

SCRUTINY PANEL A

**Meeting held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road,
Kirkby-in-Ashfield,**

on Tuesday, 3rd November, 2015 at 6.30 p.m.

Present: Councillor C.A. Mason, in the Chair;
Councillors B. Bradley and P. Roberts.

Apologies for Absence: Councillors A.N. Brewer and H.J. Hollis.

Officers Present: L. Cain and M. Joy.

SA.7 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

There were no declarations of interest made.

SA.8 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 1st September, 2015, be received and approved.

SA.9 Scrutiny Review – The Impact of Street Works in the District

The Chairman opened the item and advised that the attached report contained further insights and draft recommendations following the last meeting of the Panel and the discussions held with the County Council's Traffic Manager, Peter Goode.

Whilst the original scope for the review was a lot wider in terms of the proposed methodology for gathering evidence, having spoken with Peter Goode and in light of the information provided by him at the meeting, the Panel had agreed that it would be more pertinent to examine the use of communication tools such as bulletins to local Councillors, the Council's website, social media, local media and advisory signs to disseminate information efficiently and effectively and thus improve the communication and information on street works within the District.

Following this revised direction, the Scrutiny Manager reminded the Panel that they had expressed their satisfaction with the responses to their questions from the County Council representative Peter Goode and had been guided through the processes for scheduling and carrying out street works within the County.

It was apparent that the systems currently in place appeared to work well, albeit acknowledging that there was always going to be disruption caused by any works undertaken and the best course of action was to ensure that there was adequate information available to both Councillors and local communities.

With this in mind, the Scrutiny Manager advised that the following draft recommendations had been put together for consideration:-

(1) Road Signage detailing road works and clearly displaying website address/contact details for the planned works;

Peter Goode had indicated at the last Panel meeting that an upgrade of signage to include details of the road works and website address/contact details was something that the County Council could consider and should not prove too costly to implement.

(2) A regular briefing note be provided to District Councillors detailing planned works;

It had been suggested that a briefing note could be circulated to District Councillors giving notice of planned street works taking place in the Ashfield District. This would enable Members to cascade the information to affected local residents to mitigate against any potential disruption and to avoid any unnecessary complaints being lodged.

(3) Analysis work be undertaken on complaints relating to road works to ascertain levels impact and resolution;

The Scrutiny Manager had asked Peter Goode if he could supply the Authority with some data relating to number of complaints received in relation to planned street works. It was agreed that some comparison work could be undertaken to ascertain a more accurate picture of where affected residents lodge their complaints in relation to disruption from street works.

(4) Email alerts are considered for the District Council, particularly for emergency works;

It had been agreed that e-mail alerts for emergency works would be useful for District Councillors to disseminate the information quickly to affected residents. It was also suggested that contact details for external utility companies could be included on the Council's website to enable any complaints/queries to be fielded and dealt with directly by service providers should any emergency works need to be carried out.

(5) That consideration of current use of press and social media be assessed in relation to communicating road works;

It was acknowledged that the Council could take steps to utilise the local press and social media more efficiently to communicate details regarding planned and emergency road works.

In conclusion, the Panel were requested to consider the draft recommendations for submission to Cabinet in the near future.

RESOLVED

that Cabinet be requested to approve the draft recommendations (outlined below) following completion of the light touch review in relation to the impact of street works within the District:-

- (a) the County Council be requested to undertake the following:-
- to consider providing road signage which details the planned road works and clearly displays a website address and contact details should they be required;
 - to consider providing District Councillors with regular briefing notes which detail planned works to be carried out within the Ashfield District;
 - to provide data in relation to number of complaints received relating to road works within the Ashfield District to enable the Council to ascertain levels of impact and resolution at both District and County level;
 - to consider the provision of e-mail alerts for the District Council and Councillors, particularly for emergency works;
- (b) the Council assess their current use of press and social media in relation to communicating planned and emergency road works to local communities and consider its future potential for the quick and efficient dissemination of information to affected residents as appropriate.

SA.10 Terms of Reference for Potential New Scrutiny Review - Effective Public Transport in Ashfield

The Chairman opened the item and advised the Panel that the 'Impact of Public Transport within Ashfield' review topic had been recommended for consideration to assess how well current public transport facilities were meeting the needs of the community. In addition, the Panel could examine whether there were any areas for improvement that could be considered by service providers, partners and the Council. It was intended that the meeting would be for scoping the topic before inviting any key expert witnesses to address the Panel as part of the review process.

The Panel were asked to consider and give some thought to the topic including how effective transport services were in their wards, were the needs of the community being met, were there any obvious gaps in service and were the current levels of transport provision in any way effecting local businesses or employment opportunities.

The Scrutiny Manager then proceeded to present the report and advised the Panel that there were two key documents that affected local public transport namely, the Local Plan and the Nottinghamshire Local Transport Plan 2011/12 to 2025/26. Both the documents complimented each other with the County Council providing advice to the Council both on the emerging Local Plan and specific development proposals. There was a recognised ongoing need to manage traffic management arrangements and residual traffic impacts from development.

To assist with the debate, some excerpts from the Council's draft Local Plan in relation to anticipated transport priorities were also circulated for Members' information.

Whilst considering which aspects of public transport provision were more worthy of review at this particular time, the Scrutiny Manager made some suggestions regarding areas of focus as follows:-

Community Cohesion;
Access to Services;
Do services meet the needs of the community;
Alternative transport methods (i.e. Cycling);
Impact on businesses and economy;
Can the external travel companies do more (concessions, revised routes etc?)

A debate followed and Members quickly established that they wished to review and consider whether the current bus service provision around the District met the ongoing needs of the local communities. Various issues were discussed which included the following:-

- concerns surrounding the current bus services for Skegby, Stanton Hill and the Carsic Estate;
- the perception that bus companies were more interested in making a profit than looking after the needs of their customers;
- the levels of current Government subsidies/incentives for providing public transport and how they are utilised by the bus companies;
- whether 'areas of deprivation' are taken into account when bus companies assess potential bus routes within the District;
- the types of concessions currently available to older people;
- the potential benefits of the new 'oyster card' being developed for the Nottinghamshire area.

RESOLVED

that the Scrutiny Manager be requested to undertake the following in readiness for the next Panel meeting scheduled for January 2016:-

- (a) to note that the Panel agrees to undertake a review of 'Effective Public Transport within Ashfield' with a remit as follows:-

"to consider the current bus service provision within Ashfield and examine whether it continues to effectively meet the needs of local communities";
- (b) to invite representatives from the Trent Barton Bus Company and the Council's Planning Department to an informal meeting of the Panel to consider the current levels of bus provision within Ashfield and to enlist their views/responses as part of the scrutiny review process;
- (c) to request the County Council to provide some information in relation to the processes/procedures currently in place for identifying bus service requirements and routes and the types of passenger concessions currently available;

- (d) to consider the best methods for ascertaining residents' views in relation to the current bus service provision within Ashfield, customer service standards, accessibility of stops and routes and general suggestions for improvements.

The meeting closed at 7.17 p.m.

Chairman.