

PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
14th January, 2011

Present:- Councillor Whelbourn (in the Chair); The Mayor (Councillor McNeely); Councillors Austen, Gilding, Jack, License, G. A. Russell, P. A. Russell, Steele, Swift and Whysall.

Also in attendance for item 109 below were Councillors Cutts, Parker, Smith and Turner.

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor J. Hamilton.

107. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Councillor Smith declared a prejudicial interest in item 109 below, being the Cabinet Member taking the decision called in and only remained in the room to answer questions and explain the reasons for the decision.

Councillor Swift declared a personal interest in item 109 below having been, as Vice-Chair of the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel, present at the meeting when the Cabinet Member took the decision subject to the call-in.

108. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS.

There were no questions from members of the public or the press.

109. CALL - IN FLASH LANE, BRAMLEY - PROPOSED TRAFFIC CALMING SCHEME

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and the process and procedures were explained.

The Committee considered Minute No. G87 of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Environment held on 13th December, 2010 regarding the proposed traffic calming scheme on Flash Lane, Bramley. Also considered was the report that was submitted to the above meeting.

Councillor Turner, supported by Councillors Cutts and Parker, presented the objections to the proposals covering the following issues and views:-

- need to mitigate the situation and meet the requirements of the public
- in the Section 106 agreement the developer had contributed £10,000 towards the provision of a pedestrian crossing
- some residents in sheltered accommodation were reluctant to go out and rather than cross Flash Lane, got on the bus to the terminus and back up Flash Lane to alight at the other side
- £10,000 of the £45,000 calming scheme estimated costs was for the provision of a pedestrian crossing

- arguments for a formal pedestrian crossing were supported by speeding vehicles on Flash Lane, high activity of people and vehicles on Flash Lane at peak hours due to school, supermarket, youth centre and play area increasing the vulnerability and danger
- concordance from the community regarding the need for a formal pedestrian crossing
- costs for formal crossings quoted by engineers excessive compared to own investigation of costings
- sensible acknowledgement of the needs of the community would be reflected in the provision of dropped kerbs, striped crossing, two belisha beacons and two full length speed retarders situated at the beginning of Flash Lane off Bawtry Road and prior to the cemetery
- lack of consultation with the people living off Flash Lane e.g. housing estates using Flash Lane as an access road
- need for an urgent public meeting to determine what was wanted by the community
- LED's could be solar powered obviating the need for expensive excavation costs to connect to lamp posts

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Environment, responded as follows:-

- the Section 106 referred only to a pedestrian crossing not the type of crossing
- there was insufficient monies for a controlled crossing
- speed cushions and a flat top road hump had been proposed but when consulted the public objected and those objections were acceded to
- the appropriate consultation had taken place
- LTP monies were specifically for speed cushions and flat top hump nothing else, so when the cushion proposal was dropped, as a result of the public consultation, the money had to be returned to the LTP
- the Department for Transport criteria for the implementation of a controlled crossing could not be met and indeed fell short of the criteria by a long way
- other options therefore had to be considered leading to the scheme that was consulted on and the resulting amendment to remove cushions and the flat top hump from the scheme

The sponsors of the call-in answered, where possible, questions from the Committee covering:-

- why no objection from the sponsors of the call - in to the scheme at the time of the public consultation
- were there any objections from sponsors to the removal of the speed cushions from the scheme
- clarification that the sponsors wanted a controlled rather than an informal crossing
- clarification that the sponsors wanted a public meeting
- what the sponsors expected to achieve from a public meeting bearing in mind the consultation already carried out

Councillor Smith, together with an officer, answered, where possible, questions from the Committee covering:-

- costs of a zebra crossing/belisha beacons/LED's
- extent of the public consultation exercise
- suitability of speed cushions working as a 'pinch' point on Flash Lane
- effectiveness of speed cushions
- effectiveness of zebra crossings
- who suggested the Section 106 issue regarding a pedestrian crossing and why
- why had there been a delay in designing the proposed scheme
- cost of the scheme
- was the consultation area too narrow
- consultation process followed
- clarification that proposed calming scheme prepared following discovery that criteria could not be met for the provision of a controlled crossing

Councillor Smith answered questions from members of the public covering:-

- criteria for the provision of a controlled crossing
- refusal of the Authority to leaflet drop the Broadlands estate and limited public consultation exercise undertaken

At the conclusion of the questioning Councillor Smith left the room and the Committee deliberated.

Resolved:- (1) That the call-in request be not supported.

(2) That clarification be sought regarding the consultation exercise.

(3) That the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel be requested to look at costs and strategies regarding the provision of pedestrian crossings.

(Councillor Smith declared a prejudicial interest in the above item and left the room at the conclusion of the questioning and prior to the Committee's deliberations

Councillor Swift declared a personal interest in the above item)

110. PLANNING FOR THE 2011 CENSUS

Further to Minute No. C136 of the meeting of Cabinet held on 15th December, 2010, Miles Crompton (Research Co-ordinator) accompanied by Michael Whetton (Census Area Manager) presented the submitted report which set out details of the next UK Census which would take place on 27th March, 2011. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) was working in partnership with local authorities to benefit from their knowledge of local areas. The Council could help ONS to achieve the highest possible coverage in the Borough which would improve the accuracy of local statistics and maximise Government funding determined by census data.

The 2011 Census would offer online completion for the first time, as well as postal response. ONS had begun recruiting staff who would work on the Census with local agencies and communities to maximise response from those who have difficulty in completing the form, or who otherwise did not respond.

The Council and partner agencies were supporting the Census Area Manager to make use of local knowledge, experience and additional sources of data to ensure the success of the 2011 Census.

The 2011 Census would cost the Government £480 million, but there would be no direct cost to Rotherham MBC. During 2010 and 2011 there would be in-kind contributions through officer time to support preparation for, and implementation of, the Census.

The risks involved with the Census largely related to response rate and how accurately the data represented the actual population which were the responsibility of ONS. There was a risk to the Council from an under-count of population because a large amount of Revenue Support Grant was based on Census data. It was, therefore, in the interests of the Council to assist in maximising Census coverage locally.

The report covered:-

- maximising response

- Census content and topics

- population and usual residence
- housing
- national identity
- ethnicity
- language
- health
- migration
- 2011 census data

- Census Operation

- Contribution by Rotherham MBC

- address register
- enumeration and intelligence
- community engagement
- recruitment and logistics
- communications and publicity
- elected members

- Contribution from Rotherham Partner Organisations.

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were covered:-

- engaging the hard to count population
- census timescales
- non responders and chase up activity
- utilisation of Ward Councillors, Parish Councils (Parish Network) and community groups to assist in maximising responses
- online usage and need to gear up community buildings
- future of the Census
- partner organisations
- penalties for non-compliance
- CRB checks for census staff
- potential help from recommendations of previous scrutiny review
- need for a hotline number for elected members

- awareness of disabilities that could lead to non-compliance e.g. dyslexia

Resolved:- (1) That the importance of the 2011 Census to local intelligence and funding, and contribution which the Council and partners could make to its success locally be noted.

(2) That the key role which the Council and local partners could play in promoting the Census, maximising coverage and thereby ensuring the accuracy of data for planning and funding purposes be noted.

(3) That it be noted that Cabinet agreed that Rotherham MBC work with the Office for National Statistics and local partners, as set out in the Draft Census Partnership Plan, summarised in Sections 7.5 and 7.6 of the submitted report.

(4) That, following the completion of the 2011 Census, a further report be submitted on the outcomes, lessons learnt etc.

111. MINUTES

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th December, 2010 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

112. WORK IN PROGRESS

Members of the Committee reported as follows:-

(a) The Mayor (Councillor McNeely) reported that the review of private landlords was nearing its completion and that next week's Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel meeting was to include a visit to Rotherham Crematorium.

(b) Councillor Whysall reported that the latest meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel had considered the response to snow events in November and December, 2010 and that a joint scrutiny review was being arranged.

The next meeting of the Panel was to be held at the Advanced Manufacturing Park. A future meeting of the Panel would consider arrangements for a scrutiny review regarding pedestrian crossing strategies and costs.

(c) Councillor Jack reported that the latest meeting of the Adult Services and Health Scrutiny Panel had considered:-

- The Demographic Change for Rotherham
- Diabetes Review
- Yorkshire Ambulance Service : Potential Indicators for 2011/12 Quality Accounts
- The Rotherham Foundation Trust : Improvement Areas for 2011/12
- presentation on the collaborative study of hospital in patient falls

(d) Councillor Austen reported that the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel would look at consultation processes across the Council.

113. CALL- IN ISSUES

There were no formal call-in requests.