



*St Edmundsbury*  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# B137

## **Cabinet** **28 July 2010**

### **Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 7 July 2010**

At this meeting the Committee also considered an update on Regulatory Enforcement, and a separate report appears on this Cabinet agenda.

#### **1. Review of the Disabled Facilities Grants Process**

- 1.1 An item on this year's work programme put forward by a Councillor is a review of the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) process, which was added to the programme due to the time which sometimes elapses between identification of the need for a grant, and the actual payment of such grant and provision of adaptations.
- 1.2 The Committee's request came at an opportune time, as the County Council, in partnership with Mid Suffolk District Council, have been working on a review of the system.
- 1.3 The review commenced in 2009, and an outline of what this will cover, plus findings to date, was presented to Members. The review commenced with a "check" process, whereby the entire end-to-end process was scrutinised. 100 applications were examined, and it was found that the whole process could take up to 2 years. A main finding from the check process was that a high number of applications could be dealt with by Occupational Therapy Assistants (OTAs), thus relieving the pressure on Occupational Therapists (OTs) and streamlining the process. A pilot had, therefore, been commenced on 1 July 2010 whereby two OTAs had been employed in the East of the County, and this pilot would run for a year. Delays were also found at the Customer First stage, and there was now a dedicated team in Customer First to move applications quickly to team lists. The entire DFG process will continue to be monitored throughout the year of the pilot.
- 1.4 The report was intended to give Members some background both to the review, and also to the DFG system, including the agencies involved at each stage of the process, and the Borough Council's part in the process. A further report will be considered by the Committee in March 2011 setting out the full findings of the review and pilot to date, and actions proposed to achieve the target of the reduction of the average 223 days to 55 days from initial referral to forwarding the single recommendation form to the housing authority.

## **2. Review of Car Parking and Potential for Park and Ride in Bury St Edmunds**

- 2.1 The Committee had requested a review of the impact on car parking demand following the arc having been open for a year, and also an investigation into the potential for park and ride provision in Bury St Edmunds. The review focused on the effectiveness of the changes to parking policy and management in the town adopted in advance of the development opening, and also included an assessment of the potential for park and ride based upon a study undertaken in 2007/2008.
- 2.2 The opening of the arc had significantly increased the number of parking events in the town, and the peak hour had changed from 11am to 12 noon on Wednesdays to 11.15am to 12.15pm on Saturdays, although it did appear that there was some movement to a flattening in demand and a move away from a single peak as visits to the town were spread over a longer time. Peak weeks for parking demand occurred in April, May, December and January, and parking attendants were deployed to manage access and guide drivers to available parking. On occasions they also managed traffic flow. A number of other issues were discussed in the report, including non-car based access to the town and variable message signing. The report, and the Committee, concluded that the impact on parking of the opening of the arc had been as anticipated, and the measures put in place had enabled the additional demand to be managed effectively.
- 2.3 Turning to the issue of park and ride, whilst such facilities were provided temporarily when high peaks in parking demand were expected, these mainly attracted custom on busy Saturdays, by people who were not regular visitors to the town. Additionally, the car parks were rarely full. Permanent park and ride services were usually established where there was insufficient car parking, or a wish to reduce car access to a town; they were mainly aimed at commuters and long stay parking demand. The majority of park and ride operations in the UK needed significant ongoing revenue support and large capital investment.
- 2.4 A viability assessment for park and ride was carried out in 2007, and the most favourable option would have needed ongoing revenue support of approximately £500K per annum, with a capital construction cost of £1 to £2 million. Members concurred with the study's conclusion that there was no current justification for the provision of a permanent park and ride service in Bury St Edmunds.

## **3. Work Programme**

- 3.1 The Committee considered the current position of the 2010/2011 work programme, including an early indication of the topics expected at the Committee's next meeting scheduled for 8 September 2010. Additionally, Members were advised of the discontinuation by Suffolk County Council of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) Joint Scrutiny Panel, and were reminded that the Committee had the power, if necessary, to require information relating to LAA targets from LAA partners.

#### **4. Cabinet Forward Plan: July to October 2010**

- 4.1 The Committee examined the Cabinet's Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period July to October 2010, and asked when recommendations from the Shared Services Steering Group would begin to be brought to Cabinet. Officers advised that dates for meetings of the Steering Group had now been set for the year, commencing on 21 July 2010, and that the next edition of the Forward Plan would show the flow through to Cabinet.

#### **5. Update on Section 106 matters in St Edmundsbury**

- 5.1 The Committee reviewed the Council's Section 106 approach in 2007, and had received progress reports periodically since then. A further update was considered, including what funding had been received and used to support transport schemes within the Borough. The Committee was also updated on the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy system, which would operate in conjunction with the existing Section 106 approach. The scope and application of Section 106 had been amended/reduced to reflect this change.
- 5.2 Since the last update to the Committee, the planning service had implemented a formal Section 106 monitoring system. A table was presented to Members indicating the Section 106 funds that had been secured over the past three years, and the purposes to which those funds had been put or were committed towards.
- 5.3 Members found the report's content useful, but requested a further report to the next meeting of the Committee with a more in-depth breakdown of contributions on a scheme by scheme basis, to include:-
- (a) a full breakdown of the 22 schemes included in the £2.6 million of Section 106 funds currently held by the Council;
  - (b) progress notes on each of these schemes;
  - (c) advice as to whether monies arising from a particular scheme and earmarked for works allied to that scheme could be used for works in other areas (this question arose because Members wanted to see a footbridge erected at the Hollow Road road bridge in Bury St Edmunds); and
  - (d) a breakdown of how £300K from the County Council for bus transport had been allocated.

#### **6. Civil Parking Enforcement**

- 6.1 Members requested an update on the position with the introduction of civil parking enforcement (CPE) in Bury St Edmunds. This was also known as decriminalised parking enforcement, and meant that the enforcement of most parking offences was carried out by a local authority rather than the police.

- 6.2 Ipswich was currently the only area of Suffolk where such a regime was in force. The decision to implement such schemes rests with Suffolk County Council, and in September 2009 the Roads and Transport Scrutiny Committee endorsed a way forward in that no further action should be taken until the position with Local Government Review (LGR) was clearer, but that in principle CPE should be the direction that Suffolk authorities should aim for. The costs associated with introducing such a scheme across Suffolk were around £750,000; additionally, it was originally anticipated that the Ipswich scheme would break even after 3 years, but it was now expected to take 8 years. Many authorities had had problems with making CPE self financing.
- 6.3 As the uncertainty around LGR has now been resolved, the County Council will be reporting further to its Members in the near future, and is aware of the concerns of this Council about on street parking enforcement. Officers will report further on this matter when the County Council has decided on a way forward.

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