

Report from the Physical Environment Scrutiny Commission (PESC) Jan 31st 2008

1. Draft report of West of England joint Residual Waste Mgt Strategy

A frank and lively discussion followed a very good presentation from Jacobs UK Ltd. The debate mainly centred around which alternative solution for waste disposal to landfill should be put forward. The two primary choices were mass incineration and pyrolysis or gasification. The arguments in favour of the former were that it was a well tested process and one that could be put forward to DEFRA in a bid for the money that was on the table at present and might not be in a couple of years time. In response to those members of the public and the committee who favoured pyrolysis, it was pointed out that, although this had been tested minimally in this country- its process was more successful in dealing with more homogenised waste than we generate at present in the UK. If the rates of recycling improve over the long term, there is no reason why this should not be looked at again, but in the short term, the mass incinerator was a more 'bankable' solution. As the vote was tied, the Chair, Cllr Gary Hopkins used his casting vote in favour of mass incineration

2. Bus Services Background Information

The Chair welcomed Amelia Price - Acting Director of First Bus and Alan Willoughby Operations Manager. Ms Price agreed that, as a company, First fully supported that part of BCC's Transport Strategy looking for an improvement in the city's bus services. She said the aim of their working relationship with BCC was to achieve a sustainable public transport for Bristol. However there was still a great deal of work to do on improving the partnerships targets, especially in regard to punctuality. There had already been heavy investment in showcase routes and hot spots where buses are regularly held up. The Council were also had good communications with First with regard re roadworks which were currently causing extra problems and re realtime information systems. One councillor commented that the information from the latter did not always seem to co-incide with the real life experience of customers, and the chair said reports had been received that around 25% of drivers were not using the system, but Mr Willoughby said it was only about 2%. First Bus also claim that 66.6% buses ran within five minutes of their correct time. The main reason for the third that are late was stated as road congestion, but it may be that new, more realistic timetabling might be necessary, especially in view of the amount of road works currently taking place through the city. It was also felt that a greater push towards pre-paid tickets would speed up the delays at bus stops. A commission member stated that First were one of the few companies not taking steps to introduce 'swipe card' equipment. Cllr Lewis asked that First could give BCC same notice of changes to routes/timetables that they gave the Traffic Commissioner so implications of these changes could be assessed. She also queried their responses to complaints from customers, but First said all complaints should receive a response within seven days.

A representative from Travelwatch South West said he hoped that the new managing director of First Bus would be willing to consult them on these and other issues in the future.

After much discussion, the Chair summed up by saying that there did appear to be a discrepancy between what First were saying and what customers were reporting to their elected representatives. However there had been improvements and things were moving forward in a positive way. He thanked the representatives of the company for attending, and they re-affirmed their commitment to work with BCC. It was agreed there would be a six-monthly update to PESC, part of which would be based on a small scale customer satisfaction survey.

3. Bristol Development Framework Preferred Option Paper

The head of Strategic Development reported that the proposals set out in this paper were broadly consistent with recommendations set out by the Secretary of State. These include an increase in the number of new houses from 28.000 to 30.000 over the period 2006 - 2028. It was stated that the preferred option's main thrust was that the city centre should retain its identity and vitality, but that there should be a shift in emphasis, development-wise, to south Bristol.

Consultation has already started and will continue until 22nd Feb. Margaret & I have been invited to one of these workshops on behalf of the BWF.

Val Jenkins Feb 2008