

Minutes

RESIDENTS' AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

13 September 2011

Meeting held at Committee Room 4 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



HILLINGDON
LONDON

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Michael Markham (Chairman) Susan O'Brien (Vice-Chairman) Jazz Dhillon Shirley Harper-O'Neill June Nelson David Payne David Yarrow Michael White</p> <p>Witnesses Present: Lesley Crowcroft, Eastcote Residents' Association Ian Brooks, Eastcote Residents Association</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: James Rodger, Head of Planning, Trading Standards and Environmental Protection Gareth Gwynne, Planning, Education, Environmental and Community Services Nadia Williams, Democratic Services</p>	
15.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Councillor Judy Kelly with Councillor Michael White substituting.</p>	
16.	<p>DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interests notified.</p>	
17.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT ALL ITEMS MARKED PART 1 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT ANY ITEMS MARKED PART 2 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items on the agenda were marked as Part 1 and would be considered in public.</p>	
18.	<p>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 JULY 2011 (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2011 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.</p>	

<p>19.</p>	<p>REVIEW 1: WITNESS SESSION 1 - REVIEW OF MOBILE TECHNOLOGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT IN HILLINGDON BOROUGH: THE EFFECT ON RESIDENTS AND BEYOND (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed Ian Brooks and Lesley Crowcroft of the Eastcote Residents' Association to the first witness session of the review of telecommunication masts and ancillary equipment associated with the masts.</p> <p>He explained that as part of the review, the Committee would welcome and listen to concerns that residents may have about what might be done with perceived problems about the issue.</p> <p>Witnesses informed the Committee that as well as concerns about the telecommunication masts, there were major issues in respect of the installations of cabinets, which were 1.6m high and very wide. Particular concerns were raised about the fact that planning application to install the masts were only required in conservation areas; otherwise they could be installed outside a conservation area without any prior notification to residents.</p> <p>Further concerns raised related to the issue of the siting of the cabinets, which witnesses felt were sited without due consideration to the visual impact of the area and without due regard to guidelines. An example stated was the Policy of not placing cabinets near fences (to discourage people from climbing into residents' gardens).</p> <p>Witnesses were of the opinion that many masts had been sited in the past without being approved by a Planning Committee. Furthermore, a key issue raised was that cabinets were installed without due regard to safety issues, as the width of the footpaths were often inadequate for passers by due to the share size of the cabinets. In addition, witnesses did not think that the width of the pavements were included in submitted applications.</p> <p>Officers advised that 1.6m high cabinets were permitted only in conservation areas and the planning department was refusing many applications sited outside the conservation areas.</p> <p>It was highlighted that in the past, the Council would not allow for masts to be placed on Council land. It was also mentioned that some masts had been allowed on appeal. Witnesses expressed grave concerns about the siting of cabinets and their effect on pedestrians and the environment and suggested that if the operators were duplicating in the same area, then they should be encouraged to amalgamate and share masts.</p> <p>Officers commented that the Council's Corporate Landlord would need to be engaged in respect of the use of Council land. Whilst the Planning Department dealt with operators, Corporate Landlord was not currently actively involved in planning matters.</p> <p>Witnesses suggested that it would be helpful if applicants gave reasons</p>	<p>Action by</p>
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<p>or evidence in their planning application to support their case for the sites that they state and submit as the only suitable sites for the installation of their masts.</p> <p>Witnesses accepted that masts were required but considered that the Council should look at where applicants could re-site and suggest alternative locations. It was suggested that operators might be prepared to re-position masts, particularly in unsightly locations.</p> <p>The Chairman commented that operators sought to place the cabinets as close as possible to the highway for maintenance purposes.</p> <p>Officers advised that operators would usually seek to install the cabinets on highway lands rather than verges.</p> <p>A Member asked whether operators could be asked to redesign the cabinets, which appeared to be unsightly particularly when located (at 6ft high) next to residential properties.</p> <p>The Chairman informed the Committee that he and officers had had a preliminary meeting with representatives of the Mobile Operators Association (Vodafone, Three and Mo) (MOA) to get an understanding of where the technology was going and what the future had in store for the design of phone masts. Members were advised that the MOA had agreed to take an active role in the review and would attend the witness session in October 2011.</p> <p>The meeting was advised that notes of the preliminary meeting will be circulated to Committee members.</p> <p>As part of the preliminary discussion, Committee Members were informed that the question of providing different packages and cabinets was raised and the operators had indicated that they could provide a catalogue of designs. They had also suggested that no one had asked them to provide this in the past. This was seen as a key point for the industry to provide a catalogue of designs.</p> <p>In response to a question raised about contractors conducting a safety check on masts after they had been installed, officers advised that safety certificates were only required when planning applications were submitted. These were notably the International Commission on Non-ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) safety certificates.</p> <p>A Member commented that even though the Office of Communications (Ofcom) audited compliance of ICNIRP, it was unlikely that Ofcom would check the masts.</p> <p>During discussions, the Committee raised the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requested officers to find out from the Highways Engineers what the standard width of the pavement should be • Requested officers to ascertain the type of materials used for the electrical cabinets and how durable they were 	<p>Natasha Dogra</p> <p>Nadia Williams</p> <p>James Rodger/ Gareth Gwynne</p>
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- Noted that the cabinets were worth £50,000 each and were usually placed at the back of the pavements
- That as installations were undertaken by contractors who may not place equipment in the designated locations, which meant that better restrictions would be required
- Licences were granted for masts and it may therefore never be possible to move the masts
- That experts should be invited to give evidence in respect of the level of emission from masts
- That applications could not be refused on health issues as planning inspectors would issue 'stop statements'
- That updates on health would be provided for information
- Noted that masts were not maintained or regularly checked.

The Chairman reiterated that a wide consultation would be carried out in order to gauge people's perception and views about telecommunications masts and the associated ancillary equipments. As part of the consultation process, the draft questionnaire circulated at the meeting would also be sent to other local authorities (to ask for their views on telecommunication masts in their areas) once agreed by the Committee.

The Committee was informed that the MOA had carried out their own survey on this issue and had agreed to provide the results of the outcome for information to the Committee. This would be circulated once it has been received.

Members acknowledged that laptops and ipads were getting smaller and smaller; whilst the cabinets were getting bigger and bigger and noted that this was related to the transmission of data.

The Chairman suggested that this review could trigger a scientific debate on the provision of alternative technology on how to transmit radio waves and emerge with innovative ideas about the design of cabinets. Members supported the idea of approaching the Industrial Design Department at Brunel University with this initiative.

Committee Members agreed that the Chairman could write (on their behalf) to various organisations in respect of this review, subject to appropriate clearance.

The Chairman thanked officers for developing the draft questionnaire and agreed that the questionnaire be circulated to all local authorities including those in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Once amendments had been made, the questionnaire would be distributed electronically, with the automated 'chase up' facility. The Committee noted that the responses received would assist in the development of a draft Planning Guidance for the siting of telecommunication masts and ancillary equipments, as there was no guidance at present.

The Committee queried the issue that when masts were replaced, the structures were not being removed and indicated that the requirement to remove structures should be included in policy.

Natasha
Dogra/
Nadia
Williams

	<p>Officers advised that structures under 15m were deemed to be approved and under Planning Regulations, these structures were required to be removed once they became obsolete.</p> <p>The query was then raised as to how residents would know whether or not a phone mast was obsolete.</p> <p>On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked the witnesses for attending to give their helpful comments.</p> <p>Resolved</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Committee agreed the revised survey to be circulated to local authorities once amended. 2. Requested officers from Highways to attend a witness session to advise on the control in place for placing of telecommunications masts and cabinets. 	
20.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>Resolved</p> <p>The Committee agreed the Forward Plan.</p>	
21.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME 2011 (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>Resolved</p> <p>The Committee agreed the Work Programme for 2011/12.</p>	
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 5.30 pm, closed at 6.45 pm.</p>	

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Nadia Williams on 01895 277 488. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.