

# **ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 6 March 2019 commencing at 10.00 am at the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

## **PRESENT MEMBERSHIP:**

|                                |                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Cllr Robert Bird<br>(Chairman) | Cllr Jeremy Hilton    |
| Cllr Dr John Cordwell          | Cllr Patrick Molyneux |
| Cllr Kevin Cromwell            | Cllr Sajid Patel      |

## **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Keith Rippington, Eva Ward and Stephen Hirst, Cabinet Member Nigel Moor and Jon McGinty.

Cllr Rachel Smith substituted for Cllr Eva Ward.

The Chairman took this opportunity to welcome Wayne Bowcock, the new Chief Fire Officer at Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS).

He also paid thanks for the hard work of Scott Tompkins, Highways Lead Commissioner, who is due to leave Gloucestershire County Council (GCC).

## **2. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2019 were approved and signed by the Chair.

## **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

## **4. GLOUCESTERSHIRE EMERGENCY SERVICES COLLABORATION BOARD**

4.1 Wayne Bowcock, Chief Fire Officer (CFO) of GFRS gave a brief overview of the report which provided an update on collaboration projects in progress. The Committee were informed there is a lot of collaboration taking place and that there is an increasing level of willingness to engage from all parties.

4.2 However, it was also stressed that there are still some areas that pose a challenge to the board, primarily due to the availability of technical solutions and thus a soft approach has seen the best outcomes so far.

- 4.3 Members heard that GFRS remain completely open to collaborating, where possible, and keep watch for any new ideas on potential collaboration from other services around the country.
- 4.4 A member wondered whether other partners of the collaboration board were as willing to collaborate as GFRS. It was reiterated that each project has to be taken on a case by case basis. The methods of operation are very different between all the emergency services, and sometimes even if there is willingness on all sides, practically it is not workable. All parties are interested in achieving efficiencies, where possible, in the interest of the public.
- 4.5 The Committee were advised that there may be scope to make savings through joint purchasing of equipment. GFRS already use the same framework that exists for Police and Ambulance service purchasing but this can be limited due to budgetary restraints. In addition, highways officers advised that they are looking into future procurement of highways vehicles with GFRS, as well as the ITU bus fleet using GFRS workshops. Members noted the positive examples of collaboration across the board, not just within the emergency services.
- 4.6 Members queried the report which made reference to Kent and South Wales using joint Police and Fire control rooms, due to points made earlier about the lack of technical solutions. The CFO confirmed that this simply meant they occupy the same room but still operate on different software systems.
- 4.7 A member questioned how much involvement the Police had with SkillZONE. It was explained that the initial idea was to create a public safety information hub and this is currently completely funded by GFRS. In the future, the Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Parking & Libraries suggested that the service needed to review the way in which SkillZONE can meet the needs of the communities, for example, safety for an ageing population. This would therefore lead to more collaboration opportunities in the future.
- 4.8 A discussion followed on how schools are funded to visit the SkillZONE. Members were aware that GCC used to support schools by funding their transport to and from and were keen to understand whether the withdrawal of this funding has had an impact on schools visiting the centres. Members felt it would be useful to receive a report on previous funding, the effects of its withdrawal, the success so far and vision for the future of SkillZONE. It was agreed that this would be added into the CFO report for May.

**ACTION: WAYNE BOWCOCK**

- 4.9 The Committee requested going forward that the CFO also includes regular updates on the collaboration board projects and that any issues are highlighted.

**ACTION: WAYNE BOWCOCK**

**5. MOTION 828: MAKING GLOUCESTERSHIRE'S COUNTRYSIDE SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE**

As the original proposer of this motion was unable to attend the Committee meeting, it was decided that this item be postponed until the next meeting in May 2019.

**6. DIRECTOR'S REPORT, COMMUNITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE**

6.1 Colin Chick, Strategic Adviser (Communities & Infrastructure), updated the Committee on current issues. In particular, members noted that:

- Ringway and Atkins are mobilised ready to take on the delivery of highways services from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019;
- Cabinet are being asked to consider the matter of increased costs of re-tendering public transport services;
- GCC officers continue to be engaged with the A417 Missing Link project and are expecting an announcement on the 'Preferred Route' spring 2019;
- Cheltenham Borough Council has supported the requested trial extension at Boots Corner, including further mitigation measures to be installed. These additional measures will be introduced in April/May for a further 6 months; and
- The potential affect on the Horton Road Crossing if additional rails services are run into Gloucester Station. It was reinforced to members the importance of improving rail access in Gloucester for economic growth of the county.

6.2 Members discussed the Horton Road Crossing at length. Serious concerns were raised regarding congestion/delays in an already busy area, if there was an increase in trains through Gloucester station. Members acknowledged the crossing is used a lot for the nearby hospital and schools, not only by car but walking and cycling as well.

6.3 Responding to comments on an alternative resolution for the crossing, officers stressed that any new bridge for pedestrian/cycle use at this location would be difficult both in terms of design and finances.

6.4 It was also queried the level of investigations that had taken place into the impacts on the crossing. Members were advised that GCC had to initially respond very quickly to Network Rails proposal and therefore only introductory investigations had been done. It was assured going forward, once the situation is clearer from Network Rail, there would be a proper consultation and members would be fully engaged.

6.5 Members requested a written summary of the future timings for the Metro-West phase 2 project.

**ACTION: SIMON EXCELL**

- 6.6 A member expressed concern that slipping recycling targets, coupled with forthcoming decisions on food waste collection and third party recycling credits, appears to be leading to a reduced focus on recycling in the County. Officers advised that once the mentioned decisions came into effect, they would be monitoring recycling rates very closely to make sure there wasn't a negative impact.
- 6.7 For the food waste collection decision, the Committee were advised that all but the two named districts currently receive £100,000 worth of waste credits per year. The forthcoming decision is therefore to simply make this deal fair and bring Stroud and the Cotswolds onto the same tariff. Members noted that recycling has continued to increase in other districts, regardless of the £100,000 cap.
- 6.8 Cllr Smith requested figures on how the third party recycling credits are paid to organisations.

**ACTION: COLIN CHICK**

- 6.9 A query was raised as to whether the Traffic Regulation Order on parking outside the new bus station had 'gone live'. Officers advised they would seek an update on this.

**ACTION: SCOTT TOMPKINS**

- 6.10 There was a request for regular updates on the Chepstow Bypass are added to this report going forward. Officers noted this request and also advised that the Bypass has been added to the Sub-National Transport Board list of schemes and thus is now able to compete for funding in the future.

**ACTION: COLIN CHICK**

- 6.11 On a final note, members were advised that the works at Metz Way are now complete and only snagging works remain.

**7. CHIEF FIRE OFFICER REPORT**

- 7.1 Wayne Bowcock, CFO, gave a brief summary of the fire services update report – noting particularly the following points:
- The service are still awaiting finalised dates for the full HMICFRS Inspection but understand it is intended for w/c 8<sup>th</sup> April 2019 and w/c 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2019, with feedback due w/c 10<sup>th</sup> June 2019. The new CFO expressed how well Gloucestershire service has been prepared for this Inspection.

- The opening up of new collaboration opportunities in the future when the simulation suite in Cirencester is completed, this has been a positive story for GFRS during its development.
- The need for recruitment within whole-time fire fighters which is projected to run short towards the end of the year. The CFO advised the service will be offering fixed term contracts to retained fire fighters to help manage the whole-time vacancy as well as provide good experience for the employees.
- The better reach the new website and social media pages for trading standards will have, as well as the recent successful prosecutions.

7.2 A member raised concerns over the possibility of an 'experience gap' within the service due to a recent need for increased recruitment. The Committee was assured that, in the short-term, the service is making sure the quantity and quality of training is increased to replace the lack of operational exposure.

7.3 Whilst in the longer term, the service will look to use Gloucestershire as a unique selling point to live and work, marketing GCC as a good employer of choice and keeping an eye on procedures for relocating staff. A member highlighted that the Fire Cadets are a potential source of experienced future firefighters and a key pathway into the service.

7.4 On questioning, members noted that the Council are currently producing a final response to the Police and Crime Commissioner submitting his bid to take on governance of GFRS to the Home Secretary.

7.5 With regards to trading standards and recent national trends, there was a discussion about using the test purchase programme with age on buying knives. The CFO advised he will feedback as to whether the police have deployed this in Gloucestershire.

#### **ACTION: WAYNE BOWCOCK**

### **8. WORK PLAN**

8.1 Members agreed for the postponed item (5) from today's meeting to be scheduled for the next meeting on 22 May 2019.

8.2 There was a request for the following topics to be added to the work plan as future items:

- Climate change reduction pledge;
- The increase costs of re-tendering public transport services; and
- An update on Ringway's mobilisation 6 months in.

8.3 The Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Parking and Libraries agreed to keep the Committee updated, when required, following the Police & Crime Commissioner submitting a business case to the Home Secretary for taking on governance of GFRS.

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

- 8.4 Members to receive a verbal update from lead members of the GFRS and Biodiversity Task Groups at the next Committee meeting in May 2019.
- 8.5 The CFO advised he would be able to give an update on the HMICFRS Inspection for the July 2019 meeting.

**CHAIRPERSON**

Meeting concluded at 12:45