

**ENVIRONMENT & NON-EXECUTIVE
FUNCTIONS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

20th November 2008 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Ireland (Chair), Councillors Ayub, Garrett, Patterson
and Skepelhorn.

59 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (REF: 1)

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Dolling, Riaz, Taylor and Timoney

60 MINUTES (REF: 3.1)

Resolved: That, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16th October 2008 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Arising from the Minutes, a Member asked officers if they were aware of any impact the new Licensing Regime had made on the night time economy in the Town.

The Licensing Service Manager informed Members that the effect had been fairly steady. Members were also informed of various projects run jointly with other agencies such as the Police and the Ambulance Service, which were underway and having a positive impact on the Town centre. The Council were also providing a taxi marshalling service on a Friday and Saturday night that was proving to be a success.

Members expressed concern regarding the unsatisfactory situation regarding the redesign of the Chaul End/Dunstable Road junction. Following discussion, it was suggested that the matter be included on the work plan and brought back to a future meeting of this Committee to be considered in more detail.

61 PRIVATE HIRE AND HACKNEY CARRIAGE SCOPE REPORT (REF: 9)

The Licensing Service Manager submitted a report providing statistical information and scope for the review of processes/protocol involved in granting Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Vehicle licenses by the Licensing Authority.

The report reviewed the information obtained from the Committee records for the Panel decisions over the last 15 years. In addition, the Licensing Service Manager also outlined the matters that the Committee had previously agreed should be reviewed including:

- developments in relation to Minutes,
- the Council's conviction Policy,
- use of translation services,
- perceived apparent bias of Members,
- training guidelines and
- best practice from other Councils.

Members of the Committee agreed that further detailed work was required on this matter to ensure that the Taxi and Hackney Carriage Licensing Panel were making informed and appropriate decisions on the Cases brought before them. Concern was expressed by Members, in particular relating to the membership of the Panel and the use of Independent members, the provision of translation services and Member training including Members declaration of interests.

The Licensing Service Manager informed the Committee that officers were investigating a range of initiatives relating to this matter including a programme of training for drivers and the introduction of a penalty points system similar to that used by the DVLA.

In response to a question from a Member of the Committee, officers advised that they did not currently have any information relating to the numbers of drivers reapplying for licenses following a conviction for perverting the Course of Justice.

After further discussion, the following suggestions were made for inclusion in a further report to the next meeting of this Committee on the matter:

- i) The rules and regulations relating to the appointment of Independent Members to the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Panel,
- ii) The use of translation services,

- iii) Member training including the guidelines around Members' declarations of interests,
- iv) The Penalty Point System for drivers,
- v) Best practice from other local authorities,
- vi) Draft Convictions Policy

Resolved: That the Scrutiny Officer be instructed to include Members' comments and suggestions listed above, in a further report to the January meeting of this Committee.

62 CARBON FOOTPRINT (REF: 10)

The Director of Scrutiny presented a report informing the Committee about the work being undertaken and the progress being made by officers working to implement the Council's commitment to the Nottingham Declaration on climate change. The officer group had met twice since the last meeting of this Committee.

At its meeting on the 25th September, the Climate Change Group agreed that two Plans would now be produced, one on energy consumption including CO² emissions and the other on adaptation to climate change.

At the meeting on the 23rd October, the Climate Change Group agreed that a visit to the I-cycle and Green Living Centres in Islington would be made. A report back on this visit would be made to the next meeting. Feedback was received from the meeting that had been held at the Hat Factory in October with members of the Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Sub-Group of the LSP and other partner organisations.

Members noted that a response was still awaited from the Carbon Trust regarding an expression of interest that had been made about the Local Authority Carbon management Programme. An application had also been made to join the DEFRA funded One-to-One support programme for helping local authorities to assess their progress in addressing climate change and energy costs for residents and buildings in the area.

Members noted that due to the reorganisation of the local authorities in Bedfordshire, the proposed new Bedfordshire Carbon Reduction Partnership (CRed) would be put on hold for the near future.

Members were advised that the guidance for Local Authorities from the UK Climate Impact Programme (UKCIP) on Planning to Adapt to Climate Change had been delayed until late Spring 2009. The Climate Change Team had begun working on a Climate Impact Profile for Luton,

which would involve assembling information from over the past five years on the effects of extreme weather events on the lives of the people of Luton.

Members suggested that the work on the Profile should include information dating further back than the five years suggested, the information gathered should not be restricted to the Luton area only and the effect extreme weather conditions had on the delivery of Council services.

The Director of Scrutiny was also pleased to advise Members that several Councils, including a Beacon Council for Climate Change, had made enquiries of the Environmental Assessment Manager about how the Aerial Thermal Image had been produced and how the data obtained was being used to advise residents regarding insulation for their homes.

Resolved: That the report (Ref: 10) be noted.

63 WORK PROGRAMME (REF: 11)

The Scrutiny Officer updated the Committee with details of the latest version of its work programme.

Members suggested the following amendments to the Work Programme:

- Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing – Scoping report,
- Performance Indicators – Progress report on major and minor planning applications
- Carbon Footprint
- Increase in waste in Luton, including waste reduction and recycling
- 10 minute presentation on the East of England Plan
- Chaul End/Dunstable Road junction – report on the proposed changes including costings and timescales
- The Council's strategy on landscaping the street scene
- The effect of the introduction of the concessionary bus fare scheme for the bus companies and the Council
- The protection of the Town's parkland from developments.

Resolved: i) That the content of the work programme (Ref: 11) be noted.

ii) That the Scrutiny Officer amend the Committee's Work Programme in line with Members suggestions above.

Note: The meeting ended at 7.47 p.m.