

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 16 January 2019 commencing at 10.00 am at the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

PRESENT

Cllr Robert Bird (Chairman)	Cllr Patrick Molyneux
Cllr Dr John Cordwell	Cllr Sajid Patel
Cllr Kevin Cromwell	Cllr Stephen Hirst
Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Cllr Eva Ward

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Keith Rippington.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 November were approved and signed by the Chair.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

4. ACTIONS

Updates on actions from 7 November 2018 meeting were noted by the members.

5. LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- 5.1 James Blockley, Principal Flood Risk Management Officer, presented the Local Flood Risk draft Annual Progress and Implementation Plan for consideration and comment, highlighting the input of the team in its development.
- 5.2 The Committee was reminded that the Plan updated members on the progress of the Local Strategy, where the team are to date and priorities for the forthcoming year.
- 5.3 Members were advised that the main Flood Alleviation Scheme for the past year had been completed at Priors/Oakley in Cheltenham.

- 5.4 Members raised concerns of how the flood risk team engaged with the district councils and/or the Environment Agency to ensure no developments were being approved that would cause a risk of flooding. It was explained that even though the enforcement of planning applications is devolved to districts, the team meet regularly with district officers to understand/offer guidance on key issues and are consultees on planning applications.
- 5.5 On questioning about the future project priority list, members were informed that schemes go through a number of criteria to ascertain their level of priority e.g. degree of flood risk, feasibility etc. The number of projects the Council can complete per year will vary depending on the nature of the scheme and funding available. It was also important to note that the list only contained schemes Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) funded/were responsible for; there are other schemes that developers, for example, would have responsibility for.
- 5.6 It was explained that the costs allocated to each scheme going forward were realistic but they were only estimates until the point of initiation. It was highlighted that GCC have ring-fenced £2.1 million to spend on flood schemes annually as a minimum.
- 5.7 A member wondered how smaller maintenance that can help alleviate flood risk was monitored, such as clearing ditches to allow water flow. In response, officers advised that regular walks were taken of water courses to identify ditches that needed clearing, but they also relied on flood action groups and the public to feedback to the Council on areas that needed attention. It was highlighted the team are currently looking at how best to encourage public engagement on this.
- 5.8 Members acknowledged that 'individual property level protection' (now known as Property Flood Resilience (PFR)) is a set of resilience measures installed on individual properties such as barriers/flood doors etc. Members heard that in the in the next financial year a project is planned to deliver PFR for 15 homes, but more may be sought.
- 5.8 The item was brought to a close with members commending the flood risk team for their hard work and support since 2007.

6. HMICFRS INSPECTION

- 6.1 Andy Hermiston, Acting Chief Fire Officer introduced the presentation by explaining that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) are an independent body who are currently inspecting fire & rescue services on 3 criteria, which are graded on Ofsted levels:
- KLOE 1 – How effective is the FRS at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?

- KLOE 2 – How efficient is the FRS at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
 - KLOE 3 – How well does the FRS look after its people?
- 6.2 It was explained that the service are taking a 'glass half full' perspective to evidence gathering to challenge themselves in each area. It was highlighted that 'KLOE 3' was a slightly difference approach due to its subjective nature.
- 6.3 In preparation for the inspection, members heard that the service have appointed a Strategy Leader and Service Liaison to lead. The service was broadening out its engagement with other services that have already had their inspections for feedback on the process and that staff were being regularly updated and engaged with the process.
- 6.4 Members noted that this inspection was purely on operational process of the service and the next inspection will be on governance.
- 6.5 The Committee were keen that inspectors were made aware of the high regard the community holds GFRS. It was advised that the partners' role in this inspection were seen as the public voice as well as previous survey responses.
- 6.6 Members were concerned of possible capacity issues caused by preparing for the inspection. They were keen to remind the Acting Chief Fire Officer to engage with GCC if capacity issues were to arise, to prevent avoidable mistakes in the inspection. Members were reassured that the strategic leadership team currently have a close eye on this issue but are satisfied the process is currently manageable. It was hoped that a nationwide evaluating model would be an outcome of this process for the future.

7. COMMISSIONING DIRECTORS REPORT

- 7.1 Colin Chick, Strategic Adviser (Communities & Infrastructure), updated the Committee on current issues. In particular, members noted that:
- Ringway and Amey were in ongoing negotiations regarding staff moving over under the new contract;
 - in December Atkins were awarded the professional services contact, to commence 1 April 2019;
 - the lengthsman scheme was funded by a one off provision. Due to importance members placed on this scheme, the highways team are currently working out the best way to continue to deliver the work from within the term maintenance contract;
 - the LED street lighting programme is due to be completed by the end of this month;
 - GCC are currently analysing data from Phase four of the Cheltenham Transport Plan (Trial Boots Corner Closure) and have met with

Cheltenham Borough to discuss how best to address concerns of local businesses;

- a new parking management scheme has been implemented at Arle Court to tackle misuse by local long-term parkers;
- there has been a three/fourfold increase on the price of bus contracts which is being looked at on how best to manage;
- an announcement on the preferred scheme for the A417 is due in the spring; and
- Metzway works are due to be completed by the end of January;

7.2 A member raised an issue on the maintenance of streetlights. He highlighted that it is sometimes not clear whether lights in developments are the responsibility of the Council or the developer. Officers confirmed highways hold a database which they would check first before carrying out any maintenance works.

7.3 Members noted the delay of planned enhancements to GWR and Cross Country services, now due to start in May 2019 from December 2018. Members welcomed the suggestion by officers to write to GWR, lobbying that this date of commencement doesn't slip any further.

ACTION: SIMON EXCELL

7.4 A member sought clarification on section 2.1.2 of the report. It was understood by members that they received £20,000 per year per member for highways local, which doesn't equal £1.58m as a total as stated in the report.

ACTION: COLIN CHICK/SCOTT TOMPKINS

7.5 Several members raised concerns in respect of planning applications. As district councils have the devolved power to process applications, GCC as the highways authority are able to make comment on issues that may arise if approved. Members are becoming increasingly frustrated when they attend planning committees to decide on applications and there are no highways officers present. They highlighted it is very difficult to question comments made if there is no one present to question. Members requested that officers' feedback at the next committee on their criteria for sending an officer to planning committee, and to highlight if there are issues with capacity in this area.

ACTION: PHILLIP WILLIAMS

7.6 Due to urgent circumstances, the Strategic Adviser had to leave the meeting. A member raised a question regarding the timeline for the Javelin Park project going forward, specifically when the project will 'go live'.

ACTION: COLIN CHICK/DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

- 7.7 A member stressed there were currently 13 outstanding double yellow line orders in Stroud. Officers responded advising that the Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) is a very complicated process. Every time a TRO is made it costs £10,000, therefore to improve efficiency – the teams will ‘bundle together’ sets of yellow line orders to do in a day. Members were informed the Department of Transport is currently looking at how TRO’s can be better streamlined for local authorities. Members requested an update on the outstanding orders in Stroud and to confirm the criteria for ‘bundling’ TROs.

ACTION: MARK DARLOW-JOY

8. CHIEF FIRE OFFICER REPORT

- 8.1 Andy Hermiston, Acting Chief Fire Officer, gave a brief summary of the fire services update report – noting particularly the following points:
- 56% increase in the number of on-call Firefighters, of which 22% are female Firefighters. Gloucestershire is therefore far in excess of the national ratio of female staff;
 - the implementation of a nationally recognised fitness test for staff;
 - the success of the ‘Exercise Star’ call-out exercise in December. Members were informed that in the case of an emergency over the Christmas period, GFRS would have been fully able to respond; and
 - tribute was paid to the hard work of the trading standard on prosecutions in the County.
- 8.2 A member was concerned that having to ‘recruit to replace’ on many senior positions within the service would evidently lead to a loss of experience. The Acting Chief Fire Officer confirmed that replacing experience in a service of this nature is always a battle. Members were assured that there was a management structure in place to allow a senior manager to always be available to attend a call. Part of the criteria for deciding to attend will always be ‘who is attending’ therefore highlighting newer members of staff. New recruits are also fully supported with a development plan and scenario training.
- 8.3 The Committee noted the new national fitness tests being implemented and questioned what happens if a firefighter fails these tests. Members were informed that fitness tests have always existed, but there was inconsistency across the country on the process. Officers appreciated this may cause unsettling within the service and therefore have taken a ‘soft landing’ approach to rolling out the programme. Staff have been assured if they don’t reach the required level (but reach above the minimum requirement) they will be fully supported with a development plan.
- 8.4 A member recommended that GFRS support the ‘Friends Against Scams’ national initiative, to which it was confirmed the initiative would link well with the services ongoing work against scams. Members acknowledged work of

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

the skill zones in Gloucestershire in educating young people in cyber security, which includes scams.

9. WORK PLAN

- 9.1 It was agreed that a report on the Blue Lights Collaboration Board and motion 828 from November's full council: 'Making Gloucestershire's countryside safe and accessible' would be scheduled for the March meeting.
- 9.2 It was agreed that a report on Long-term review of local transport plan would be scheduled for the May meeting.
- 9.3 Members agreed the 'Soft Flood Alleviation Schemes' on the work plan had been covered in today's meeting.
- 9.4 Democratic Services to check whether a topic on the Ernst and Young report regarding Javelin Park was under the remit of the Environment Committee.

ACTION: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

- 9.5 Members requested a copy of the latest Air Pollution and its Impact on Public Health report update to be circulated after the meeting for consideration on how to take forward.

ACTION: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

CHAIRPERSON

Meeting concluded at 13:05