

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

Date: Tuesday 1st December 2015

Time: 10:00am-12:50pm

Present: Councillors Ashwood, Butcher, Chapman, Connor, Criswell, Divine (substituting for Councillor Gillick), Hickford (Chairman), Hunt, Moghadas, Reeve (Vice-Chairman), Rouse, Scutt and Taylor

Apologies: Councillor Gillick (Cllr Divine substituting)

Also present: Councillors Bullen, Mandley, Orgee and Tew

153. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

154. MINUTES AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd November 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Action Log was noted.

155. PETITION

The Committee considered a 55 signature petition requesting two street lights that had been removed were reinstalled in Beech Close, Little Shelford.

The petitioner, Mrs Clements explained that she was presenting the petition on behalf of the residents of Beech Close, a cul de sac in Little Shelford, and that she had supporting letters from Little Shelford Parish Council and Heidi Allen MP, who had written to the County Council's Chief Executive. She explained that there had been no crime in the 33 years she had lived in Beech Close, but within weeks of the street lamps being removed in the summer, there had been two car burglaries. The criminals had been seen by a resident and apprehended by police, but only when they were visible under a street light. The Police had agreed that the absence of lights had contributed to the problem. There were a number of elderly and infirm people living in the street, and many residents were anxious about going out in the dark, with one buying a torch just to walk from their front door to their car. In correspondence with the County Council, she had been told that the contractor, Balfour Beatty, had twice distributed leaflets to the residents of Beech Close earlier in the year. However, no Beech Close residents had received these leaflets.

Arising from the presentation of the petition:

- a Member commented that he was disturbed to hear the petitioner's distressing story, but asked for more information about the consultation process, specifically communications with the Parish Council, who would have been consulted about the proposed layout of street lamps in the village, and would have been able to make changes to the proposals. The petitioner advised that the Parish Council had wanted to retain the streetlights in Beech Close, and a representative from the Parish Council, and Local Member Councillor Orgee had walked round the village discussing where light removals were proposed. The petitioner reiterated that no residents of Beech Close had received any leaflets or letters about streetlighting;
- a Member commented that regrettably, this was not an uncommon experience, and it was clear that criminals work better under cover of darkness, as was evident from this case. It was also suggested that the Parish Council should have been given the option of making cuts elsewhere in the village, or paying for streetlights to be retained. The petitioner advised that the Parish Council had been informed of that option, which was covered in one of the supporting papers submitted with the petition;
- a Member asked if the petitioner was aware of any letter/notice being sent to individual residents elsewhere in the village. The petitioner advised that Beech Close residents, Parish Councillors and the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator were not aware of any individual receiving notice. The Member commented that she was aware of similar incidences in Cambridge city, but was dismayed that it was also happening in the villages;
- a Member commented that he lived in a cul de sac that was totally unlit, but this was mitigated to some extent by security lights on individual properties. However, he was concerned by the lack of consultation, and that this was not the first account of this kind in connection with the streetlighting project.

Local Member Councillor Orgee spoke in support of the petition. He advised that 26 of the 103 street lights in Little Shelford had been removed, far in excess of the 10% average across the county. Little Shelford was unusual in that the majority of roads were main traffic routes, where street lights could not be removed, so the residential roads such as Beech Close were disproportionately affected by the removals. He outlined the discussions that had taken place between the Parish Council and local Members and reminded Members that when the streetlighting programme was introduced, the intention was to work with District Councillors on crime reduction initiatives. In response to a question, he advised that there were a number of elderly, vulnerable residents in Beech Close, and the removal of one particular streetlight had created a very dark corner. He confirmed that even reinstating one streetlight in Beech Close would be welcomed.

A Member asked that the Chairman's letter to the petitioner be copied in to all Committee Members. **ACTION: Dawn Cave.**

The Committee noted the petition and the Chairman advised the Committee that the petitioners would receive a full written response within ten working days of the meeting.

156. TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER OBJECTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH WENNY ROAD, CHATTERIS

The Committee received a report on a proposal for double yellow lines on Wenny Road in Chatteris. The background to the proposed scheme, and the outcome of the statutory consultation process were noted. Members noted that there had been one objection to the revised scheme from Cromwell Community College.

Speaking as Local Member, Councillor Mandley advised that he had always lived in Wenny Road so was very familiar with the issues. Parked vehicles on Wenny Road caused difficulties in terms of congestion, poor visibility resulting in accidents, and the risk of obstructing emergency vehicles. He fully supported the proposed scheme, his only concern being that it could encourage some drivers to speed on Wenny Road, so it may be necessary to introduce speed reduction measures and crossings. He highlighted the difficulties on other areas of Wenny Road, not covered in the proposals, including the entrance to Wenny Court. It was noted that one of the main objections by the Community College was that parents would be unable to park on the road on parents' evenings, although it was suggested that the Community College's car and coach park could be used on these occasions.

In response to Members queries, it was noted that a proposal for single yellow lines along one side of the road and double yellow lines along the other had been rejected by Chatteris Town Council. It was confirmed that the speed limit on the road was 30mph and that the Police supported the scheme. It was confirmed that there were no speed mitigation measures – any such application would need to form a separate scheme.

Members who had sat on the Fenland Local Highway Improvement Panel that had considered this bid commented that it had been well supported by both the Panel and the late Councillor Sandra Rylance, who had been the Local Member for Chatteris at that time.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Implement the waiting restrictions as advertised;
- b) Inform the objector accordingly.

157. ANNUAL PARKING REPORT 2014/15

The Committee received a report on the financial and operational performance of Parking Services in 2014/15, relating to on-street parking, bus lane enforcement and residents' parking schemes, which were all managed by the County Council. The report was prepared in accordance with the Traffic Management Act 2004.

A Member commented that whilst interesting, the majority of the content related to Cambridge city. Parking charges had increased in Huntingdonshire and most on-street parking was in Market Square in St Neots, and that particular scheme had not achieved the revenue projected. Responding, officers advised that specific revenue projections for on-street parking schemes were not made: with regard to the Market Square, St Neots scheme, one of the objectives had been to reduce minimum parking times to less than an hour, to meet demand for those parking for shorter time

periods. It was noted that the scheme had only been in operation for less than a year, so the revenue set out in the report did not reflect a full year's revenue.

A Member thanked Philip Hammer for his support on parking issues, and asked officers to pay particular attention to on street parking on and around Hawthorne Way and the Fort St George bridge in Cambridge. She also commented that it would be useful to have a map of Cambridge illustrating all parking options. Officers responded that they were currently working with a third party who were producing a mobile phone application to identify parking options, so there was scope for that third party to produce and publicise that information.

There was a discussion on the potential to introduce parking charges in other towns in Cambridgeshire. It was noted that the fundamental issue was the cost of introducing schemes. It was also noted that whilst Civil Parking Enforcement was required for parking charges to be introduced generally, the Council could charge for chargeable bays under the Road Traffic Act 1984.

Noting a reference to parking permits in Ely, a Member asked for further information, including whether East Cambridgeshire District Council had been consulted, as Ely was a city with no parking charges. **ACTION: Richard Lumley to provide information to Councillor Hunt.**

It was resolved unanimously to note the report.

158. LIBRARY SERVICE TRANSFORMATION – INCOME GENERATION UPDATE

The Committee received an update on the work of the Member Review Group considering income generation options for the Library Service. Members were reminded that at its Special Meeting on 26th June 2015, the Committee agreed that a Member Review Group be established to look at alternative options for increasing income at libraries. The first meeting of this Group, chaired by Councillor Ashwood, had taken place on 17th September, and had been meeting frequently since then.

Councillor Ashwood outlined progress to date. This included the establishment of a Friends Group at Cambridge Central Library, and various ideas on income generation. The top three themes were (i) reinvigorating the café and improving its income, (ii) sponsorship, advertising and social media; (iii) improving/modifying the third floor to provide more space for chargeable events.

It was acknowledged that there was a lot of focus on Cambridge Central library, but this was where the major shortfall was. However, it was anticipated that Central Library would provide a template which could be replicated at other libraries.

Councillor Ashwood paid tribute to those on the Group, who had given their time unstintingly, and to officers, particularly Jill Terrell and Christine May. A final report would be produced for the Committee meeting in February.

The Chairman and Members thanked Members and officers for their hard work to date on this issue.

It was resolved unanimously to note the report.

159. ETE RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Committee received an update on the Risk Register for Economy, Transport & Environment. The report only included those areas within the remit of the Highways & Community Infrastructure Committee i.e. it excluded those covered by the Economy & Environment Committee.

A Member noted reference on the Risk Register to Business Disruption (H&CI1) and asked whether this would be updated or changed in any way to reflect the recent Council wide IT problems. The Executive Director agreed that the IT problems across the Council in recent weeks had been significant, but fortunately these had now been resolved. There had been regular meetings between the Executive Directors with the Chief Executive to ensure there was minimum disruption to business: whilst there had been issues on responsiveness, there had been no critical issues, and it had served as a demonstration of how risk management processes work in practice. There were no immediate plans to change the ETE Risk Register as a result, but those issues would be taken into consideration when the team undertook their regular quarterly review of the Risk Register.

A Member paid tribute to all the Council officers who had had to work under difficult conditions over recent weeks. She also applauded the Chief Executive's actions, commenting that the Chief Executive's regular updates on the IT situation had been very important not only to staff, but also so that staff could explain issues to service users e.g. at libraries.

It was resolved unanimously to note the report.

160. SERVICE COMMITTEE REVIEW OF DRAFT REVENUE BUSINESS PLANNING PROPOSALS FOR 2016/17 TO 2020/21

The Committee received a report providing an overview of the draft Business Plan Revenue proposals for Economy, Transport and Environment Service and specifically, the elements of that budget that were within the remit of the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee. The report also provided a summary of the latest available results from the budget consultation.

It was noted that Finance colleagues were still working through the implications of the Government's Autumn Spending Review, but it was believed that the figures were broadly accurate in terms of the savings requirements. The total savings requirement across ETE for 2016/17 was £6.593M, and the majority of those savings were under the remit of the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee.

Members first considered the overview and context sections of the report, plus the stakeholder consultation, and raised the following points:

- observed that Members needed to consider the report presented alongside the CIAs (Community Impact Assessments) presented at the last meeting;

- observed that the consultation showed understandable concern, but also sympathy and understanding about the unpalatable savings that the Council was being forced to make;
- noted that the UKIP Group Leader had asked at the General Purposes Committee to see additional lines in the report demonstrating the savings required to meet a 0% Council Tax increase.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) note the overview and context provided for the 2016/17 to 2020/21 Business Plan proposals for the Service, updated since the last report to the Committee in November;
- d) note the ongoing stakeholder consultation and discussions with partners and service users regarding emerging business planning proposals.

Colin Saunderson, a Fenstanton Parish Councillor and retired accountant, spoke to the Committee. Whilst understanding the budgeting difficulties Members faced, he asked for a delay of one year on the Mobile Library decision. At the CPALC (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils) Annual General Meeting, he would be seeking support from Parish and Town Councils to set some funding aside for Mobile Libraries. He had already had positive discussions on this matter with some Parish Councils. Whilst he did not believe that this would meet the total £160K budget, he felt that £80-100K may be achievable. Some smaller villages may wish to look at alternatives, and these should be promoted where possible. However, realistically he felt that there was a digital divide, with a lot of older residents relying on mobile libraries. He would also be involving Cambridgeshire ACRE, and seeking the support of Housing Associations.

The Chairman thanked Mr Saunderson on behalf of the Committee for his comments and valuable, positive approach to addressing the cuts. He also suggested that Mr Saunderson work with Councillor Ashwood, who was looking at potential sponsorship of Mobile Libraries as part of the Libraries Income Generation working group.

In response to Member questions, Mr Saunderson:

- advised that he would be able to answer questions on whether CPALC Members were able to offer contributions following the CPALC AGM on 10th December, and he invited Members to attend that event;
- outlined his personal experience of Mobile Libraries, noting that they could be a real lifeline to the service users. The merits of alternatives such as Library at Home, timebanks and community run Library Access Points were discussed.

The Executive Director drew Members' attention to the proposals revisited following the November Committee Highways & Community Infrastructure and Economy & Environment Committee meetings (Table 4) and the new/modified proposals since the November meeting (Table 5). The areas set out in Table 5 would save an additional £494K and would effectively offset all the previously unallocated savings,

to give a balanced budget. The largest single proposal involved funding more local highways work through the on street parking account. It was felt that this £300K estimate was achievable. The Executive Director also drew Members attention to a correction to the papers presented at the November meeting, which was an increased total from withdrawing County Council funding for School Crossing Patrols, which related to management costs.

In presenting the report, the Executive Director stressed that these were proposals from officers, based on their professional judgement.

Members' comments on different savings proposals are set out below:

Highways Maintenance

A number of Members felt strongly that both Reactive and Cyclic Highways Maintenance should be maintained and not included in the proposed savings going forward to the General Purposes Committee, otherwise the maintenance of roads would be in a downward spiral. A number of Members advised that in a recent meeting of the Highways Maintenance Working Group, Members had been made aware that significant additional government funding (up to £3M) could be accessed if the highways network was maintained to a certain standard. In response to another Member's question as to why this had not been reported and acted upon in previous years, officers explained that this funding approach was only introduced in April 2015 off the back of the national Asset Management work. . It was agreed that more work was needed on the business case for meeting the improvements required to meet the 'Band 3' requirements under the new funding scheme. Members welcomed this invest to save approach to highway maintenance.

In terms of the proposed reductions to Reactive and Cyclic Highways Management, it was confirmed that the intention would be to scale back activities, not to stop anything completely.

Mobile Libraries

A number of Members indicated strong support to retain Mobile Libraries. Whilst it had been suggested that those services could be undertaken by the voluntary sector, it was felt that there was a real danger of volunteer fatigue. The move was also seen as premature given the work of the Library Income Generation Group in identifying alternative sources of funding to support library services more generally. The role of libraries in tackling rural deprivation and isolation for more vulnerable individuals was also stressed. It was noted that Mobile Libraries visit over 100 care homes in the county, and it was suggested that mobile libraries could deliver additional services e.g. delivering prescriptions. Looking ahead, it was pointed out that cutting mobile libraries would leave fewer options when the Library Service was reviewed in future. In addition, it was pointed out that the cost of reinstating a service in future would usually be far more costly e.g. mobile library vehicles were likely to have a low resale value, but fitting out new vehicles would be much more costly.

School Crossing Patrols

A number of Members spoke strongly in favour of protecting the School Crossing Patrols (SCP) budgets, pointing out that these impacted on some of the most vulnerable. One Member advised that they had heard that redundancy notices had already been issued, but officers confirmed that this was not the case. Members also suggested that if SCPs were run by schools or on a community basis, they would still need a management element, e.g. for training and DBS checks. A Member commented that if the decision was taken to withdraw SCPs, sufficient time should be factored in to enable schools and/or communities to set up SCPs themselves.

Members also asked if the savings identified in the SCP proposal were offset by the costs of redundancies: officers advised that the costs of any redundancies would be met corporately, not through the ETE budget. With regard to the management of SCPs, it was confirmed that this was currently covered by two posts, and the intention would be to make one post redundant, which would leave some resource available to support local voluntary schemes.

Members noted that affected schools had been advised that SCPs were at risk, and there was potential for them to fund their own SCPs at a cost of approximately £3,000-3,500 per annum. It was agreed that the same letter could be issued to Parish and Town Councils **ACTION:Richard Lumley.**

It was clarified that there was no statutory requirement for the Council, as Highways Authority, to provide SCPs, however if SCPs were provided by other parties then the Highways Authority did have a statutory duty to carry out the management of the patrols.

Council Tax

Some Members noted the strong support in the consultation for Council Tax to be raised as long as it was ringfenced, so there was potential for a referendum to raise further funding for specific services. Specifically, 62% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would be happy to pay increased Council Tax to maintain services. The Chairman acknowledged this, but pointed out that the question was based on a Council Tax rise of 5%, not the 17% required to maintain services at current levels.

Other comments

Individual Members made the following points:

- most reductions have consequences with impact elsewhere in Council, and some could lead to the loss of matchfunding;
- pointed out that the alternative was to lobby central government, protesting that the cuts were unsustainable and more funding was required, because whether or not the Council restricted itself to providing statutory minimums or not, the Council would no longer be able to serve the people of Cambridgeshire properly;
- discussed the ability of Parish and Town Councils to plug budgetary gaps, as they were not restricted in their precept, with Members observing that Parish Councils and communities were unlikely to contribute funding unless services were definitely being withdrawn. The specific issues for Cambridge city, which does not have Parish and Town Councils, was also discussed;

- commented that there was still scope to reduce bureaucracy and management posts;
- observed that there was significant reliance on developing and motivating voluntary work implicit in many of the proposals, and there was a real danger of 'volunteer fatigue';
- noted that the RECAP(Recycling for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough) partnership were looking at options to improve waste reduction across the county, which could be significant.

The Vice-Chairman commented that the Committee was missing opportunities to cut services, which would lead to great difficulties with budgets later on. He welcomed the invest to save initiative for Highways, and commented that there needed to be more community involvement in areas such as Highways, as communities were keen to participate.

With regard to the Soham Station proposal in the Capital programme, it was noted that this was an issue within the remit of the Economy & Environment Committee, and would be dealt with outside the meeting. **ACTION: Graham Hughes to arrange for a response to be sent to Cllr Hunt.**

Summarising, the Chairman advised that it was his role to present a balanced budget to the General Purposes Committee, but that he could not do that without the Committee's approval. If there were any issues that the Committee felt strongly should be excluded from the proposals presented by officers, he would request that General Purposes Committee review corporately those areas.

Members debated the following areas, as possible exclusions from the ETE Business Plan proposals going forward, i.e. whether to reject these specific savings proposals. There were five amendments proposed to withdraw individual savings proposals, all of which were seconded, as set out below:

Following individual votes, it was resolved to exclude the following areas from the savings proposals:

1. Highways Maintenance (reactive and cyclic)
2. Mobile Libraries

Following individual votes, it was resolved to retain the following areas in the savings proposals:

3. School Crossing Patrols
4. Community Grants
5. Streetlighting

There was also a proposal, from Councillor Reeve, seconded by Councillor Divine, that the Committee be presented with alternative budget proposals, including a 0% Council Tax option. On being put to the vote, the amendment was lost. Councillors Reeve and Divine asked for their votes in favour of this amendment to be recorded.

It was resolved by a majority to:

- b) comment on the draft revenue savings proposals that are within the remit of the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee for 2016/17 to 2020/21, and endorse them to the General Purposes Committee as part of

consideration for the Council's overall Business Plan, excluding Highways Maintenance (cyclic and reactive) and Mobile Libraries;

c) comment on the changes to the capital programme that are within the remit of the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee and endorse them

161. AGENDA PLAN AND APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

It was noted that the February 2016 meeting would definitely be taking place, with items on (i) Eastern Highways Alliance Framework 2; and (ii) final report from Library Income Generation Member Working Group.

Members noted the Agenda Plan.