

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the Highways Committee held at the County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 9 July 2008 at 10.00 a.m.**

Present:

Councillor D Morgan in the Chair

Members:

Councillors Bailey, A Bainbridge, R Bell, J Blakey, Burn, Burnip, Gittins, Hugill, J Hunter, D Maddison, Magee, D Marshall, Maslin, B Ord, Shiell, Stradling, R Todd, E Tomlinson, M Wilkes, B Wilson, M Wood, C Woods, Wright and Zair.

Other Members:

Councillors Armstrong, Chaplow, Cox, Dixon, Gray, J Huntington, Mavin, Moran, D Myers, O'Donnell, Savory, T Taylor, Temple, K Thompson, Andrew Turner, J Wilkinson and Williams.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors O Johnson, N Foster, and Southwell.

A1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 23 April and 11 June 2008 were considered by the Committee.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2008 were agreed as correct and signed by the Chairman.

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2008 were amended to include the attendance of Councillors D Marshall, Todd, and Tomlinson. The minutes amended accordingly were agreed as correct and signed by the Chairman.

A2 Unclassified Castle Close, Chester-le-Street- Consideration of Waiting /Loading Restriction

The Committee considered a report of the Acting Corporate Director, Environment regarding the consideration of a No Waiting/ No Loading Restriction recently proposed for part of the perimeter of an island at Castle Close, Chester-le-Street (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

The report together with the recommendations included therein be approved.

A3 Objections to the Traffic Regulation Order advertised for the A690 Stonebridge Bus Lane Order 2008

The Acting Corporate Director, Environment advised that the item would not be considered by the Committee as the objections which had been made to it had been withdrawn.

A4 Statutory Undertaker Performance

The Committee considered a report of the Acting Corporate Director, Environment regarding the performance of the Statutory Undertakers for 2007/08 and to update the Committee on the action being taken to improve performance (for copy see file of Minutes).

In relation to paragraph 4.2 of the report, the Acting Corporate Director, Environment advised that since the report had been written they have now successfully prosecuted 4 cases and there are 2 cases currently pending in court.

In response to a question from Councillor D Marshall, the Acting Corporate Director, Environment advised that undertakers are required to give notice that work is to be carried out on the highway. There is however an exemption in cases of emergency, although within 2 hours of the works commencing notification must be given to the Authority.

Responding to a question from Councillor B Ord about whether works were co-ordinated, the Acting Corporate Director, Environment advised that if they are informed about the works taking place then they are co-ordinated. If they are not notified then action is taken against the undertaker.

The Acting Corporate Director, Environment in response to Councillor K Thompson advised that if Members wished to know when a site was to be inspected this information could be made available. In relation to Councillor Dixon enquiring whether a contact number could be placed on the equipment used on site, he was informed that there should be an emergency telephone number to contact on the portable traffic light controller should the equipment fail. They should either contact the hire company or in the situation where there would be no answer or no telephone number, they should contact the highways action line. Members would receive a list of contact details should a problem arise in their ward.

The Acting Corporate Director, Environment advised that there are 17,000 sites per year where works could be inspected however it would not be possible for all of these to be inspected. If however a specific problem at a site is notified to officers they will inspect it, in addition to those inspected as part of the sample inspection regime.

Councillor A Bainbridge enquired about the time limit for further works to be undertaken on a site that had been made good. In response the Acting Corporate Director, Environment advised that once a road or footpath is re-surfaced there is an embargo on further works being undertaken. There are however some exemptions to this. It was pointed out that the regulations were changing and the time limit before a site could be revisited once it had been resurfaced/ re-instated was being extended from 1 year up to 5 years, depending on the scope of the works. The utilities would therefore be given sufficient notice to let them know when refurbishment/ resurfacing works are undertaken so they can plan their work around this.

Councillor Wilkes enquired about the increase in workload now that the local authority works are also being inspected. The Acting Corporate Director, Environment advised that the number of network control officers has increased from three to four.

Councillor Burnip pointed out that often road works have been commenced and there is a delay in the works being completed and traffic is still held up. The Acting Corporate Director, Environment advised that there are regulations in place when a statutory undertaker sends notice to the Authority. The notice would set out the length of time that the works would take, however this can be challenged by the Authority and a different time period imposed. Often there is a gap in the works because the utilities have different work gangs to do the reinstatement. The Authority would not expect the gap when no works are taking place to last more than three days.

It was pointed out that the inspection of unadopted roads falls with the landowner, and therefore the Authority has no right to inspect and maintain them. They do however keep a list of the works undertaken.

In response to Councillor D Myers, the Acting Corporate Director, Environment advised that those sites inspected are randomly selected by a software programme. There are however extra inspections undertaken if they are aware of a particular gang that persistently offends and those will be targeted outside of the sample survey.

Councillor Williams pointed out that there are incidents in his area where building contractors have taken out street lights and they are taking some time to replace. The Acting Corporate Director, Environment advised that this was a real issue. The Authority is aiming to hold a seminar where they can explain to developers the basic rules that they are working to.

The Acting Corporate Director, Environment in response to a question from Councillor Tomlinson explained the procedures involved if the Authority fails in its own road work schemes.

Resolved:

1. The report together with the recommendations included therein be approved.

2. The Acting Corporate Director, Environment write to the Northern Gas Network to advise of the disappointment that they had not met the target 10% failure rate.