

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 20 September 2017 commencing at 10.00 am at the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

PRESENT MEMBERSHIP:

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

Substitutes: Cllr Alan Preest

Apologies: Cllr Patrick Molyneux

27. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Patrick Molyneux.

Cllr Alan Preest substituted at the meeting for Cllr Molyneux.

28. MINUTES

The Chairman updated the Committee on progress with the development of a one page strategy for the scrutiny task group on air pollution. A meeting had been held with officers, attended by Cllr Bird and Cllr Hilton, to discuss the proposed ambitions and outcomes for the task group, which would be drafted into a one page strategy. This would then be emailed to OSMC lead members for their consideration.

It was requested that the final draft of the one page strategy be circulated with the Committee.

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2017 were confirmed and signed as an accurate record of that meeting.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

30. MOTION 772: HIGHWAY CUSTOMER SERVICE SATISFACTION SURVEY

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

Scott Tompkins, Lead Commissioner: Highway Authority, provided the Committee with an update on the findings of the Highway Customer Service Satisfaction Survey.

Members were reminded that the 2016 survey was delayed following a motion at full Council in June 2016, which asked scrutiny to review highway satisfaction levels. The Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the motion at its meeting in July 2016 and supported a proposal to commission a review of the Highways Customer Satisfaction Survey. Committee members agreed the recommended changes to the survey at the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting in November 2016, which included rewording some of the questions, creating an on-line version of the survey, extending the survey to community groups in Gloucester and Cheltenham, and offering a week's lengthsmen time as a prize draw to encourage a better response rate. The surveys were to be issued in spring 2017 but were delayed due to election purdah periods. The survey was sent out in June 2017 to be completed by the end of July.

Members were informed that the number of responses received from parish councils, town councils and elected members had dropped compared to previous years. Members were also informed that the results indicated a significant improvement in customer satisfaction levels compared to the 2015 results, particularly in relation to the service provided by Amey and the professionalism of staff.

In particular, members noted that communication with Amey had improved, and that Local Highways Managers were better informed on projects as a result. Several members highlighted the good working relationships they had developed with their Local Highways Managers.

In response to a query, it was explained that a follow-up email was sent to remind parishes of the deadline for completing the survey. Members requested that a list detailing the parish and town councils that had responded to the survey be shared with them.

In response to a further query, it was suggested that people who had experienced a problem with highways were potentially more likely to respond to a survey than those who were satisfied with highways.

Members were informed that one of the performance indicators for the highways contract was the compliments to complaints ratio, for which Amey was currently achieving above target, and that social media was being used to highlight success stories.

The Committee discussed the results in detail, and recognised that whilst satisfaction levels had improved, further work to raise satisfaction levels needed to be done. Members also considered whether the low response rate could have been due to an increase in satisfaction levels.

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The Committee was asked to consider whether the survey should be issued again in autumn 2017. Members were informed that autumn was the preferred time to issue the survey as a significant amount of construction work was carried out over the summer, the survey had previously been issued in the autumn, and because the results of the National Highways and Transport Survey were published at this time. It was also noted that the results of the survey formed part of the performance indicators for the highways contract.

Members compared the benefits of sending the survey out in either autumn 2017 or summer 2018. It was agreed that officers and the Cabinet Member for Highways and Flood would discuss the options, with reference to the thoughts of the Committee, and would provide the Committee with an update on their decision at a future meeting.

The Committee noted that Quennington Parish Council had been picked from the prize draw as the winners of the week's lengthsman service.

31. COMMISSIONING DIRECTORS REPORT

Nigel Riglar, Commissioning Director: Communities and Infrastructure, updated the Committee on current issues.

In response to a query on the Local Growth Fund, it was explained that in August 2017, the LEP Board had confirmed the indicative funding for five transport schemes, and that a further three transport schemes, including the A38 B4066 access to Berkeley, were allowed extra time for a final decision to be taken at the LEP Board meeting in October 2017.

Members noted that a recovery plan was in place to deal with the staffing shortages in Highways Development Management.

Following a request, an update would be arranged for Cllr Hilton on changes to bus services, particularly those which would affect St Oswald's Retirement Village.

There was a discussion about the Commons and Rights of Way (CROW) application process. It was agreed that a private briefing on the status of CROW applications would be provided to Committee members before the next meeting.

In response to a query, it was explained that the County Council would continue to hold conversations with Forest of Dean District Council over the development of Community Infrastructure Levy schemes.

The Committee was informed, following a question from a member, that the LED Street Lighting Project had generally been well received, although it was noted that there had been some concerns amongst those living in Minchinhampton, Thrupp and Brimscombe. It was also explained that there was not scope for new lighting columns as part of the project, unless there was an issue of road safety.

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The Committee was updated, in response to further member queries, on progress with the Residual Waste Project, the Gloucester South West By Pass, the shared space on Southgate Street in Gloucester, and on the expected costs of the shared space development at Stonehouse. In addition, an update from Highways Development Management would be arranged for Cllr Smith on infrastructure in relation to the Brimscombe Port development.

Clarification was sought on the costs per passenger for rural return bus journeys. It was also requested that the definition for the average cost per single passenger journey on public transport, as included as a performance indicator for the Quarterly Strategic Performance Reports for the Committee, be explained.

Members received an update from Cllr Nigel Moor, Cabinet Member for Fire, Planning and Infrastructure, on the Minerals Local Plan: Cabinet Panel. The Minerals Local Plan: Cabinet Panel report would be circulated with Committee members.

Members considered the Quarter 1 Strategic Performance Report 2017/18. In response to a query, it was clarified that the quarterly figures for the number of killed and seriously injured children under road safety were cumulative.

The Committee noted the report.

32. CHIEF FIRE OFFICER REPORT

Stewart Edgar, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report to the Committee, which detailed information on the portfolio of services provided by Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS).

Members noted, in an update on the Fire and Police Governance Review, that the Police and Crime Commissioner had issued a formal response stating that the governance change process would now be put on hold indefinitely. It was agreed that it would be helpful if the Committee could be provided with an estimate of the costs to Gloucestershire County Council for contributing to the review.

It was also noted that the draft Statement of Assurance for 2016/17 would be reported to the Committee for comment at its meeting in November, and that Registration Services was currently monitoring new legislation.

The Committee discussed the six Capital bids submitted by GFRS in detail, and clarification was sought on the disposal of assets, the impact the new vehicles would have on the environment, and the value for money of the bids.

Clarification was also sought on the building regulations for the use of external cladding.

The Committee noted the report.

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33. WORK PLAN

The Committee queried how Motion 787 – Pavements, which requested that the Cabinet Member report back to the Highways Advisory Group on measures to improve the inspection and fixing of pavements, before reporting to the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee with a positive action plan, could be addressed since the Highways Advisory Group had been disbanded. This would be clarified at the next meeting.

It was requested that an update on the road safety review in Gloucestershire be provided as part of the Chief Fire Officer report at the next Committee meeting.

Members discussed Motion 798 – Gloucestershire Flood and Community Resilience, which had been referred to Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee by full Council at its meeting on 13 September 2017. It was agreed that a presentation would be given at the Committee meeting on 17 January 2018 outlining Gloucestershire's flood resilience, Gloucestershire's role as lead local flood authority, and how the flood levy has been used. Cllrs Kate Haigh and Lesley Williams, the proposer and seconder of the motion, would be invited to attend the meeting to contribute to the debate.

The Committee would receive a report on the Minerals Local Plan and the Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan 2018-21 at its meeting on 22 November 2017.

34. FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted the meeting dates for the remainder of 2017 and for 2018.

CHAIRPERSON

Meeting concluded at 12.35 pm

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