

ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Select Committee held on 23 October 2012 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Bosley (Chairman)
Cllr. Grint (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Grint, Abraham, Mrs. Bayley, Butler, Ms. Chetram, Mrs. Dibsall, Edwards-Winsor, Eyre, London, Maskell, Orridge, Mrs. Purves, Searles and Williamson

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Ayres, Cooke, Mrs. Sargeant and Scholey

Cllrs. Mrs Davison, Davison, and Mrs Hunter were also present

18. Minutes

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 4th September 2012, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

19. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

20. Actions from previous meeting

The actions from previous meetings were noted.

21. Future Business, the Work Plan 2011/12 (attached) and the Forward Plan.

The Committee noted that a report on designated zones for air quality management would be presented to the meeting on 19th March 2013.

22. Railways and Trains (Southern and South-Eastern operators)

The Chairman introduced the following witnesses:

Mike Gibson – Southeastern Trains
Yvonne Leslie – Southern Railways
Roger Johnson – Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association
Bob Howes – Edenbridge Rail Travellers Association
Cllr Clayton – Sevenoaks Town Council
Cllr Robson – Edenbridge Town Council

Southern Railways

Ms Leslie provided an update to the Committee which covered the following issues:

- the timetable was changed twice a year, this year the changes in December would coincide with the work that was being carried out at London Bridge Station which would result in some short-term disruption. The timetable had been amended to reflect this and an additional service from Uckfield had been added in the morning.
- the rolling stock was currently being refreshed and refurbished.
- A new smart card was being issued as an alternative to paper tickets.
- The current franchise ran until July 2015. A consultation had been undertaken concerning a “super-franchise” whereby Southern Railways would be assumed into Thameslink.

In response to a question regarding the census for the 8:04 from Uckfield, Ms Leslie reported that a new census may have already been undertaken and that she should report back to Sevenoaks District Council with further information. This information could be passed to the Edenbridge Rail Travellers Association.

Action: that information received from Southern Railways be passed to the Edenbridge Rail Travellers Association.

In response to a question surrounding the process for auditing the procedure for rail fare increases, Ms Leslie reported that fare increases for regulated fares had to be approved by the Department for Transport.

Southeastern Trains

Mr Gibson provided an update to the Committee which covered the following issues:

- Average performance for the past 12 months had been 91.9%.
- Performance during the Olympics and Paralympics was excellent with 98+% achieved on many days.
- Southeastern and Network Rail had invested heavily in winter preparation measures. Southeastern were hopeful that in the event of below freezing temperatures services could be maintained. However, if there was severe, sustained and heavy snowfall Southeastern could not guarantee that services would run as normal.
- Southeastern were keen to improve communication and earlier in the year a Twitter data feed, automated email alerts and an i-phone App had been launched.
- This year fares would rise by an average of 4.2%

Environment Select Committee - 23 October 2012

- A number of improvements had been made to Sevenoaks and Swanley Stations as part of the National Stations Improvement Programme.

Councillor Tony Clayton from Sevenoaks Town Council reported that it would be helpful for information on local bus services to be provided at the station to assist commuters and that the Town Council was interested in providing a screen at the station which could be used for this purpose.

Representing the Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association, Mr Johnson highlighted that approximately 4 million train journeys a year began or ended at Sevenoaks. The need to maintain a good rail service in order to make Sevenoaks an attractive place to live or work was also highlighted. Mr Johnson also suggested that it would be helpful for Southeastern to publish a spread sheet of fare increases in order to maintain transparency. Mr Gibson reported that he thought that this would be possible.

In response to a question about overcrowding on trains Mr Gibson reminded the Committee that in recent years the number of rail passengers had increased considerably and in order to reduce overcrowding there would need to be improvements to the rail infrastructure. One way to mitigate against overcrowding was to rethink working patterns and encourage workers to travel at off peak times and work from home.

The Chairman thanked all the witnesses for attending the meeting.

23. Village Design Statements

The Group Manager – Planning introduced the report and explained to the Committee that the application for a neighbourhood plan area for Shoreham covered the whole Parish, including Badgers Mount. However, Full Council was shortly to determine whether a new Badgers Mount Parish Council should be established in 2015. In the light of this proposed future change to parish boundaries, it was considered that the administrative area of Shoreham Parish Council may not be an appropriate neighbourhood plan area. Further engagement with Shoreham Parish Council and Badgers Mount Residents Association would be necessary to determine an acceptable way forward on this issue. The Group Manager – Planning therefore proposed that the recommendation to the Environment Select Committee be amended and that an additional recommendation be included:

Recommendation (b) be amended to:

That Portfolio Holder approval is sought for the designation of Neighbourhood Plan Areas for Edenbridge and Ash- cum Ridley.

Additional recommendation:

That the Portfolio Holder decision on the Shoreham Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Area application be deferred until after Full Council make the decision on whether a new Badgers Mount Parish Council should be formed in 2015.

In response to a question the Group Manager – Planning reported that there was nothing in statute limiting the life of a Village Design Statement. Over time it was possible that Statements could become out of date and the relevance of the document would depend on the amount of change in an area however, responsibility for making changes to the documents would rest with the local Parish Council.

Resolved: that

- (a) the Portfolio Holder be recommended to approve the adoption of Seal and Underriver Village Design Statements and Otford Parish Plan Supplementary Planning Documents;
- (b) The Portfolio Holder be recommended to approve the designation of Neighbourhood Plan Areas for Edenbridge and Ash-cum Ridley; and
- (c) The Portfolio Holder decision on the Shoreham Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Area application be deferred until after Full Council make the decision on whether a new Badgers Mount Parish Council should be formed in 2015.

24. Annual Review of Parking Charges for 2013/14 and Christmas Parking 2012

Members considered the annual review of parking charges which proposed options for increases in respect to car park and on street parking charges to meet the budget for 2013/14. The Committee also gave consideration to proposals for free Christmas parking for 2012.

The Parking and Amenity Manager explained that all the car park options put before the Committee achieved the 3.5% increase in charges reflected in the 10 year budget.

Councillor Mrs Purves proposed and Councillor Mrs Dibsall seconded the following motion:

Sevenoaks car park changes should not be raised but be kept at the current level in order to encourage people in this difficult economic climate to come into the town and use the shops and other services.

The Chairman noted that this proposal would represent a loss of approximately £60,000 and these savings would have to be found elsewhere in the budget.

The Committee held a debate on the proposed motion. The motion was put to the vote and LOST.

It was suggested that increases should be applied to the Blighs car park with others slightly further out from the town centre remaining as they are. People could choose between paying higher charges for the convenience of parking very close to the shops or paying less but with a longer walk to the shops. Members were supportive of this proposal and went on to discuss the merits of increasing the 1 hour charge in the Buckhurst 1, Buckhurst 2, South Park, Suffolk way and Pembroke Road car parks by 10p to £1.00.

Councillor Grint proposed and Councillor Eyre seconded that all on-street parking charges for 30 minute short stay parking be raised from 10p to 20p

The motion was put to the vote and there voted –

13 votes in favour of the motion
2 votes against the motion

Environment Select Committee - 23 October 2012

The Chairman declared the motion to be CARRIED.

The Chairman proposed the following increases:

SEVENOAKS TOWN CENTRE - Blighs			Proposed Increase
Short stay	30 minute	50p	20p
" "	1 hour	£1.10	20p
" "	2 hours	£2.30	20p
" "	3 hours	£3.80	40p
Buckhurst 1, Buckhurst 2, South Park, Suffolk Way & Pemboke Road			
Short stay	1 hour	90p	10p
" "	2 hours	£1.60	-
" "	3 hours	£2.20	-
" "	4 hours	£3.20	-
Buckhurst 2 & Pembroke Road			
Long stay	all day	£4.20	-
Season tickets	year	£819	-
SEVENOAKS STATION			
Long stay	all day	£6.20	30p
Season tickets:			
Bradbourne	year	£1,050	£10
Sennocke	year	£1,090	£10
SEVENOAKS ST JOHNS HILL			
Short stay	30 minute	20p	-
" "	1 hour	40p	-
" "	2 hours	60p	-
" "	3-4 hours	£1.00	-
Long stay	all day	£2.90	-
SWANLEY			
Short stay	30 minute	20p	-
" "	1 hour	40p	-
" "	2 hours	60p	-
" "	3-4 hours	£1.00	-
Long stay	all day	£3.70	-
WESTERHAM			
Short stay	30 minute	20p	-
" "	1 hour	40p	-
" "	2 hours	60p	-
" "	3-4 hours	£1.00	-
Long stay	all day	£2.90	-

The motion was put to the vote and CARRIED.

Environment Select Committee - 23 October 2012

In considering the issue of free Christmas parking, a Councillor reported that anecdotal reports from traders suggested that this initiative did not increase footfall in the shops. The Chairman suggested that this initiative was the District Council's way of saying "Happy Christmas".

The Chairman proposed that free parking throughout the District be offered on Saturday 15th December and Saturday 22nd December.

Following a vote the motion was CARRIED.

Resolved: That the following recommendations be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration:

- (a) free parking throughout the District be offered on Saturday 15th December and Saturday 22nd December;
- (b) all on-street parking charges for 30 minute short stay parking be raised from 10p to 20p; and
- (c) car park charges for 2012/14 be increased by the following amounts:

SEVENOAKS TOWN CENTRE - Blighs		Proposed Increase
Short stay	30 minute	20p
" "	1 hour	20p
" "	2 hours	20p
" "	3 hours	40p
Buckhurst 1, Buckhurst 2, South Park, Suffolk Way & Pemboke Road		
Short stay	1 hour	10p
" "	2 hours	-
" "	3 hours	-
" "	4 hours	-
Buckhurst 2 & Pembroke Road		
Long stay	all day	-
Season tickets	year	-
SEVENOAKS STATION		
Long stay	all day	30p
Season tickets:		
Bradbourne	year	£10
Sennocke	year	£10
SEVENOAKS ST JOHNS HILL		
Short stay	30 minute	-
" "	1 hour	-
" "	2 hours	-
" "	3-4 hours	-

Environment Select Committee - 23 October 2012

Long stay	all day	-
SWANLEY		
Short stay	30 minute	-
" "	1 hour	-
" "	2 hours	-
" "	3-4 hours	-
Long stay	all day	-
WESTERHAM		
Short stay	30 minute	-
" "	1 hour	-
" "	2 hours	-
" "	3-4 hours	-
Long stay	all day	-

25. 2013-14 Budget & Review of Service Plans

Members considered a report setting out proposals for updates to the 2013/14 budget within the existing framework of the 10 year budget and 4 year savings plan. The report presented some service changes that had been identified by managers and the changes needed to be considered before the budget for 2013/14 was finalised.

The Group Manager – Financial Services introduced the report and explained that consultation with the Select Committees was the second stage of the budget setting process. The Committee was informed that due to the uncertainties in the budget, specifically the Government settlement and levels of Council Tax, it was possible that further reports would be presented to the Select Committees in January asking Members for their ideas of where further savings could be achieved.

In response to a question about the use of barristers for planning appeals, the Finance Manager reported that if appellants instructed a barrister, Sevenoaks District Council would normally also instruct a barrister.

Resolved: That the views of the Committee be put forward to Cabinet at its meeting on 6th December 2012.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 9.10 pm

Chairman

