ENVIRONMENT AND NON-EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 2001/02

Introduction

The Council's constitution, introduced in December 2001, provides that each of the scrutiny committees reports once a year to the Scrutiny Board. This is the first annual report of the Environment and Non-executive Functions Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee

During the year covered by this report the Membership of the Committee was as follows:

Chair	Councillor Dr. Flegmann
Vice Chair	Councillor Franks
Member	Councillor Ali
Member	Councillor Banerji
Member	Councillor Boyle
Member	Councillor Stewart

The terms of reference of the Environment and Non-executive Functions Scrutiny Committee cover the following:

Executive portfolios	Environment
Functions	Physical infrastructure – provision and maintenance Use of land and impact of uses Local Agenda 21 and sustainability Value and appropriateness of services Operation of external partnerships Critiques budget proposals, standards, performance and Best Value including reviews All functions within the terms of reference of: Administration Committee Development Control Committee Regulation Committee

Mentors

The Scrutiny Board appointed Councillors R. Davies and Hambleton to oversee the work of the Environment and Non-executive Functions scrutiny committee

Panels

Members of Environment and Non-executive Functions Scrutiny Committee do not serve on the Leisure Panel or the Community Cohesion Panel.

The Role of Scrutiny Committees

The role of scrutiny committees is as follows

- To hold the Executive to account
    - By considering Executive decisions which are 'called in'
    - By giving advice to the Executive about matters included in their forward plan
- To monitor and evaluate performance
    - Using performance Indicators
    - And best Value reviews of services
- To examine topics of public interest or concern
- To consider topics referred by the Executive
- To undertake policy development, reviews and revision
- To undertake the role of community champion
    - By reviewing the performance of other public and 'common' services
    - By considering matters affecting the area and/or local people

Work completed

The Committee has met generally every four weeks throughout the last municipal year. The topics considered by the Committee are set out in the attached appendix. Notable successes of the Committee include clear recommendations to the Executive to allow Hackney Carriages but not Private Hire Vehicles to use bus lanes, the recommendation to take the Translink project to the next stage involving a public enquiry, the lobbying of the Government and the Strategic Raul Authority for the earlier implementation of the Thameslink 2000 project to improve rail services and capacity and the identification of serious concerns about aspects of the design of the proposed Bedford Roads Bus Lanes scheme.

A number of topics remain under review including the Translink project which will be kept under review as it progresses to the next phase, the proposals for the completion of the inner ring road and the development of the town centre traffic management strategy as each phase is completed, the feasibility of a pilot community bus scheme and the development and implementation of bus priority measures.

Future Work

The Committee has considered an extensive range of topics over the last twelve months but only a few of them have been considered in any great depth or have given rise to significant recommendations to the Executive or to the Council. This has been a common experience of all four Committees. The Scrutiny Board, at their meeting in December 2001, considered the experience of operating scrutiny since its inception in May 2000. The outcome of their consideration was a decision to adopt a much more structured and planned approach to scrutiny involving in depth reviews of relatively few major topics. The advice that is being given to the Scrutiny Committees is to have regard to the Council's vision, its corporate plan and the main priorities for the forthcoming year in considering what topics to select for the new work programme. The Committee will be considering its work programme for the forthcoming municipal year and submitting proposals to the Scrutiny Board at their meeting on 15th May 2002.

Councillor Dr. Alex Flegmann
Chair of the Environment and Non-executive Functions Scrutiny Committee

11th April 2002

Date	Topics Considered	Comments
14 June 2001	• Cycle lane – Leagrave High Street	

	• Bus Priority Measures and the Local Transport Plan • Bus users forum • Bus Lanes – use by Private Hire vehicles • Bus Service Issues • Service Plans	Recommendation to the Executive against the use of bus lanes by P.H. vehicles
16 July 2001	• Translink	

21 Aug 2001	• Translink (cont'd)
	• Local Plan timetable
	• Performance action plans
	  ○ Street Cleansing
	  ○ Refuse Collection
	  ○ Waste Disposal
	  ○ Recycling
		Executive recommended to continue to develop project subject to specific reservations

20 Sept 2001	• Performance information • Local Transport Plan – annual progress report	Comparison with the performance of other authorities re abandoned vehicles requested
18 Oct 2001	• Budget and capital programme • Budget monitoring • Car Parking charges	
15 Nov 2001	• Town Centre Strategy • Central Area Transportation Strategy	Recommendation to continue to apply local occupier clauses to housing developments
13 Dec 2001	• Vermin	Executive asked to lobby Gov't re lack of baiting of sewers by water authorities

Date	Topics Considered	Comments
17 Jan 2002	• Rail services	• Executive asked to lobby for quicker implementation of Thameslink 2000, and other improvements
	• Response to Government consultation about abandoned vehicles legislation	• Additional comments re speeding up the introduction of the end of life recycling directive and postal delivery of tax discs
	• Tendered evening local bus services to Lewsey	• Report on a pilot community bus scheme requested
14 Feb 2002	• Town Centre drop off and pick up points	• No further action recommended
	• Use of Bus Lanes by Hackney Carriages	• Exec. advised this is generally acceptable
	• Planning Green Paper	• Detailed comments to be included in response
	• Sustainable Design Guide	• Sustainability supported, views of Development Control Cttee. To be sought.
14 Mar 2002	• Bedford Road Bus Lanes proposal	Bus priority measures supported in principle but Executive advised not to proceed with this scheme