

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

Date: Tuesday 12th September 2017

Time: 10:05am-11.45am

Present: Councillors H Batchelor, I Gardener, M Howell, B Hunt (Vice-Chairman), S King, P Raynes, T Sanderson, J Scutt, M Shuter (Chairman) and A Taylor

Apologies: None

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

17. MINUTES AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th July 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

A request was made that the terms of reference for the Waste PFI and the Libraries steering groups be circulated to the Committee. Action required.

The Action Log was noted.

18. PETITIONS

The Committee considered a petition with 1,178 signatures collected from local residents and regular users of the B1091 asking the Committee urgently to consider installing average speed cameras on the B1091 as an enforceable traffic calming measure. It was presented by a local resident, Lauren Underwood, who explained that speeding traffic posed a danger to cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians using the B1091; two pedestrians had died in an incident earlier in the year.

In answer to members' questions, further information supplied included that

- the Parish Council had considered applying for funding under the Local Highways Improvement (LHI) scheme
- the Police had deployed some mobile speed cameras on the road, but only to a modest extent
- a reduction in accidents had been noted on stretches of the road where fixed speed cameras were located

- local residents were participating in Speedwatch several times a week
- the Committee's support would be very helpful in efforts to secure speed reduction measures
- average speed cameras, indeed any speed cameras, were in the petitioners' view an effective means of traffic calming because drivers saw the cameras and slowed down to avoid penalty points on their driving licences.

Members pointed out that the deadline for applying for LHI funding was 15 October, and noted that the cost of speed cameras would almost certainly exceed the LHI funding limit, though third-party funding might be an option.

The Chairman expressed an understanding for the request, and undertook to raise the matter with the Road Safety Partnership at its next meeting. He advised the petitioners that a written response to the petition would be sent to them within ten working days, and asked that the Police be copied in to that response.

Action required

The Committee considered a 22-signature petition asking the Council to take measures such as staggered yellow lines to reduce the volume of traffic parked along Cavalry Drive, March. The petition stated that there was a junior school in the road, which led to parking both by school run traffic and by school staff. The parking gave rise to a risk of obstruction to traffic on Cavalry Drive, including emergency vehicles and buses.

As there were fewer than 50 signatures, there was no right for the petitioner to address the Committee.

The Committee noted the petition and the Chairman advised that, as there was no relevant item on the agenda, the petitioners would receive a full written response within ten working days of the meeting. It was noted that senior officers were well aware of the matter. **Action required.**

19. SERVICE COMMITTEE REVIEW OF THE DRAFT 2018-19 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report setting out an overview of the draft Business Plan Capital Programme for Economy Transport and Environment for 2018-19. Members noted that the report formed part of the iterative process of developing the Capital Strategy, and that all borrowing proposals were within the advisory cap set by the General Purposes Committee. Compared with the 2017-18 Business Plan, Highways Maintenance had been re-profiled, and the Ely Archives Centre scheme had been re-phased.

In the course of discussion, members

- queried the reason for the drop in contributions between 2018-19 and subsequent years, as set out in the table of funding sources for the revised draft Capital Programme. The Strategic Finance Manager undertook to find out the reason. **Action required**
- noted that the Highways Maintenance Challenge Fund bid related to funding from the Government to improve the roads in Fenland. About £1m of this government funding remained, the Council had already contributed £1.25m as matched funding, but it was necessary to increase this contribution level
- sought clarification of the fit out costs of the refurbished Milton Road library. Members were advised that the existing furniture and equipment were not suitable for re-use, and the Section 106 funding and City Council contribution to the refurbishment of the building did not cover the cost of their replacement. The Interim Service Director Infrastructure Management and Operations undertook to look into the question of whether community groups could make use of the old furniture. **Action required**
- asked that more detailed information be supplied for Highways and Community Infrastructure elements of the Capital Programme table, and that the link between corporate priorities and Highways and Community Infrastructure activities be more clearly expressed to enable members to judge the relative importance of different strands of activity
- noted that performance information was regularly reported to Committee in the monthly Finance and Performance Report
- in relation to the Capital Investment Appraisals Prioritised List of Schemes, enquired what the difference was between carriageway and footway maintenance, and how a depreciation charge on the road and footway network might compare with the amount of money being spent on maintenance. The Strategic Finance Manager undertook to seek the answer to this question. **Action required**
- noted that funding for Carriageway and Footway Maintenance shown in the 'Operating the Network' section of the Capital Programme budget table came from central government, whereas funding for Carriageway and Footway Maintenance in the Infrastructure Management & Operations section came from County Council funds. More detail was given in the Highways Asset Management Plan, which was submitted to Committee for agreement on an annual basis
- sought clarification of capital programme variation and the variation budget. Officers advised that this had first been employed as a category in the previous year's budget, and referred to the inevitable slippage on expenditure on capital schemes and the associated need for borrowing. There was a revenue cost in relation to borrowing, but this allocation avoided the need to call on the revenue budget to fund the capital programme.

Councillor Hunt commented that the Ely Bypass would result in greatly increased pressure on Cambridge Road and Witchford Road, which were both single carriageway. He asked officers to look into this matter.

Members agreed with the E Director's proposal to hold a seminar for members at which the process of translating the overarching budget figures into actual specific schemes could be set out in more detail. He and the Chairman also undertook to look at how best to follow up a member's suggestion that it would be helpful if, for each proposed item of expenditure in the Highways and Community Infrastructure budget, information could be given on the availability of funding, to help identify points of pressure. **Action required**

Turning to the recommendation, Councillor Scutt said that, while she and her group appreciated the work done by officers to prepare the Business Plan, and recognised that they were working under great difficulties, she could not support the recommendation to endorse the development of the Capital Programme draft proposals, though she could endorse the quality of the work done to develop them. There was insufficient money available to the Council because of the level of the government grant and the level of Council Tax set by the Council for 2017-18.

The Chairman agreed to take the two parts of the recommendation separately.

It was resolved unanimously to

- a) Note the overview and context provided for the 2018-19 Capital Programme for Economy Transport and Environment;

It was resolved by a majority to

- b) Comment on the draft proposals for Economy Transport and Environment's 2018-19 Capital Programme and endorse their development.

20. ANNUAL UPDATE FROM CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH TRADING STANDARDS

The Committee received an annual report and pictorial presentation from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Trading Standards Service on the work the service was delivering for Cambridgeshire County Council. Members noted that the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough trading standards services had merged on 1 April 2017, retaining two operational bases, one in Cambridgeshire and one in Peterborough, but operating with an integrated management team across the whole area. There had been national recognition for the work of Trading Standards locally, a tribute to the good work of the previous Head of Service, Aileen Andrews.

Examining the report, members

- expressed appreciation and admiration for the work of Trading Standards officers, and thanked them for their interesting presentation
- noted that the service merger had involved a reduction of only one post, which was in the management team; the person leaving had done so voluntarily, and there had been no negative impact on service delivery, because the work was covered by the new combined management team
- suggested that the report might have identified equality and diversity implications because of the potential effect on vulnerable people, including those with a disability and those for whom English was an additional language
- in answer to a question about bringing together the two sets of staff, noted that the merger had been carried out to improve the resilience of the Trading Standards services rather than as a response to external pressures; the work was not defined by local authority boundaries. The two management teams had supported each other in the run-up to the merger. There had been some differences in ways of working between the two services; Cambridgeshire covered a wider geographical area and had had more specialists; the smaller team in Peterborough had been deployed more flexibly. The Head of Service aimed to take the best of both services and bring them together into one
- sought further information on the work done to increase vulnerable people's awareness of how to avoid being deceived by rogue traders. Officers said that they had involved a range of people in this, including adult social care teams and bank staff. As a result, banks were now alerting Trading Standards and the Police, with photographic evidence, in cases where traders were taking people along to withdraw large sums of money to pay them
- noted that the service prioritised its work according to the level of harm or detriment being caused in a case, whether that was to health, safety, welfare or finances. Two officers had attended an intelligence apprenticeship scheme, which was enabling them to make better use of intelligence; the aim was to make the smartest possible use of resources and information
- noted that the service liaised with the Council's Communications Team to achieve publicity for their achievements, on both a planned and an ad hoc basis.

The Head of Service offered that, if members of the Committee wished to shadow any of the Trading Standards team, he would be happy to arrange this. The Chairman thanked him and his team for their excellent work, and wished them further success in the future.

It was resolved to:

Comment on any aspect of the service being delivered by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Trading Standards on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council.

21. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT – JULY 2017

The Committee received a report presenting financial and performance information for Economy, Transport and Environment (ETE) for July 2017. Members noted that there had been little change in the budget position reported to the previous meeting.

Discussing the report, members

- expressed concern at the planting of only three trees in a period when a total of 61 had been removed, and asked whether information could be given on type of tree involved and whether local members and parish councils were being contacted about tree removal, pointing out that individuals or groups might be willing to pay for the planting of a tree. The Interim Service Director said that officers were working in accordance with policy. It would be possible to give a breakdown of figures for trees by district; information on trees would continue to be included in the Finance and Performance Report. She undertook to find out and report back whether local member members were being involved, and whether parish councils were being given the opportunity to replace a felled tree.

Action required

- commented that the purpose of enforcement cameras was to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists; it was not primarily a revenue-generating exercise
- enquired whether the increase in the number of road accident deaths and serious injuries was an accounting artefact or the result of a significant change. The Strategic Finance Manager undertook to find out and report more information on this point. **Action required**
- a Fenland member queried whether the 2.68% gap in the actual latest data for 'Classified road condition – narrowing the gap between Fenland and other areas of the County' related to the condition of the roads or to the finances, and expressed concern that a 2% gap should be seen as acceptable, when the whole county should be aiming at the same standard. The Executive Director, Economy, Transport and Environment undertook to clarify exactly what was meant by this measure. **Action required**
- asked whether any progress had been made in finding out more about the feasibility of using plastic to repair roads, particularly in relation to Fenland roads. Officers advised that they had so far had no response from the manufacturers of the compound being trialled on roads in Cumbria
- sought further information on the number of visitors to libraries, such as the comparison figure from the previous year, reasons for any rise or fall in numbers, and measures being taken to increase footfall. The Interim Service Director said that this information was available. **Action required**

The Chairman summed up by saying that, for all finance-related reports, the Committee wished to receive more relevant information that allowed members to look at the direction of travel, with indicators, and more contextual information. He undertook to work with officers to see how the reports could be made more easily understood for both members and the general public. **Action required**

It was resolved to:

review, note and comment on the report.

22. HIGHWAYS AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN, TRAINING PLAN AND APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The Committee considered its agenda plan and training plan and appointments to outside bodies, noting that there was to be a series of Highways Depot Open Days for Councillors; the dates would be circulated by email, and members were encouraged to contact individual officers about attending them. **Action required**

No appointments to outside bodies were required to be made.

It was resolved to:

1. Note the agenda plan, training plan and appointments to outside bodies, including the updates provided orally at the meeting.

Chairman