

HIGHWAYS AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY AND SERVICE COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 9th October 2018

Time: 10:00 – 11:40

Present: Councillors I Gardener, L Harford, B Hunt (Vice-Chairman), D Jenkins, S King, T Sanderson, J Scutt, M Shuter (Chairman) and A Taylor

Apologies: None

81. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were noted as recorded above. There were no declarations of interest.

82. MINUTES AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th September 2018 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

The action Log was reviewed and the following updates noted:

- i. A member noted that a number of items on the action log stated “In progress”, in future these items should also include an estimated completion date. The Chairman agreed and stated that a tentative date could be introduced in order to help take the item forward.
- ii. Minute 76: Engage with Mr Carpen on the History of Cambridge proposal: Members suggested there was value in what Mr Carpen had been offering and noted there was no suggestion to take it forward. The Chairman requested that Officers engage with him so the ideas could be taken forward. A Member suggested that a timescale should be added for the engagement with Mr Carpen.
ACTION
- iii. The Vice-Chairman expressed his concern to the Committee that the Council’s planned expenditure on tree planting in Cambridgeshire was not included. The Chairman commented that now the drought season was over there needed to be greater focus on planting more trees in Cambridgeshire.

83. PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no petitions.

84. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee considered the Finance and Performance Report as at the end of August 2018.

Officers reported two significant pressures relating to the Coroners Service and Waste, although some underspends were now coming through in relation to concessionary fares which would help mitigate the position. The Community Hub in Sawston had been slightly delayed due to planning issues and whilst no guarantees can be given, officers hoped this would be completed in 2019/20. 3 out of the 9 performance indicators (KPIs) were currently classed as red.

A Member thanked the Chairman for putting this item as first on the Agenda.

Arising from discussion of the report:

- A Member asked officers why they had a backlog of cases in the Coroners Service, and why they were not dealt with in previous years. Officers suggested they are working through cases more rigorously and made sure that cases were dealt with within 6 months wherever possible. It was anticipated that the backlogs would be addressed by end of the financial year.
- Following on from this, a Member asked officers whether they had been able to provide the correct amount of resources in order to deal with the backlog. Officer advised that by rebasing the budget, they will be able to allocate the right number of resources to deal with the increase in cases.
- A Member asked if the underspend on Concessionary fares was related to the deregistration of bus services in Cambridgeshire and whether there were any other reasons. Officers stated that they had not surveyed who had stopped using the services, but suggested that there were less services the concessionary passes could be used on. Officers noted also that as the age of people who can now receive a pass had increased, the propensity for people to use services was diminishing overall.
- A Member asked whether the Waste Management agreement for savings would be completed in November, as in previous reports the agreement was meant to be agreed in September then October. Officers advised that they hoped to complete negotiations by the end of October but until finalised, this could not be certain. This agreement could save up to £1.3million.

In reference to section 2.1 of the report, Members asked where the savings statistics come from and how much will come from posts not being filled, and expressed particular concern about the lack of highway engineers in the County Council, and asked whether these posts were left empty deliberately. Officers stated that due to the pressure across the council and their effort to balance the budget for this financial year, Cambridgeshire County Council have been monitoring head count very closely. Officers confirmed that they were not holding vacancies in highways specifically but every time a post became vacant they would consider if it could be covered in another way before advertising. The biggest issue is that there is a problem with

finding the appropriate candidates for the posts. It was agreed to add a recommendation highlighting the number of vacancies and how long posts have been left open. **ACTION**

- A Member asked Officers why they had problems recruiting Highway Engineers and inquired whether this was because posts were Cambridge based. Officers advised that Highway engineers were based across the county, and the lack of skilled workers in the market was a national problem, and the A14 development was impacting on the recruitment and retention of highways and planning officers.
- A Member thanked Officers for the current Performance Indicators for October but suggested that the proposed PIs for next financial year could be used in tandem with the current PIs;
- A Member expressed their concern as to why the Officers were referring to classified roads when they thought that the red performance indicator was referring to unclassified roads. Officers replied stating they would have to go away and double check so they can accurately respond to Members. The Member also highlighted the gap between road conditions in Fenland and the rest of the county. **ACTION**

In Discussion:

- In reference to 3.2, a Member asked whether the Community Hub in Sawston would commence by the end of October. Officers replied that they have been liaising with the Village College and the project was moving forward, however, it was hoped the project would be starting in the next few months as delays have been caused by third parties, and these issues now appeared to be moving forward.
- A Member raised their concerns with Officers that over the course of the summer the actual energy usage for street lighting was higher than the target value, which was surprising given energy usage was typically lower in the summer. The Member also expressed concerns about inadequate street lighting both in Cambridge and the villages.
- A Member raised their concerns with the computer charges introduced into libraries across Cambridgeshire, noting the decrease in visitor figures and suggesting that this charge was very reminiscent with the Park and Ride parking charges. There were worries that if usage goes down in libraries then the council may start to cut services.

It was resolved to:

- a) Review, note and comment on the report

- b) Requested future reports include number of vacancies within Place & Economy

85. SERVICE COMMITTEE REVIEW OF DRAFT REVENUE BUSINESS PLANNING PROPOSALS FOR 2019-20 TO 2023-24

The committee considered an overview report of the draft Business Plan Revenue Proposals.

The Chairman welcomed Members' comments on issues related to the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee and Economy and Environment Committee. The Chairman also reminded the Committee that all these items were just suggestions of possible areas money could be saved, and needed to be debated critically.

In discussion, Members:

- Wanted more clarification on how the Officers used parking permits as income for highway investment. They suggested that expanding parking schemes in Cambridge could lead to greater income for highway projects. A Member suggested that Officers should inform the people paying these parking permits where their money was being spent.
- Were cautious about removing the discretionary concession and subsidies to assist more vulnerable individuals travel in Cambridgeshire.

The Chairman again reminded the Committee that these items were just possible proposals that need to be analysed by members.

In discussion:

- A Member drew attention to section 5.4 and suggested that Officers could present the accounting in the report in a clearer fashion;
- In reference to section 5.4 a Member suggested that the revenue raised through the purchasing of parking permits should be used to maintain the pavements not just roads. She suggested that the pavements in villages were not fit for purpose. Bus passes were being used less frequently due to fewer services running, which meant fewer people using buses and possibly the bus services not continuing. With regard to concessions for vulnerable people, the Member commented she could not support this proposal as it would be undercutting the equality and diversity act approved by full council;

The Chairman asked the Officer to clarify how the parking permits could fund potential highways projects. The Officer stated that the fund is made up from the enforcement of parking, not the parking schemes themselves. Highways were not

permitted to make an income but when there was a surplus, this could be then used to fund transport in Cambridgeshire

In discussion:

- One Member wanted to know more about cuts to concessionary fares budgets and would they sit in the Mayors budget? The Officer suggested this is difficult to answer as the Combined Authority was now the Transport Authority, but had delegated this responsibility back to the County Council. The detail of the levying arrangements between the Combined Authority and Council were explained. In response to a question as to whether the Council had to accept the delegation from the CA, officers advised that it did not, but to date this had never been tested;
- A Member was disappointed to note the proposed removal of the discretionary budget for Partnerships, Projects and Funding Team, which had been welcomed at previous Committee meetings as a positive example of where the Council was raising revenue. Another Member supported this point, noting that although the cost was £101K, this budget raised approximately £200K in revenue.

The Chairman thanked the Committee, stating that this item was a good opportunity for Members to raise their points and help provide more analysis into these possible proposals. This analysis could lead to more refined savings proposals. The Vice Chairman followed this up by suggesting that discussion spotlights these issues and could highlight the value of certain services and allow for more informed decisions in future.

The Chairman concluded by thanking Members for their contributions, and noting that the Committee could not support the proposals to remove any bus concessions to vulnerable residents, as it would reduce equality, and those people may not be able to get to work because of this proposed change.

It was resolved to:

- a) Note the overview and context provided for the 2019-20 to 2023-24 Business Plan revenue proposals for the Service
- b) Comment on the draft revenue proposals that are within the remit of the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee for 2019-20 to 2023-24.

86. SERVICE COMMITTEE REVIEW OF THE DRAFT 2019-20 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a report outlining the draft Business Plan Capital Programme.

In discussion Members:

- expressed strong opposition to the County Council developing Older People's accommodation and then putting these in the hands of private operators. He also expressed concerns about the grants to This Land, when the Council was under an obligation to undertake borrowing in a sustainable manner. Responding, officers briefly outlined the issues with the profiling of developments by This Land, stressing that there was no issue about the grants not being repaid.
- commented that the £90M highways maintenance programme in 2013, for which capital had been borrowed, was essentially plugging a hole in the revenue budget. Members needed in depth analysis to facilitate informed decision making in future, and it was unsustainable to borrow capital for highways maintenance.

Officers agreed to circulate a one page summary on this issue prior to the next Committee meeting. **ACTION.**

- A Member asked for an overview of the new Hub schemes. It was noted that Touchdown facilities were spaces which public sector workers could use. This required some minimal investment in workspaces and digital access. Officers agreed to circulate information on that investment to the Committee. **ACTION.**
- A Member asked Officers whether it would be easier to just employ existing library staff for those open access hours. Officers suggested that it would cost more to employ staff whereas open access only has the upfront cost of licensing.

It was resolved to:

- a) Note the overview and context provided for the 2019-20 Capital Programme for Place and Economy
- b) Comment on the draft proposals for Place and Economy's 2019-20 Capital Programme and endorse their development

87. AGENDA PLAN AND APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no changes to the Agenda Plan.

The Committee appointed Councillor Taylor to the Clay Farm Centre Advisory Group