

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL 4 - EMISSIONS STRATEGY (ACTION PLAN)

Thursday, 16 February 2017

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillor Sam Kilby-Shaw (Chair), Councillor Gareth Eales (Deputy Chair); Councillors Julie Davenport, Terrie Eales and Brian Sargeant

CO-OPTED MEMBER: Patrick Cross, WASPRA

Witnesses Dr Peter Barker, Acting Director of Public Health, NCC
Stephen Marks, Public Health, NCC
Councillor Mike Hallam, Cabinet Member for Environment, NBC
Neil Polden, Senior Environmental Health Officer, NBC

Officers Ruth Austin, Environmental Health and Licensing Manger
Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

Member of the Public Mr Sawyer

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Graham Croucher, Co Optee.

2. PUBLIC ADDRESSES/DEPUTATIONS

Mr Sawyer addressed the Scrutiny Panel commenting that he had previously addressed full Council. He had read the documents and minutes of the work so far of this Scrutiny Panel and had been impressed. He queried whether the Scrutiny Panel had looked at the quality of the cycle network, adding that through the involvement of the Town Centre Cycle Network, a cycle network had been devised that made the best use of the current cycle network. This would not require an initial outlay. Mr Sawyer advised that he had brought this to the attention of the Director of Customers and Communities, NBC, and also to the Managers of two Leisure Centres in the town. Mr Sawyer concluded his address by suggesting that this initiative would need to be a combined effort and would need the involvement of Highways, Northamptonshire County Council.

Mr Sawyer was thanked for his address.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2016 as a true and accurate record.

5. WITNESS EVIDENCE

(A) DIRECTOR, PUBLIC HEALTH, NCC

Dr Peter Barker, Acting Director of Public Health and Stephen Marks, Public Health, Northamptonshire County Council, presented the written responses to the core questions to the Scrutiny Panel. Dr Barker added that Public Health had submitted a formal response to the Borough Council's consultation on the Emissions Strategy. Dr Barker highlighted the importance of air quality in relation to health and wellbeing and that it could either cause or exacerbate certain health conditions. It is mainly the most vulnerable (e.g. very young / very old) that are affected the most. There is a need for joint working and for Agencies to be encouraged to change their behaviours.

Dr Barker went on to highlight the salient points contained within his written response.

The Scrutiny Panel asked supplementary questions of Dr Barker and Stephen Marks:

- In answer to a question regarding joint working, Dr Barker suggested that there was an element of disconnectivity between NBC, NCC, Public Health and the public. He acknowledged it was a tricky area. There is a need to link the Emissions Strategy to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. He highlighted a number of key performance indicators that are being identified in relation to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, such as mortality attributable to particulates. Agencies need to work together to tackle this.
- In response to a question regarding particulate matter, Dr Barker advised that industrial pollutants must also be considered; anything that is going to cause particulate matter will add to the problem.
- Dr Barker and Stephen Marks confirmed that a lot of good work is being done but there needs to be joined up working. Agencies often have different priorities. NICE has produced a draft guideline document around outdoor air quality and health.
- The Scrutiny Panel conveyed concern about the building of houses near to busy roads and the problem of this needs recognition. The draft NICE guideline does indeed refer to minimising the exposure of vulnerable groups to air pollution by siting buildings away from busy roads and ensuring facilities such as schools, nurseries and retirement homes are located in areas where pollution levels will be low. This needs to be considered in relation to development proposals and planning decisions.

Dr Barker and Stephen Marks were thanked for their informative address

(B) DIRECTOR - HIGHWAYS, NCC AND DIRECTOR CARBON MANAGEMENT TEAM, NCC

The written response from the Director - Highways, NCC and Director Carbon Management Team, NCC, was noted.

It was agreed that the Director of Highways, NCC and Director Carbon Management Team, NCC, is asked to attend the next meeting of the Scrutiny Panel to provide clarity on some of the responses to the core questions provided.

(C) CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT, NBC, HEAD OF PLANNING, NBC, SENIOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER, NBC AND DIRECTOR, LOW EMISSIONS STRATEGY LTD

Councillor Mike Hallam, Cabinet Member for Environment, NBC, and Neil Polden, Senior Environmental Health Officer, NBC, presented the written response to the core questions to the Scrutiny Panel.

The salient points contained within the response were highlighted.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- A discussion took place regarding a planning application and the amount of traffic it could create
- The Scrutiny Panel was referred to vehicle idling. Government Guidelines are that cars should not be idle for longer than one minute. Traffic in Booth Rise moves slowly but cars are not idle for longer than a minute at a time.
- In response to a query regarding engagement with other Agencies, Neil Polden advised that a lot are very good at engaging with NBC but some could provide better engagement
- A discussion was held regarding charging points for electric cars around the town. It was noted that all options would be looked at.
- The Scrutiny Panel was advised that Transport Planners do not necessarily consider air quality. There is a need to consider how NBC communicates with Authorities/Agencies that are pushing for developments on the edge of the boundary of Northampton. It was noted that Cross Border meetings do take place but the Cabinet Member did not feel that these meetings were effective.
- The Scrutiny Panel discussed the Old White Public House and that a planning application to convert this into flats had been refused. The Scrutiny Panel discussed various alternative options, such as a Smart Corridor.
- The Scrutiny Panel welcomed that NBC has a good working relationship with StageCoach
- The Scrutiny Panel referred to discussions that had been ongoing for a number of years regarding the North West bypass. It felt that this would be a solution to easing traffic and pollution. There needs to be connectivity between Authorities and Agencies.
- It was noted that the key message in the Emissions Strategy is the health message.
- There are around 400 air management area centres in England alone.
- The consultation phase of the Emissions Strategy had been a positive exercise with a good level of responses.

- There is a need to look at how awareness can be raised and new initiatives brought in, for example a suggested initiative being the offer of a voucher for a week's trial of an electric car, and "Don't use the car for a day" initiative.
- Grant funding of £65,000 had been provided for the Emissions Strategy but currently there is no further funding
- NBC has worked with SEMLEP regarding the local growth fund and also did some good work with the University of Northampton
- The Scrutiny Panel conveyed concern that there should not be too many electric car charging points installed too soon. It was noted that often developers will just put the cabling in for these charging points, so that they can be activated at a later date.
- Bus companies have confirmed that investment will initially be in areas such as Birmingham that have been declared as a Clean Air Zone. It was noted that should it be investigated that Northampton becomes a Clean Air Zone, costs would be involved and there would be a need for a feasibility study to be undertaken.
- The Scrutiny Panel noted that Traffic Regulation Orders can set emission standards.

Councillor Mike Hallam and Neil Polden were thanked for their comprehensive address.
The meeting concluded at 7:12 pm