

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Place Scrutiny Committee held at Remotely via Teams on 23 June 2021.

PRESENT Councillors Matthew Beaver (Chair) Councillors Chris Collier, Alan Hay, Julia Hilton (Vice Chair), Ian Hollidge, Stephen Holt, Eleanor Kirby-Green, Philip Lunn, Steve Murphy, Paul Redstone and Stephen Shing

LEAD MEMBERS Councillors Claire Dowling and Rupert Simmons

ALSO PRESENT Rupert Clubb, Director of Communities, Economy and Transport
Karl Taylor, Assistant Director Operations
Dale Poore, Contract Manager Highway Infrastructure Services
Ruby Brittle, Stakeholder and Engagement Manager
Ian Gutsell, Chief Finance Officer
Nigel Brown, Assistant Director Property
Sarah Mainwaring, Head of HR and Organisational Development

Councillors Bob Bowdler, Godfrey Daniel, Abul Azad and Nuala Geary.

1 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

1.1 The Committee RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2021 as a correct record.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 There were no apologies for absence received from Committee Members. Apologies were received from Phil Hall, Chief Operating Officer.

3 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests.

4 URGENT ITEMS

4.1 There were none.

5 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

5.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and those councillors new to the Committee as well as Cllr Stephen Shing who is a returning councillor on the Place Scrutiny Committee. The Chair also thanked the Chair and members of the previous Place Scrutiny Committee for all their work on the Committee.

6 SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ROAD MARKINGS - 6 MONTH UPDATE REPORT

6.1 The Contract Manager, Highway Infrastructure Services introduced the report. He outlined the areas of focus for the review and the work undertaken with the Review Board. The scrutiny review was presented to Cabinet in November 2020 where the action plan, developed in response to the six recommendations of the review, was agreed by Cabinet ahead of approval by Full Council. The action plan, together with an update on the implementation of recommendations of the review, is contained in appendix 1 of the report.

6.2 The Contract Manager Highway Infrastructure Services summarised the work that had been undertaken on the six recommendations:

- Recommendation 1 was developed in response to the line of enquiry which looked at why some road markings wear out more quickly than others. The Team has explored the use of new materials for road markings and has started trials in a number of parts of the County using MMA which is an enhanced resin material which it is claimed to last up to 3 times longer than standard materials.
- Recommendation 2 is to ensure Highway Stewards include road markings in their routine safety inspections. The Contract Manager Highway Infrastructure Services is able to assure the Committee that this is consistently taking place.
- Recommendation 3 concerns the work of utility companies and Highways England. The web site has been updated to include information on these organisations which also carry out work on the highway and their responsibilities.
- Recommendation 4 – allocation of resources to road markings. The Contract Manager Highway Infrastructure Services confirmed that the first priority for resources are safety critical road markings such as stop lines, centre line markings and pedestrian crossings. The allocation of funding for an additional road marking gang enabled 2,322 safety defect and road marking renewal jobs to be carried out over the last service year.
- Recommendation 5. The Parking budget is now recharged with the cost of any significant road marking work carried by the highways team.
- Recommendation 6. Unfortunately, there has not been any Government funding that could be used for road marking work since the review was completed. However, all safety critical road marking work has been undertaken, line marking refresh work has taken place and some capital works have also been carried out on a machine laid road marking programme. Expenditure on road markings over the last year has included: £165,000 in the core maintenance budget; around £200,000 on the additional road marking gang; and £400,000 on the machine laid capital works programme. It was clarified that a single gang is being used in the current service year and it is estimated that expenditure on road markings will be around £360,000. The implementation of the recommendation to increase the base budget for road markings in the highways contract will be looked at as part of the new highways contract which starts in May 2023.

6.3 The Chair invited Councillor Godfrey Daniel, who was Chair of the Review Board, to speak on this item. Councillor Daniel commented that the review was a good piece of targeted scrutiny work, which was well received by officers and the Cabinet Member. It demonstrates that scrutiny can have an impact on spending decisions and has helped improve road markings which are important for road safety and the efficient movement of traffic. Road markings are also a very visible part of the highways maintenance service which demonstrates that the County Council cares about these issues. Councillor Daniel also commented on the condition of parking enforcement road markings and asked if it would be possible to establish a rolling programme of renewals since most were put in place when the various civil parking enforcement arrangements were introduced.

6.4 The Committee discussed the report and a summary of the comments made is given below.

6.5 Councillor Stephen Shing, who was also part of the Review Board commented that he also thought that it was a good review and is pleased with the progress that is being made on the recommendations.

6.6 The Committee asked what measures are in place to ensure road markings are laid onto sound road surfaces and whether there was a standard condition that the surface needed to be in before markings are applied or renewed. The Contract Manager Highway Infrastructure Services responded that the Highway Steward will identify if the carriageway needs repairing before re-marking work can take place or will check the capital programme to see if resurfacing work is planned. There are some circumstances where road markings are temporarily re-instated before a larger piece of resurfacing work is undertaken.

6.7 The Committee asked if it was possible to estimate the cost benefits of improved road markings on road safety. The Contract Manager Highway Infrastructure Services outlined that this is a question that would need to be put to the Road Safety Team, but the Council will always refresh or renew road markings where this has been flagged up by the Road Safety Team or as a consequence of a crash site investigation.

6.8 It was noted that the central line re-marking on some roads has been carried out in such a way that some markings have been overlaid, whilst others have been missed and are faded. The Contract Manager Highway Infrastructure Services asked if the details of where this has happened could be passed either to himself or Ruby Brittle, Stakeholder and Engagement Manager, so it can be investigated.

6.9 The Committee discussed whether there was a need for a second road marking gang during the current year. The Contract Manager Highway Infrastructure Services commented that taking into account the capital programme and other road marking work being undertaken, one gang for the current year is reasonable. However, the amount of safety defect and refresh work needed will be reviewed during the year to see if additional resources are required.

6.10 It was clarified that once a review's recommendations have been agreed by Full Council, an update report is brought to the Committee at roughly six and twelve month intervals after the adoption of the report to review the progress of implementing the recommendations. As part of the update work the Committee can decide if it wishes to undertake any further work on particular aspects of the review. A second update report on the Scrutiny Review of Road Markings is scheduled for the November meeting.

6.11 The Committee RESOLVED to note the updates to the recommendations and action plan set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

7 WORK PROGRAMME

Workstyles Programme - update

7.1 The Committee received a verbal update on the Workstyles programme from the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development and the Assistant Director, Property. As a result of the first national lockdown all staff were asked to work from home where this was possible. The previous Agile flexible working programme meant that staff were able to transition quickly to this way of working as the technology and equipment was already in place. A whole range of support has also been put in place during the pandemic to enable staff to work from home. This has included providing screens and chairs where needed, wellbeing support, and support for managers to manage remote working.

7.2 The Workstyles programme is reviewing how staff and services will work in the future, post pandemic. There has been extensive engagement with staff, teams, and managers to look

at the way staff will work in the future. The programme is a collaboration between Human Resources, Property and IT which is looking at a hybrid way of working through a combination of increased working from home and less time in the office. This way of working has a number of benefits such as a reduction in carbon emissions through less travelling and the reduced need for office space, improvements in work life balance, and increased flexibility to attract staff who may live further away. The Government has recently announced flexible season tickets as a way of facilitating this way of working. The programme is reviewing how a hybrid way of working and the needs of the various council services can be met.

7.3 The Workstyles programme is working through what hybrid working will mean in practice. It is likely this will require an investment in new technology and a reconfiguration of office space. Currently the Council has four main offices which are located at St. Mark's House and St. Mary's House, Eastbourne; Ocean House in Hastings; and County Hall in Lewes. Together these offices host around 2,600 staff. Part of the programme will entail the reconfiguration of office space and meeting rooms which is likely to reduce the amount of office space needed. This may produce a surplus of office space which may result in the sharing of offices and the co-location of services with other councils or organisations.

7.4 The Committee asked how much space was likely to be vacated and possibly shared. The Assistant Director, Property outlined that it could be that the Council will need around 20% less space, but the position will become clearer in late summer when staff start to return to the office. Discussions are currently underway with Lewes District Council about sharing some discrete office space in County Hall for back office functions.

7.5 The current County Council position is that staff will continue to work from home until all adults have been vaccinated and Covid social distancing requirements have been removed. This means staff will continue to work from home until around the end of September.

7.6 The Committee thanked officers for the update and noted that a report will be brought back to the meeting in November.

Archives and Historic Records Reference Group

7.7 The Committee agreed to note the report from the Archives and Historic Records Reference Group.

Highway Services Re-Procurement Project (HSRP) - Reference Group

7.8 The Assistant Director, Operations outlined that officers had been working with the Scrutiny Member Reference Group over the last 18 months on the Project to re-procure the highways maintenance contract. The Project covers four main stages and work is about to finish on the second stage of the Project. The first stage involved the development of the Outline Business Case (OBC) which was agreed by Cabinet in January 2021. The second stage is the development of the Detailed Business Case (DBC) which is due to be finalised and presented for approval to Cabinet in July.

7.9 Following approval of the DBC, the next stages of the Project are to undertake the procurement with a notice being issued in September and tenders being issued in the Autumn for return and evaluation. This is likely to take ten to twelve months, with the aim being to award the contract in December 2022 to allow sufficient time for contract mobilisation and the start of the new contract in May 2023. The Committee is invited to re-form the Reference Group to work on the next stages of the Project.

7.10 The Chair invited Councillor Bob Bowdler and Councillor Godfrey Daniel to speak on this item as they were part of the Reference Group prior to the May elections and formation of the current Place Scrutiny Committee membership. Councillor Bob Bowdler, who was Chair of the

Reference Group, outlined that the Reference Group had held thirteen meetings to support the Project Team led by Phil McCorry through the first two stages of the re-procurement process. The Reference Group was cross party and able to ask probing questions about all aspects of the contract re-procurement. Comments and recommendations made by the Reference Group have been taken on board by officers and has led to a number of improvements in the new contract, particularly around quality control which has been a concern of a number of new Members.

7.11 Councillor Godfrey Daniel commented that the Reference Group has also had external validation of the work carried out by officers from Proving Services, an independent consultancy based at Cranfield University. The work of the Reference Group has included looking at areas of improvement in the contract and in particular around better quality work, the role of Highway Stewards who work for the contractor, and the role of the Contract Management Team who monitor the work of the contractor. The Reference Group noted that the quality of utility company re-instatement work can be sub-standard with only 10% of works checked. This may be an issue the current Scrutiny Committee may wish to examine in more detail. Achieving better quality is important and there may be a cost associated with this. It will be important to ensure the best quality contract is adopted, rather than the cheapest, to ensure value for money. Councillor Daniel recommended that the Committee reform the Reference Group to continue with this important piece of work.

7.12 The Committee thanked their fellow councillors for the work they had undertaken on this important service area and made a number of comments on the work of the Reference Group and the re-procurement of the highways contract. It was noted that what people see and how the Council maintains highways is very important and therefore the Committee should reform the Reference Group to continue with this work. It is important that there is a clear definition of what the Council means by carbon neutral, and what it expects from contractors in the highways contract, in order to help the Council meet its carbon reduction commitments.

7.13 The Committee asked about what flexibility there is in the new contract to respond to changes in circumstances and whether there were any examples of successful changes made to the current contract. It also enquired whether there would be an assessment of the cost implications of requiring carbon reduction measures in the contract, as they may increase the cost to the council (e.g. the amount of CO₂ saved per additional £1 of cost).

7.14 The Assistant Director, Operations commented that the carbon neutral measures will be considered by officers in line with the Council's Climate Change Action Plan and will be included in the contract to achieve the Council's carbon reduction targets. This will include establishing a carbon footprint for the contract and measures to reduce carbon emissions. The NEC4 form of contract being used allows for flexibility and this option has been used successfully to change the current contract when necessary and to ensure value for money. The point about value for money in carbon reduction measures is well made and will be addressed as part of the assessment during the procurement stage to ensure the contract contributes towards the Council's carbon reduction targets.

7.15 The Director of Communities, Economy and Transport commented that the Member Reference Group had been outstanding in supporting the work of officers on the Project and seeking improvements in quality assurance, the performance framework and stakeholder engagement. Having a Reference Group has been important to understand Members' concerns, help Members understand the service and enable challenge from Members.

7.16 In respect of climate change, the decarbonisation of transport will be vital to reducing carbon emissions and meeting the Government's legally binding target of being carbon neutral by 2050. For the highways contract, de-carbonising the materials it uses is going to be a challenge. A key aspect will be to identify a carbon emissions baseline and work from that to meet de-carbonisation targets. Through the procurement work the Council will be clear to the

supply chain what it expects in terms of carbon reduction. The issue of biodiversity net gain in the management of the highways soft landscaping estate will also be important.

7.17 The Committee agreed to reform the Highways Services Re-Procurement Reference Group and the Chair asked members of the Committee to email him to indicate their interest in being part of the Reference Group. Cllr Ian Hollidge volunteered to be on the Reference Group.

Existing Work Programme (Appendix 3).

7.18 The Committee asked if it would be possible to include the threat of cyber attacks and use of ransomware in the Business Continuity and Emergency Planning report that is scheduled for the September Scrutiny Committee meeting. The Director of Communities, Economy and Transport confirmed that it would be possible to include these additional issues in the report.

Forward Plan

7.19 The Committee noted the Council's Forward plan of decisions in Appendix 4 of the report.

Other Potential Future Items to be Considered for Inclusion in the Work Programme

7.20 The Committee raised and discussed the following items for possible inclusion in the work programme. The Committee agreed to hold an 'Away Day' in early September to discuss, refine and prioritise the future items on the work programme.

- Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, Active Travel and Sustainable Transport – A review of work in this area including links to the Public Health work on Active Travel for health benefits and encouraging more walking and cycling. Also, to examine how we move from strategies and plans to developing 'shovel ready' projects ready for delivery when funding is available.
- Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (Cabinet 30 September) – The Committee may wish to look at this in regard to sustainable transport and the item above.
- Economic Development – Examine the work undertaken by Sea Change Sussex and Team East Sussex and how future projects are identified and developed.
- A review of the available Government funding for the services that are within the remit of the Committee and examination of how a pipeline of projects is developed to maximise the use of such funding.
- A review of how ESCC engages with Borough, District, Parish and Town Councils and other community stakeholders to devolve services and encourage communities to engage in the delivery of services that are important to them.
- Electric Vehicle Charging – A review of the plans for the Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure in East Sussex and the utilisation of available Government funding.
- 'Bus Back Better' strategy – Work on the development of the Enhanced Bus Partnership.

Local Transport Plan (LTP) Review

7.21 The Director of Communities, Economy & Transport suggested that the Scrutiny Committee may wish to form a Reference Group to work on the development of the revised Local Transport Plan (LTP4) as this would encompass many of the sustainable transport issues

and would include multi modal transport links to ensure different forms of transport link together and that both rural and urban communities' transport needs are met.

7.22 This links to the Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan, the 'Bus Back Better' strategy and the development of an Enhanced Bus Partnership (as discussed at the recent Lead Member for Transport and Environment meeting) as well as climate change issues such as the use of electric vehicles and de-carbonising transport. The formation of a scrutiny Reference Group could be beneficial in developing the LTP.

7.23 The Chair asked the Committee Members to email him with any potential scrutiny work topics for inclusion in the Committee's deliberation of the work programme within the next two weeks.

7.24 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note the update on the Workstyles Programme and receive a report at the November meeting;
- 2) Note the report of the Archives and Historic Records Reference Group;
- 3) Note the work of the Highway Services Re-Procurement Project (HSRP) Scrutiny Member Reference Group and agreed to re-establish the Reference Group to work on the next stages of the Project;
- 4) Note the items on the current Work Programme and include cyber security and ransomware attacks in the Business Continuity and Emergency Planning report scheduled for the September meeting;
- 5) Note the Council's current Forward Plan of decisions; and
- 6) Agree to hold an 'Away Day' work planning session in early September to discuss and agree the Committee' priorities for the future Work Programme, including topics for scrutiny reviews.

The meeting ended at 11.41 am.

Councillor Matthew Beaver (Chair)