

## **MEETING OF HIGHWAYS AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY AND SERVICE COMMITTEE: MINUTES**

Time: 10:00-11.10am

Present: Councillors Ashwood, Criswell, Chapman, Connor, Gillick, Hunt, McGuire (Chairman), Reeve (Vice-Chairman), Rouse, Scutt, Taylor and Williams

Apologies: Councillor Butcher

### **205. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **206. MINUTES AND ACTION LOG**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Action Log was noted.

There were a number of issues relating to the Action Log and minutes:

Item 182/Archives Festival – Councillor Scutt commented that it would be unrealistic for the Friends Group to arrange the Archives Festival and provide the project/business plan and curator support necessary to present a proposal to businesses to seek sponsorship. It was suggested that this was a longer term aspiration, but that it should be kept on the Action Log so that the Committee did not lose sight of it.

Item 196/Average cost of pothole repairs – it was suggested that this information should be circulated to all Members. **Action required.** Councillor Connor agreed to discuss this issue further with Richard Lumley outside the meeting: he advised that he had anecdotal evidence that suggested that some pothole repairs were not being completed appropriately. Officers agreed that a note would be circulated to Members detailing the protocol used. **Action required.** They also requested that if Members have evidence that work was not being undertaken satisfactorily, that they pass this information on to officers. However, there were a variety of factors affecting the type of repair undertaken e.g. whether it was an emergency repair, and the type of road e.g. heavy versus lightly used. Officers explained that contractors now worked under a self-certification regime, as the authority did not have the resources to undertake a full inspection regime. The Chairman observed that all Local Members have a responsibility to report any problems they become aware of.

On a related issue, Councillor Scutt asked for information about how the highway maintenance budget was split between highways and footpaths, and the allocations to different districts. **Action required.**

Item 200/Streetlighting attachments – Councillor Taylor confirmed that she did receive the clarification requested on street light attachments policy.

Item 204/Cambridgeshire Collection – it was confirmed that an item on the Cambridgeshire Collection had been scheduled for the November Members' Seminar.

## **207. PETITIONS**

There were no petitions.

## **208. CLAY FARM CENTRE – REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

The Committee considered a report on the future governance arrangements for the Clay Farm Centre.

Members were reminded that in 2014, the Committee had agreed to create a Joint Venture Company (JVC) to run Clay Farm Centre in Trumpington, which was a five storey building providing a library, health centre and other community facilities. The JVC comprised two Cambridge City Councillors and one County Councillor (Cllr Ashwood). It was also always envisaged that members of the community would also be involved in running the Centre. The JVC chose to commission the City Council to manage the Centre on its behalf, and in recent months it had become apparent that the advantages of operating the JVC may have become outweighed by the disadvantages of this mode, mainly due to the addition of taxation, insurance and other costs. It was therefore proposed to dissolve the JVC and for the two Councils to enter into a partnering agreement to govern their interests in the Centre. A new advisory steering group would then be established, with 60/40 City/County investment.

Councillor Ashwood spoke as both Local Member and the County Council's representative on the JVC. She explained that the original proposal to establish a JVC was the first time the respective authorities had considered entering into such a partnership arrangement. A lot of detail had been unknown when the JVC was originally set up, but an excellent officer was now in place and running the Centre, and it had become clear that the JVC had become very limiting. The JVC had not traded and had no liabilities. The advisory group would be better in that members of the public could be involved, which was a particular benefit as there was a strong likelihood that the library part of the Centre could become community run. The plan was to have three elected members on the Advisory Group (two City Councillors, one County Councillor) who would form the core of that group.

The Vice-Chairman commented that he fully supported the proposed approach, as it showed a flexible approach from the Council. It was reiterated that the JVC had not traded and had no assets or liabilities.

It was resolved unanimously that:

a) the County and City Councils will work together to dissolve the Joint Venture Company, The Clay Farm Centre Limited; and formulate a new partnering agreement for the governance of the community centre;

b) the County and City Councils will work together to establish a new Partnering Agreement;

c) the new partnering agreement will establish an advisory group to provide community oversight of the centre management, which will incorporate elected members;

d) the detail of a), b) and c) is worked through between the City and County Councils and the Directors of the JVC. Once agreement is reached, authority to enter into the new arrangement on behalf of the County Council is delegated to the Executive Director – Economy, Transport and Environment in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee.

## **209. SERVICE COMMITTEE REVIEW OF THE DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2017-18**

The Committee received a report on the draft Business Plan Capital Programme for Economy, Transport & Environment. There were no new capital schemes, but Members noted some slippage and changes to capital schemes being progressed.

Arising from the report:

- a Member commented that it appeared that no detailed assessment was undertaken on the feasibility of some schemes, and he gave examples where schemes had not gone ahead because it had transpired that they were not practicable. He suggested that more attention needed to be given to ensuring projects were feasible in the first place;
- a Member queried the underspend in highways maintenance, observing that there was plenty of highways maintenance works that needed to be done, and asked if the issue was a lack of officer resources. Officers advised that there was no real underspend, rather it related to the accounting treatment of this budget heading: last year, the Council had secured some additional resources, and for budgetary reasons some funding had been moved between different budget headings;
- a Member queried an issue on King's Dyke, specifically the delay relating to access to private land for ground investigation surveys. Officers confirmed that this issue had been discussed at the Economy & Environment Committee, and briefly outlined the issues relating to the landowner. It was agreed that a progress report that was being emailed to E&E Committee would also be sent to H&CI Committee Members. **Action required;**
- a Member expressed strong concerns that there were consultations with local people and local Councils for various traffic schemes, but the results of those

consultations appeared to make no difference to the final schemes implemented. It was agreed that the specific schemes referred to would be discussed outside of the meeting. **Action required.** Other Members commented that it was also the case that sometimes schemes were adapted to reflect consultation results, but this was not communicated or publicised, and more needed to be done in this area;

- Councillor Hunt reported that Cambridge Road in Ely had recently been resurfaced, and he had been delighted at the fabulous work undertaken. Much of the work had been done at night, but with courtesy, tolerance and understanding towards residents. The quality of the job was outstanding, and every person involved in that project was a credit to the authority. He added that the Council was very lucky to have some excellent officers at the Witchford Depot, some were fairly junior officers but had a great, 'can-do' attitude, and get on with the job. Local Member Councillor Rouse supported Councillor Hunt's comments. Councillor Scutt similarly praised the high standard of workmanship in relation to the footpath improvement scheme on Midsummer Common and Jesus Green in Cambridge, adding that although the Jesus Lock to Portugal Place section still required attention, the rest was very good.

Officers gave an update on the new Archives Centre. Initial figures indicated that this scheme could cost more than the current approved budget, but it was too early to look at possible options for this scheme. £4.2M had been budgeted, but it had been suggested that up to an additional £1M may be required. Work was underway to see how this figure could be reduced to ensure that the Centre could be delivered for £4.2M.

A number of Members expressed disappointment that after years of planning, this type of change to costs was emerging at such a late stage. Councillor Rouse, seconded by Councillor Ashwood, proposed an amendment:

- That the matter be referred to Assets & Investment Committee.

Officers confirmed that a full report would be brought to the October Highways & Community Infrastructure (H&CI) Committee, and the matter would then be referred on to Assets & Investment (A&I) Committee for a final decision. There was a discussion on holding an additional H&CI Committee to discuss the Archives report, but it was noted that the existing schedule of H&CI and A&I Committee meetings meant that this was not necessary, and could be achieved by the Archives report going to the October meetings of both Committees. Members supported this approach but stated that the report should provide detail on the exact specification of what could be achieved within the proposed budget, and any cuts/changes that would be necessary. Officers confirmed that they would be challenging their procurement colleagues and contractor very hard.

Councillor Hunt declared a non-pecuniary interest as Chairman of the Asset Development Committee at East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC). He advised that that authority had just bought a piece of land adjacent to the proposed Archives Centre site, which would be used for car parking. He suggested that there needed to be better liaison between ECDC and the County Council on this matter,

with a view to achieving possible economies of scale and synergies. Officers welcomed this approach. **Action required.**

In response to a Member question, it was confirmed that the site for the new Archives Centre was an existing building, but there were detailed internal layout designs that were available for Member inspection. It was confirmed that the proposals were for a “no frills” site that focused on archives, albeit one that welcomed walk in users i.e. it would not always be necessary to pre-book appointments. **Action required.**

A number of Members stressed the importance of the Archives Centre, and doing the job properly, given the longstanding inadequate accommodation for archives, which were primarily housed in the basement of Shire Hall. Members also commented that one of the reasons for seeking the Assets & Investment Committee’s involvement was to ascertain what lessons could be learned from the process of developing the specification for the Archives Centre, and identify why and where the additional costs had arisen.

Officers confirmed that they were in regular communications with National Archives, and as long as the Council continued to work on its plans to reprovide, National Archives would be satisfied.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) note the overview and context provided for the 2017-18 Capital Programme for Economy, Transport and Environment;
- b) comment on the draft proposals for Economy, Transport and Environment’s 2017-18 Capital Programme and endorse their development.

## **210. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Committee received a report setting out financial and performance information for Economy, Transport and Environment (ETE) as at the end of July 2016.

Members noted that there was no significant variances currently and ETE was showing just a £7,000 adverse forecast variance.

Following endorsement by the Committee in June, the July General Purposes Committee approved the retention of £2.452M of reserves for specified schemes in ETE, and Members noted an update on the treatment of these reserves.

Members noted performance against Performance Indicators (PIs) and the year end forecast that there would be nine amber and one green.

Members observed that there appeared to be a drop off in the street lighting programme between March and July, in terms of the numbers of street lights replaced. Officers explained that all of the straightforward column replacements had now taken place, and that the outstanding work related to heritage columns and more difficult replacements. It was fully expected that streetlighting would meet its target by the end of October.

There was a query about how financial information was presented on the Capital Expenditure table (appendix 6 to the report), and also queried how budgets were phased. It was clarified that the column entitled "Forecast Variance – Outturn (July)" related to what was predicted (in July) to be the outturn at year end. With regard to phasing, it was confirmed that whilst this information was available, it was not included in the reports as it would make the report much longer: moreover, the focus was always on the year end outturn, not how budgets were phased during the year.

Councillor Gillick raised a specific issue relating to old lighting columns not been removed at specific locations in Wisbech, and officers agreed to follow this up with Cllr Gillick after the meeting. **Action required.**

It was resolved unanimously to:

review, note and comment on the report.

## **211. COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN, TRAINING PLAN AND APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

Members reviewed the Agenda Plan and Training Plan. They welcomed the "information stalls", but suggested that this was located either at the top of the stairs or outside the Members' Lounge in future. **Action required.**

It was resolved to:

note the attached report and make recommendations for any additional items on the Training Plan (attached at Appendix 1 to the report), and note the Agenda Plan (attached at Appendix 3 to the report).

Chairman