

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 7 November 2018 at the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

PRESENT:

Cllr Robert Bird (Chair)	Cllr Sajid Patel
Cllr Dr John Cordwell	Cllr Keith Rippington
Cllr Kevin Cromwell	Cllr Stephen Hirst
Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Cllr Rachel Smith
Cllr Patrick Molyneux	

Substitutes:

Officers in attendance: Peter Wiggins, Simon Excell, Andy Hermiston, Scott Tompkins, Philip Williams, Stephen Bace, Gareth Edmundson, Wayne Lewis, Roger Smith, Ben Yolland, Colin Chick and Simon Cluley

Apologies:

92. MINUTES

92.1 The minutes of the meeting on Wednesday the 19th of September approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

93. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

93.1 No additional declarations of interest were made.

94. PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

94.1 Cllr Nigel Moor, Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning, introduced the report updating the Committee on actions taken to reduce the backlog of applications but also referenced methods with which they would continue to work to meet statutory deadlines and timescales. There was a widespread acknowledgement that the increased frequency of Commons and Rights of Way Committee meetings was a good method of meeting these deadlines. Members were informed that there was an outstanding issue surrounding the appointment of an Officer to help reduce the backlog. It was explained that there was an effort to recruit from within the organisation with no success.

He acknowledged that it was important to honour the commitment made at Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee to appoint an Officer to this role. Members asked questions of the budget for this role but the Cabinet Member informed the Committee that the Budget was in the process of being formed and therefore figures could not be given at this time.

- 94.2 A Member raised the issue that amended minutes were not reflected on the minutes on the website and Democratic Services would look in to this.

ACTION DSU

95. UBICO

- 95.1 The Managing Director of UBICO, Gareth Edmundson, provided an update to the Committee on the finances and corporate structure of UBICO. In total, UBICO's turnover was around £32m; it employed 650 staff; and had a fleet of 400 vehicles. They continued to work closely with the Gloucestershire Joint Waste Committee. He informed the committee that 90% of milestones in the 2018-2019 business plan have either been met or are in progress. He also mentioned how UBICO has restructured how they operate their finances to create a closer working partnership with its shareholders and to provide better value for money for the taxpayer. The Managing Director also raised the issue of rising cost pressures that UBICO are due to face such as the rising price of diesel as well as a driver shortage.

- 95.2 Simon Cluley of Ubico discussed the status of recycling centres around Gloucestershire. He mentioned that of the five centres in Gloucestershire, four continued to use costly static compactors. One site, Pyke Quarry, has switched to mobile compactors and Hempsted was due to make this switch in December. Works were planned to change two further sites over the course of 2019/20. He continued to discuss the change to opening hours to the local recycling centres. He mentioned that the reduced opening hours reduced Ubico's costs and contributed to savings for GCC. He reiterated that the company had closed all sites one day during the week but worked to ensure that adjacent sites were not closed at the same time. In the first 10

days, there were no major issues reported and no increase in fly-tipping although the scheme will continue to be monitored.

- 95.3 A Member asked a question regarding the ownership and participation in UBICO. At present, Gloucester City Council was not a partner in the organisation and the Councillor wanted to know if there were any plans to include them. The Managing Director of UBICO replied that there was a willingness to engage with Gloucester City Council and that it would be a valued and important member if it was a partner. However, there had been no formal discussions between UBICO and Gloucester City Council to this end. The Member also raised a question regarding who owned the fleet of vehicles that UBICO uses. The Managing Director replied that the shareholders of UBICO owned the assets but considerations being put forward regarding UBICO owning parts of the fleet individually.
- 95.4 A Member wanted to know how much consultation had occurred with UBICO staff regarding the change to operating hours. The representative from UBICO reassured the Member that all staff had been consulted from the start and had been kept up to date with any developments.
- 95.5 Another Member asked whether UBICO had felt or seen any internal weaknesses from their high rate of expansion. The Managing Director replied that UBICO had been a victim of its own success and had spent a significant amount of time consolidating and harmonising practices across the various contractors. However, this diversity in contractors being brought together did have benefits as well by exposing new, more efficient methods that could be used to benefit Gloucestershire as a whole.
- 95.6 The Managing Director outlined that, operationally, UBICO's vision was to continue to provide useful information for the Local Authority to make decision that can improve the service for the local residents. Wayne Lewis, of the Joint Waste Committee, mentioned that the Committee's waste strategy was going to be reviewed next year but that future focus would

remain on reducing waste, reusing where possible and recycling along with a streamlining of collection practices that are communicated well across the County. It was also stated that UBICO would look at joining a sub-group at GCC to investigate improving the environmental impact of UBICO's fleet.

- 95.6 There was a discussion between Members over the reduction in opening hours at household recycling centres highlighting the potential for congestion issues and vehicles turning around upon arrival at certain centres. They particularly pointed out that the closing times during British Summer Time (BST) were not considered good practice and should be longer to allow people to drop off waste after work. The Cabinet Member stated he would continue to review the status going forward.

ACTION – Cllr Moor

96. CHIEF FIRE OFFICER REPORT

- 96.1 Andy Hermiston, Acting Chief Fire Officer and Head of Trading Standards and Coronial Services, presented, as requested from the previous meeting, a report on the enforcement measures in place on the supply of illegal tobacco by Trading Standards Services (TSS). He noted that there would be an external inspection by HMICFRS in Spring 2019. It was noted that, at present, no information was available on the lines of enquiry this inspection might take but that there were three key areas that would be looked at: effectiveness, efficiency and people. Members requested a presentation at the next meeting on the format of the inspection and preparation towards it.

ACTION – Andy Hermiston

- 96.2 A Member questioned the reasons behind the increase in seizure rate in tobacco and cash and asked whether this increase was set to continue in future years. Andy Hermiston stated that this increase was a spike as opposed to a trend with some notable high-value cases occurring this year. There was also discussion about raising public awareness of counterfeit tobacco but it was agreed that this responsibility was more within the remit of other departments around the Council.

96.3 There was also an assurance that GFRS was implementing new technology, including new fire appliances, with greater overall investment in the region. The replacement of other fire appliances is on schedule.

96.4 A Member asked for more information on GFRS' involvement with serious Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) and it was agreed that these figures would form part of the next report.

ACTION – Andy Hermiston

96.5 It was also noted that there was an increase in arson offences across Q1. Members discussed whether there was any data on the resulting prosecutions, suggesting that Cllrs could help in areas to support activities to reduce offences.

97. COMMISSIONING DIRECTORS REPORT

97.1 Colin Chick, Strategic Advisor (Communities & Infrastructure), presented his report to update the Committee of recent decisions and policies. Members particularly noted that the Highways Maintenance contract had been awarded to Ringway from the 1st of April and there was an ongoing process of mobilisation that was proceeding well. In response to a Member query, the Lead Commissioner for Highways reassured the Committee that work was ongoing to communication with utility companies and to ensure that road closures were properly advertised in advance and that any mess left behind is cleared up.

97.2 Members were also concerned that bus routes were suffering in rural areas as less competition equalled high prices. Particularly, there were concerns over the lack of information being fed to Members regarding upcoming closures. Members requested that Phil Williams relay feedback to the relevant officers.

ACTION – Phil Williams

- 97.3 There was a wide-ranging discussion between Members and Officers concerning the use of electric and greener vehicles by the Council and how their use can be further encouraged. It was stated that the pilot EV hire scheme at the Council has been extended by 18 months and that more need to be done to tackle 'range anxiety,' the misconception that electric cars can only make short journeys on a charge. Members also discussed and expressed their disappointment that GWR has delayed the increase in services between Cheltenham and London. It was stated that the reason for this delay is the wider issues National Rail has faced and Officers reiterated that there was a report containing the response from the Department of Transport.
- 97.4 A Member raised a concern regarding needless, short drives to move his car due to the parking rules in Tewkesbury and urged a review of the wider parking strategy.
- 97.5 A Member raised a question regarding the development of the Cyber Business Park in Cheltenham. It was also queried if the £22m allocated to this project includes the improvement of transport in West Cheltenham. The Lead Commissioner - Strategic Infrastructure highlighted that this sum relates to improvements to the transport infrastructure in West Cheltenham and that there were 12 proposed schemes to address 'pinchpoints'. The Lead Commissioner also highlighted that there was a strain on resources but that this was being handled. It was also noted that the next Cabinet report (on the 19th of December) will provide a more detailed breakdown of these schemes.
- 97.6 There was also a discussion surrounding the new Gloucester bus station and the impact on safe driving conditions with reports of drivers ignoring 'No Entry' signs. A Member asked for an update on how this was being monitored. The relevant Officer did not have the information to hand but stated that they would provide the information after the meeting.

ACTION –Scott Tompkins

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

97.7 Members also raised questions about who was a member of the A417 working group. Officers stated that they would investigate and clarify.

ACTION - Simon Excell

97.8 A Member also requested minutes from the recent meeting regarding the sub-regional transport hub. The Officer replied that he was not sure if these minutes would be publicly available but that he would investigate this issue for the Member

ACTION – Simon Excell

98. WORK PLAN

98.1 It was agreed that GFRS would present at the next meeting detailing the structure of the inspection that they are due to undergo.

98.2 Items added to the work plan included clarification on the Dynamic Purchasing System for Transport from relevant Officers as well as a long-term review of the local transport plan.

CHAIRMAN

Meeting concluded at 1:15

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