

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

Date: Tuesday 11th October 2016

Time: 10:00-11.55am

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

Apologies: Councillor Butcher (Councillor Bates substituting) and Councillor Chapman

212. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hunt declared a non-prejudicial interest in the Ely Archives item, as a Member of East Cambridgeshire District Council who chaired the relevant Committee.

213. MINUTES AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th September 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:

- updates on items 132 (Customer Feedback) and 168 (City Deal protocol) would be provided when available;
- a report on Library Income Generation (item 182) had been reported to H&CI Spokes, outlining a number of issues;
- Items 196 (pothole costs), 202 (highway maintenance budget split) and 210 (Wisbech streetlighting) would be followed up.

214. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

215. ELY ARCHIVES BUILDING

The Committee considered a report on options and updated costs to convert the former Strikes Bowling Alley in Ely to accommodate historical records and

associated public access, and to seek views from Members on the most appropriate option. Members noted that the recommendation should refer to the Assets and Investment Committee, and not the General Purposes Committee.

Members were reminded that in October 2015, Highways & Community Infrastructure Committee and General Purposes Committee approved the acquisition of Strikes Bowling Alley in Ely for the development of an Archives Centre.

Whilst the project brief and specification from the Service had been clear from the outset, detailed work showed that the original £4.2M estimate fell short significantly of the anticipated actual costs. The reasons for the increase in construction costs were detailed in the report. A lot of work had been undertaken by the LGSS Property team to identify why the potential for escalation in costs had not been identified earlier, and to learn lessons so that this should not happen again. Further design work had been undertaken subsequently to ensure the archives function was compliant with relevant legislation/guidelines, and the County Council met legal and corporate responsibilities and the building represented best Value For Money. The three Options put forward were:

Option 1 – additional cost of £435K but this did not meet any of the BREEAM requirements, so would not meet the corporate responsibilities. A fair amount of external works would also be lost. This was officers' least preferred option.

Option 2 – this option was £620K over budget, again with the BREEAM requirements omitted.

Option 3 – the preferred option from an operational perspective. Whilst this option was £860K over budget, it provided a positive local impact, and a good reputation with stakeholders.

Councillor Rouse, one of the Local Members for Ely, expressed disappointment that despite in-house expertise and use of consultants, a project of this significance had again run into these type of problems at the planning stages. However, he concluded that a new Archives Centre was required, this was a suitable site and it must be done properly. Therefore he felt the only sensible option was to recommend to the Assets & Investment Committee was Option 3, which should be progressed without further delay. He also recommended closer working East Cambridgeshire District Council on parking issues.

Councillor Rouse proposed the following amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Hunt:

- (a) Agree Option 3 should be progressed and recommended to Assets & Investment Committee;
- (b) Request officers to work with East Cambridgeshire District Council on parking issues.

The majority of Members indicated that they would support this amendment, but before putting the Amendment to a formal vote, the Chairman invited other Members to comment on the report. The following points were raised:

A Member commented that it appeared that as with the Cambridge Library Enterprise Centre, insufficient detailed work had been carried out on this project to establish the full implications of the projects. It was also suggested that it was misleading to blame the National Archive requirements. The Member also commented that the scope for expansion in the new Archives Centre, at 20 years, was inadequate, and a longer term view should be taken.

A Member asked whether the energy efficiency measures set out within Option 3 could achieve savings that could be offset against debt charges. It was confirmed that the energy efficiency measurements would save around £1000 per year in electricity costs.

A Member commented that retrofitting was always hugely expensive, and that Option 3 should be chosen so that the Centre was fit for purpose, with good facilities for users. She asked where the debt charges of £53,000 would come from. It was confirmed that the necessary finance would be secured through prudential borrowing or from the Adult Learning Reserve. Any such borrowing would need to be approved by the Assets & Investment Committee. It was confirmed that the Adult Learning Reserve (£300,000) was not a sum originally allocated for adult learning e.g. teaching or training less advantaged adults, but was a sum earmarked for overheads.

Members noted that whilst East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) does not routinely charge for parking, it did charge for parking around Ely Railway Station, given the significant demand at that location. It was also noted that a further car park, adjacent to the Archives Centre, was planned by ECDC. Councillor Hunt advised on the revenue to be gained from such parking, and how working together with ECDC could result in economies of scale and synergies. There was strong Member support for this proposal. Officers confirmed that they had already had a positive meeting with their ECDC counterparts, and had agreed in principle to work together. One issue was timescales, as the planned completion dates for the car park and the Archives Centre were different, so a more phased approach would need to be taken. In terms of timescales for the Archives Centre, it was noted that subject to Assets & Investment Committee approval, it was anticipated that work would commence on site in Spring 2017, and would be completed in just under a year. Members requested a detailed timeline for both projects. **Action required.**

A Member asked if it would be possible to have a report to H&CI Spokes on where accountability lies for the miscalculation of costs, and more importantly, the lessons learned from this project. It was suggested that Assets & Investment Committee would request this information, so it was agreed that any such information would be fed back to H&CI Committee. **Action required.**

In response to a Member question, officers outlined why the former owner had left equipment, which was now the Council's job to remove i.e. why it was not vacant possession. Officers advised that this seemed to be an unnecessary cost to enforce on the former owners, and it was originally believed that this could be dealt with within the 5% contingency. However, the 5% contingency had proved insufficient to deal with this and the changes in design requirements.

One Member suggested that the Archives Centre was an unnecessary burden, which would only be used by a small proportion of the population, when the future of such information was digitalisation. He asked if the running costs could be provided to the Committee, and officers agreed to do this. **Action required.** The Chairman commented that the decision had already been taken to progress with a new Archives Centre, which was a statutory duty. Information was already being digitised wherever possible, but there would always be a need to physically house and access archives.

The Vice-Chairman, Councillor Reeve, commented that he favoured Option 1 and would not be voting in favour of Option 3.

On being put to the vote, Councillor Rouse's amendment was carried.

It was resolved to:

- (a) agree Option 3 should be progressed and recommended to Assets & Investment Committee; (*voting pattern: majority of Members in favour, one against [Councillor Reeve, who asked for his vote to be recorded]*)
- (b) request officers to work with East Cambridgeshire District Council on parking issues (*voting pattern: unanimous*).

216. SERVICE COMMITTEE REVIEW OF THE DRAFT REVENUE BUSINESS PLANNING PROGRAMME 2017-18

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.

Introducing the report, the Executive Director: Environment, Transport & Economy, reminded the Committee that these proposals had been discussed by Members in recent Business Planning Workshops. From those workshops, and also the draft Community Impact Assessments (CIAs) in Appendix 2 to the report, it was recognised that a number of the saving proposals identified, although technically achievable, were likely to have very significant impacts and could therefore be considered undesirable. Members welcomed the inclusion of detailed CIAs at this stage, which they had found very helpful in assessing the proposals.

Members' attention was drawn to overall financial context for the Council, setting out the budgetary imperatives and environment, and the allocations and savings required from each service block. It was noted that two specific savings identified in the Business Planning Workshops were not achievable for 2017/18: (i) the saving of £30,000 identified for the street light team reorganisation had already taken place in the current financial year; (ii) £100,000 bus lane enforcement in Cambridge City: this scheme had been more successful in achieving its objectives than anticipated i.e. the fines were below estimates, as motorists were not flouting bus lane regulations.

Members made comments on the following areas:

B/R.6.214 - Community Grants – observed that this proposed £15,000 savings had a cross-cutting impact across the Council, so it was difficult for the Committee to ascertain its impact and make a decision on this unilaterally. Another Member noted that it was clear from the CIA that the Community Grants supported some of the most vulnerable groups, and this was particularly relevant e.g. support for community cohesion, given the increase in racist incidents following the Brexit decision.

B/R.6.203/Shared depot support– it was noted that this referred to the existing set up, and that it was anticipated that further significant savings could be realised from the Highways Contract. Currently there were Business Support Assistants across all depots, and savings could be made by centralising this function (B/R.6.201).

B/R.6.212/Transformation of Road Safety Services – it was noted there was no description given on the proposed saving in Section 4, although there was further detail in the CIA.

B/R.7.111/Permitting system – it was noted that the Council became a Permitted Authority on 03/10/16 i.e. permits were now being issued for roadworks.

Streetlighting – it was noted that Balfour Beatty were now reducing its set up in Cambridgeshire as the initial street lighting programme was nearing completion. A Member advised that this was making it more difficult to get new streetlights, as Balfour Beatty were reducing resources. Officers advised that they were not aware of any such incidents and would take this feedback back, and report back through Committee on the current position. **Action required.**

B/R.6.215 – queried the proposed reduction to service levels in Archives by £75,000, observing that the CIA stated that the service was already on the minimum resource necessary to run a public service e.g. there was an expectation to have a public search room available for 21 hours per week. It was suggested that it was shortsighted to reduce this service, as the alternative was that the National Archives would come in and manage the service, and the Council would be obliged to pick up that significant cost. A number of other Members also objected to any reduction in Archives, suggesting that alternatives such as increasing income from the Archives services, or using volunteers needed to be fully explored. Officers commented that this proposal also concerned them.

In response to a Member question, it was confirmed that the new centre would be open four days per week, and agreed to provide further detail on the opening hours. **Action required.** Another Member pointed out that the move to Ely would require extensive additional work by Archives staff. Officers confirmed that this was the case, and that a lot of preparatory work was already taking place. In response to a Member question, the security measures that would be in place at the new Centre were outlined.

B/R.6.211 Road Safety projects and campaigns – noting the one off removal of the Public Health grant, asked if those programmes were useful. Officers responded that this was effectively a correction, and further information would be circulated to the Committee. **Action required.**

B/R.6.209 Reduce Book Fund – suggested that should not get rid of hard copy newspapers, as not all residents would read newspapers online.

B/R.6.206 – asked for clarification on the additional £30,000 proposed saving from street light switch off. It was noted that this was just the tail end of the previously agreed savings.

B/R.6.213 – stressed the value of the Local Highway Improvements schemes, especially in Cambridge City, where there were no Parish/Town Councils to pick up third party schemes. Officers explained that previously, significant officer resource was used to develop schemes, which was not included into the total scheme costs. In reality, given diminishing officer resources across the service, the more time officers spent on LHI, the less time they had to spend on other schemes. Therefore the proposal was to factor in the full cost of developing and delivering LHI schemes, but this meant that they would become more expensive.

B/R.7.109 – Introduce a charge to commercial events using the highway – queried whether this would include community events e.g. putting up Christmas lights, etc. Officers confirmed that genuine community events would be unaffected. These charges were aimed at events such as road races where commercial companies profited from entrance fees.

B/R.6.210 – noted that part of the Community Resilience saving was the end of fixed term support officers for specific pieces of work.

A Member asked if any increase in residents' parking charges could be made clear so that residents could be advised.

School Crossing Patrols – a Member advised that she had heard anecdotally that Newmarket Road (Cambridge) would be losing its School Crossing Patrol (SCP). Officers confirmed that where there were signalised crossings, SCPs would be removed in line with national guidance, which suggested that having both a SCP and signalised crossing caused confusion. The crossing on Barnwell Road fitted this criterion.

The Vice-Chairman suggested that further revenue could be raised on Third Party funding - in his Division, there had been a switch to management companies that allow community chests to be spent on highways, and it was suggested that the Council should support that sort of structure and open up a potential source of income.

Following comments made by the Chairman, and subsequent discussion among Members, it was agreed to request that the proposals to (i) reduce service levels in Archives (B/R.6.215) and (ii) remove community grants (B/R.6.214) be withdrawn from the proposed Business Planning savings, and that the proposal to reduce Community Resilience and Development delivery work (B/R.6.210) be reviewed.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a. note the overview and context provided for the 2017/18 to 2021/22 Business Plan revenue proposals for the Service;

- b. comment on the draft revenue savings proposals that are within the remit of the Highways & Community Infrastructure Committee for 2017/18 to 2021/22;
- c. Specifically request that the proposals to (i) Reduce service levels in Archives (B/R.6.215) and (ii) Remove community grants (B/R.6.214) be withdrawn from the proposed Business Planning savings, and that the proposal to Reduce Community Resilience and Development delivery work (B/R.6.210) be reviewed.

217. 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 August 2016.

It was noted that at this stage of the financial year there were no significant variances and ETE was showing a £93,000 forecast underspend. Further slippage was anticipated in the capital programme.

It was resolved unanimously to:

review, note and comment on the report.

218. COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN, TRAINING PLAN AND APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Members reviewed the Agenda Plan. It was noted that the item *the funding of new resident parking schemes* identified for the November meeting would be included in the item on *Residents Parking Policy Review* in the January meeting.

It was resolved to:

note the Agenda Plan

Chairman