2013

Item

3

Public

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND SERVICES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 7 OCTOBER 2013**

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Present: Councillors P Adams, J E Clarke, Mr V Hunt [**Chairman**], C Lea,
P Moseley, K Roberts [**Vice Chairman**], D Tremellen and A Walpole.

Also in attendance: Councillor C Wild, Portfolio Holder for Highways
and Transport, Superintendent J Tozer, West Mercia Police.

14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor N Hartin.

15. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No disclosable pecuniary interests were declared.

16. MINUTES – 29 JULY 2013

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Services Scrutiny
Committee held on 29 July 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed
by the Chairman.

17. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public.

18. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Members' questions.

19. PETITION RE PART NIGHT LIGHTING INITIATIVE

Councillor D Carroll, the local Member, introduced the following petition that had been received and, with the requisite number of signatures, had triggered consideration by the Scrutiny Committee:

'Please keep our communities safe by turning the street lighting back on after midnight which does deter crime and makes residents feel safer. We encourage you to invest in LED lighting to reduce our carbon footprint and help save the environment'.

With reference to the accompanying Officer report, he stressed the need to recognise the fear and perception of crime in order to allay the fears of the local community.

Councillor M Kenny was permitted to speak on this item by the Chairman. He commented on the potential for reduced night lighting to reduce incidents of crime but to increase the number of trip incidents by people travelling to and fro in darkness [eg night shift workers] and suggested that night lighting could be retained in residential areas. Members noted that switching off every other light had been considered in the past but this resulted in increased shadows that made matters worse. Councillor C Wild, the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport, stated that, following a meeting with the petitioner, she recognised that the fear of crime was an issue in the local community.

Superintendent Tozer assured the Committee that he had no concern that the application of the Part Night Lighting Policy had resulted in any increase in crime but he recognised that fear of crime was a determining factor. He commented that areas with less lighting resulted in fewer incidents of burglary as burglars drew more attention to themselves when using torchlight! In answer to a Member's comments, he added that incidents of ASB had not increased with the introduction of the policy, in fact, personal ASB had seen a reduction of 30%.

He explained the work of the Shropshire Partnership and the work of the Gold, Silver and Bronze Level Tasking Groups, the latter being the forum where partner agencies agreed necessary action to meet specific problems. The Chairman commented that the work of these Groups may offer an opportunity for scrutiny involvement in future.

The Street Lighting and Traffic Signals Manager explained the pros and cons of lighting options as detailed in the report and explained that all information on the Part Night Lighting initiative was readily available on the Council's website. He added that only Shropshire Council's lighting fell within the PNL Policy and assessments were made against the same criteria county-wide.

Members raised various issues including:

- Lighting on new developments
- Incentives or penalties to encourage Parish/Town Councils to introduce a PNL scheme for the lighting that they provide

- Need to ensure that the PNL scheme maintains checks and balances to ensure specific issues can continue to be investigated
- Need to provide clear communication with local Members to keep them aware of PNL issues that may arise in their area

RESOLVED:

That the Committee understands and supports the following:

- a) Part night lighting currently provides the best feasible option offering best value to the tax payer with minimal impact to the community as a whole.
- b) The existing processes in place are appropriate and that the Policy is being applied in an equitable and consistent manner.
- c) The existing checks and balances that are in place to enable the Authority to work in conjunction with the Bronze Level Tasking Group (BLTG) to minimise the impact of crime or anti-social behaviour which occurs between midnight and 5:30am are appropriate.
- d) That the part-night lighting initiative continues to enable it to meet the required carbon & energy savings commitment as set out by Council.
- e) That crime/accident figures be monitored for 12 months and be reported to the Committee.

20. SHROPSHIRE DROUGHT PLANNING

Mr John Bateman of the Environment Agency, supported by the Council's Environment and Sustainability Service Manager, provided a presentation to the Committee on drought planning in Shropshire and answered Members' questions. A copy of the presentation is included with the formal record of this meeting.

Some of the main points raised included:

- Drought indicators are triggered after 6-7 months' of dry weather
- Local authorities have a duty to maintain a register of private water supplies
- Difficulties of supplying emergency water supplies to rural properties on private water supplies – EA works in conjunction with NFU to alleviate problems
- Lessons learned – plans to deal with drought need to be in place in a joined up way between agencies
- Difficulties in collating information on vulnerable households on private water supplies – Parish/Town Councils as a source of help in identifying those vulnerable in their own communities
- The merits of input from local Flood Forums
- The need to monitor the quality of private supplies and work towards improvements [fear of regulation and cost of water testing may hinder private water suppliers coming forward]

- Recognition of self help within communities and the need to encourage communities to help themselves
- Silver Level Tasking – have asked for a plan to be drawn up to deal with the issues surrounding private water supplies in times of drought
- EA website recognised as a useful source of reference and information
- Ground water recovery after drought is far slower than surface water recovery

The Chairman thanked Mr Bateman for his informative and interesting presentation.

21. DATE/TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the Committee’s next meeting would be held at 2.00pm on Monday 2 December 2013.

The Chairman repeated his request to members of the Committee to come forward with issues that may be suitable for future scrutiny either within the main Committee or by Task and Finish style working.

The meeting closed at 3.35 p.m.

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....