

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Place Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes on 12 March 2024.

PRESENT Councillors Matthew Beaver (Chair) Councillors Chris Collier, Penny di Cara (substituting for Eleanor Kirby-Green), Julia Hilton (Vice Chair), Ian Hollidge, Philip Lunn, Steve Murphy, Paul Redstone, Stephen Shing and Brett Wright

LEAD MEMBERS Councillors Nick Bennett and Claire Dowling

ALSO PRESENT Rupert Clubb, Director of Communities, Economy and Transport
Ros Parker, Chief Operating Officer
Ian Gutsell, Chief Finance Officer
Karl Taylor, Assistant Director Operations
Nigel Brown, Assistant Director Property
Anne Epsom, Head of Policy & Improvement, Orbis Procurement
Justin Foster, Waste Team Manager
Dale Poore, Contracts Manager Highway Infrastructure Services
Martin Jenks, Senior Scrutiny Adviser

25. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

25.1 The Committee RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023 as a correct record.

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

26.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Eleanor Kirby-Green (Councillor Penny di Cara substituting).

27. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

27.1 Councillor Matthew Beaver declared a personal non-prejudicial interest under agenda item 7, Update on the SPACES Programme, as he is Vice Chair of the Hasting Borough Council Planning Committee. Councillor Philip Lunn declared a personal non-prejudicial interest under agenda item 7, Update on the SPACES Programme, as he was the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Projects at Wealden District Council before May 2023.

28. URGENT ITEMS

28.1 Councillor Murphy raised the issue of road flooding in Hailsham due to problems with drainage on Southern Water owned land. The Chair agreed to consider this under item 12 on the agenda.

29. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

29.1 The Chair thanked Dale Poore, Highways Contract Manager, on behalf of the Committee for all the work he has done with the Scrutiny Committee as this was Dale's last meeting before retiring after 37 years service with the Council.

30. RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES (RPPR) 2024/2025

30.1 The Senior Scrutiny Adviser introduced the report which summarised the Committee's involvement in the RPPR process for 2024/25. The purpose of the report was to provide an opportunity for the Committee to review its input into the process, suggest any improvements and consider if there were any RPPR related items that should be included in the Committee's future work programme.

30.2 The Committee discussed the report and a summary of the comments made and questions raised by the Committee is given below.

30.3 The Committee suggested that it could look at fees and charges as part of the future work on RPPR. This could include examining whether fees and charges cover costs and if they could be used to support service activity. The Chief Finance Officer commented that the level of fees and charges is reviewed as part of the budget setting process and a report with some financial information about fees and charges could be brought to the Committee.

30.4 The Committee commented that at the March scrutiny meeting in the RPPR cycle it would be helpful to do some longer term horizon scanning over the next five years or so, to consider policies that may be changing. This would enable the Committee to take a longer term view of its work. The Committee also noted the comments submitted to Cabinet on keeping a watching briefing on the development of devolution deals.

30.5 The Director of Communities, Economy and Transport (CET) responded that the State of the County report does horizon scan for policy changes to some degree, but something longer term could be done. However, the policy environment is likely to change as a result of the forthcoming general election. In terms of devolution deals, it was announced in the Spring Budget Statement that Surrey County Council had been offered a level 2 devolution deal. There are no other deals that are that far progressed in the South East and this will be an opportunity to understand what is involved. The Committee asked if there is any scope for a council to influence what is devolved. The Director of CET outlined that it was his understanding that what is devolved can be negotiated with the Government.

30.6 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note the report;
- 2) Request that a report on fees and charges is provided as part of the Committee's RPPR work for 2025/26; and
- 3) Request that consideration is given to including some longer-term horizon scanning for policy changes to the March meeting stage of scrutiny's work on the RPPR cycle.

31. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF PROCUREMENT: SOCIAL VALUE AND BUYING LOCAL - UPDATE REPORT

31.1 The Chief Operating Officer introduced the report followed by further comments from the Head of Policy & Improvement, Orbis Procurement. The report provides a progress update on the implementation of the recommendations from the scrutiny review as detailed in appendix 1 of the report. Good progress has been made against the recommendations although there has been some capacity and resource constraints in implementing the recommendations. The Head of Policy & Improvement commented that the Social Value trial was going really well and is pleased with the way in which the trial of the new model using a more qualitative approach to Social Value is progressing.

31.2 The Chief Operating Officer also outlined that there are some upcoming changes as the Procurement Act has received Royal Assent, although some of the provisions have not come into force yet, which may provide more flexibility in regard to Social Value. There is a change in the procurement process from looking at the 'most economically advantageous' tender to the 'most advantageous' tender which provides more flexibility in evaluating tenders and putting more emphasis on Social Value.

31.3 The Committee discussed the update report and the comments and questions raised by the Committee are summarised below.

31.4 The Chair of the Review Board commented that it was a very positive to see how the Team is moving forward in implementing the recommendations, and it will be interesting to see how the Council moves from the trial of a new approach to Social Value, through to broadening it out into other areas across the Council.

Recording of Social Value commitments

31.5 The Committee asked about the figure for recording Social Value commitments under recommendation 2 as 8.3% of projects in scope appeared to be quite low. It was clarified that this is a very new system (PM3) which only went live in October 2022 which explains the low starting point as it is only recording Social Value commitments at the point of new contract awards. The Head of Policy & Improvement added that the capacity constraints mean that it will be necessary to see what can be achieved with the existing system (PM3) before looking at what can be done through the Contract Management Advisory Service (CMAS) in East Sussex County Council (ESCC). The PM3 system can be used now for reporting a number of outputs from procurement and it will be possible to see how CMAS can report on contract delivery.

31.6 The Committee asked if it would be possible to provide an update on how the Council is doing in securing Social Value and receiving Social Value commitments. The Chief Operating Officer responded that it will be possible to ensure the delivery on commitments is reported back to the Committee.

Carbon emissions reporting

31.7 The Committee noted that under recommendation 8c, there is a trial of a reporting platform for carbon emissions from contracts (scope 3). The Committee asked if it would be possible to have a demonstration of the system. The Head of Policy & Improvement confirmed that it would be possible to arrange a demonstration either on the test system or on the live system once some data had been loaded onto it.

Buying Local policy

31.8 The Committee asked if the Buying Local policy is working and whether the Council has information to demonstrate contractors are buying locally. The Chief Operating Officer outlined that the policy is working, and information is regularly reported on the amount of goods and services procured locally, which is currently around 66%. It was clarified that activity under this policy does not stop when the corporate plan target of 60% is reached.

Supply chain reviews and development

31.9 The Committee asked if there is an active supply chain review process in place to ensure the Council is getting value for money. The Chief Operating Officer responded that there has been two recent Internal Audits looking at supply chain risk. Supplier and contract management is decentralised to departments in the Council and a range of work is done to ensure value for money and the Council uses its buying power from contracts.

31.10 The Committee asked if horizon scanning is undertaken to ensure the Council knows when new suppliers enter the market and what the markets for various goods and services are doing. The Chief Operating Officer outlined that when tendering for contracts the Council ensures that requests to bid are advertised as widely as possible. There is also proactive market engagement to make sure the market can meet the Council's needs. The Head of Policy & Improvement added that the Council has to publish procurement notices and departmental teams carry out an assessment of the market and suppliers before going to market on large contracts that will capture any new market entrants.

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

32. UPDATE ON THE SPACES PROGRAMME

32.1 The Assistant Director Property introduced the report which sets out the activities of the Strategic Property Asset Collaboration in East Sussex (SPACES) programme since it was established in 2011. The Programme's remit has been extended since it was established to become the One Public Estate (OPE) Partnership for East Sussex, with a broader focus on regeneration, housing and sustainability priorities, based around continuing collaboration and utilisation of public sector assets. The original SPACES Programme was about getting collaboration between all the partners around operational space needs. There is proactive involvement of voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations around asset needs and links with other organisations. A list of current partners is given in appendix 1 of the report, and information about projects is contained in appendix 2.

32.2 The Committee thanked officers for the report and made a number of comments and asked questions about the content of the report. A summary of the Committee's discussion is given below.

Capacity for delivery of projects

32.3 The Committee asked officers about the potential capacity to deliver capital receipts and greater asset rationalisation across the partners. The Assistant Director Property outlined that the number of assets across all organisations with scope for capital receipts and increased co-location had reduced but there were still wider areas of partnership working in other fields. There are opportunities for joint working and collaboration on net zero (decarbonisation) work to reduce CO₂ emissions through bids to SALIX and other funding opportunities such as the Brownfield Land Release Fund (BLRF). Consequently, the focus of future work is not only around disposals, but about sharing resources and accessing central Government funding. BLRF funding received to date totals £1,761,000 (slide 3, Appendix 2). For the most recent BLRF funding round 2.3, SPACES has submitted bids with the potential value of £2,830,000. Confirmation of the round 2.3 awards are still pending until the Summer of 2024 (slide 4 Appendix 2).

32.4 The Committee asked if there are further opportunities for BLRF projects. The Assistant Director Property responded that access to the central Government BLRF fund will determine the opportunities for further projects on brownfield land. There are stringent conditions and tight deadlines attached to this funding which requires working with developers and planning authorities. This can make the delivery of projects quite complex and challenging. *(Post meeting note: Currently Brownfield Land Release Funding is only available for remediation works on Local Authority owned land to unlock and deliver housing, therefore other public sector organisations are unable to apply for BLRF).*

Information about projects

32.5 The Committee noted the number of past projects that the SPACES Programme had delivered and asked if more detailed information could be provided about the future projects and

the stakeholders involved with them. The Assistant Director Property outlined that it would be possible to provide information about future ESCC projects to relevant ESCC Local Members, including emerging applications for OPE/BLRF or other funding streams. It was noted that this will need to be aligned to partners/ project communications and engagement strategies and take into account where there are potential conflicts of interest or commercially confidential information. It was clarified that the numbers in the circles in the Live Projects Heatmap in appendix 2 relates to the number of separate projects in the same location, and that the Phase 10 OPE recent award of £150,000 (referenced on slide 3 and 9, appendix 2) is for supporting the 'Mayfield GP Surgery and Community Hall' project (led by Wealden District Council).

Asset transfer and working with developers

32.6 The Committee asked if there is a formal policy process for asset transfers to VCSE organisations in the SPACES Programme and if there is scope to involve developers. The Assistant Director Property explained that within the Programme there is a list of partner space needs and availability (including community groups' needs where provided), and this informs a matching process where needs are aligned with potential property assets. However, there is no formal asset transfer policy for the Programme as each partner may have their own policy depending on the organisations' key priorities. The SPACES Programme does engage with developers via the East Sussex Developers Group and other relevant partnerships or bodies through various forums as appropriate.

Measuring economic regeneration

32.7 The Committee noted that objective 5 of the SPACES Programme is to enable development opportunities to drive economic regeneration. It asked how the local economic regeneration benefits are measured. The Assistant Director Property outlined that the One Public Estate programme measures jobs and ongoing jobs metrics, which can be recorded and collated for projects. Information on the delivered, in progress and potential project benefits are included on slide 2, appendix 2.

Hailsham Aspires

32.8 Councillor Murphy commented that there had been a reduction in the scale of the projects covered by the Hailsham Aspires scheme, and it is possible that the new medical centre will not now be delivered. Consequently, the SPACES Programme will need to be clear about which projects relate to Hailsham Aspires. Councillor Murphy also asked about the provision of a new medical centre for Hailsham and how this issue might be referred to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) for its consideration.

32.9 The Assistant Director Property responded that the Hailsham Aspires scheme is still in the document as his understanding is that Wealden District Council is still looking at the provision of a medical centre and potentially leisure facilities, but this will be updated in the light of any upcoming decisions about changes to the scheme. Councillor Lunn commented that his understanding of the situation was that planning for a new medical centre is well advanced and a conversation with Wealden District Council may be needed to clarify the situation. The Senior Scrutiny Adviser commented that if the Committee agreed, it could resolve to refer the matter of the provision of sufficient healthcare facilities in Hailsham to HOSC. *(Post meeting note: At a meeting held on 13 March 2024, the Cabinet of Wealden District Council agreed to proceed with the provision of a new medical centre in Hailsham which was part of the Hailsham Aspires scheme. Consequently, a referral to HOSC is not necessary at this point in time).*

Funding of the SPACES Programme

32.10 The Committee asked about the funding of the SPACES Programme in terms of where the contributions come from at present and any future challenges regarding funding. The Assistant Director Property outlined that the SPACES Programme is funded by a combination of annual contributions from the majority of the partner organisations (e.g. District and Borough councils, NHS partners, Ambulance, Fire and Police services and the East Sussex College Group) and external grant funding. A number of partners are experiencing financial pressures, consequently, it will be necessary to review the future funding/resourcing of the Programme Team and service model in advance for the following financial years.

(Post meeting note: Clarification that whilst the SPACES programme does not receive ongoing revenue funding from One Public Estate (OPE), the current model is that the aforementioned partner organisation contributions are 'topped up' using external grant awarded from either historic funding or specific OPE one-off revenue funding. This grant funding is anticipated to run out in April 2025).

32.11 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note the update report on the work of the SPACES programme, including its successes and future focus; and
- 2) Request that officers investigate a mechanism to notify ESCC Local Members of SPACES projects that are taking place in their Division or pending OPE/BLRF or external funding applications involving ESCC assets.

33. COMMUNITY ASSETS UPDATE

33.1 The Assistant Director Property introduced the report which provides an update on how the Council's assets have been used for community asset transfer by community and voluntary groups. The report also contained suggestions for revising the guidance on the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) policy for consideration by the Committee.

33.2 The Committee considered the report and made a number of comments and suggestions. A summary of the discussion and the points raised is given below.

Information on running costs

33.3 The Committee thanked officers for a good report which outlined how council owned properties and assets can be transferred to or leased by community groups. The Committee asked how community groups could find out about the running costs of a property that they may be interested in. The Assistant Director Property outlined that under the proposal in paragraph 2.18 d) of the report there will be a checklist provided to community groups listing the things that they may consider, including considerations like running costs. If at that stage the community group would like more information on things like utility costs, rent, insurance etc. this can be provided to them. Also, under the proposal in paragraph 2.18 h) there would be a named contact in the Property Services Team who they could contact for information or to answer questions they may have about a particular property, including whether it is surplus or in

operational use. It was clarified that responses to requests would be given within a reasonable timescale.

Local Government Act requirements and evaluation

33.4 The Committee observed that the Local Government Act General Disposal Consent Order 2003 requirements as set out in paragraph 2.9 of the report are an important principle and that this should be given prominence in the web site information. These requirements should also be included in the website information proposed in paragraph 2.18 a) and need to be made clear in the asset disposal process. It would also be really helpful for community organisations to understand the evaluation process the Lead Member has to go through when considering these requirements for asset disposals and longer leases.

33.5 The Assistant Director Property responded that this was a helpful point on the Local Government Act requirements and acknowledged that it would be useful for information on the requirements to be provided to community organisations. Lead Member reports for asset disposals and leases over seven years in length, do set out this information and will provide information on commercial offers and the other wider economic, social and well-being benefits for the Lead Member to consider. In terms of the evaluation process, recent Lead Member reports have included a matrix of evaluation criteria.

Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Policy

33.6 The Committee asked how the existing CAT policy would be streamlined and combined with the proposals for improvements. Committee members noted that they would not want to see the existing policy document reduced too far. The Assistant Director Property outlined that the idea was to revise the CAT policy by including a process map and information on the next steps in the process.

33.7 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note the update report;
- 2) Agree the suggestions outlined in paragraph 2.18 of the report to provide greater awareness of community asset opportunities; and
- 3) Suggest that a decision making matrix is included in the information for community organisations on the Local Government Act considerations for disposals.

34. FOOD WASTE & ENVIRONMENT ACT 2021 REQUIREMENTS UPDATE REPORT

34.1 The Waste Team Manager introduced the report and outlined that the Government has provided additional information to councils to clarify the requirements for recycling services as part of the Environment Act. The Act requires all Waste Collection Authorities (WCAs - which are the District and Borough councils in East Sussex) to provide weekly food waste collections separate from other waste by March 2026.

34.2 The report provides further information on communal waste collection facilities and on funding arrangements. A total of £4.3 million in funding has been allocated to the WCAs in East Sussex (excluding Lewes District Council (LDC) who already have a food waste collection service) for capital expenditure on collection vehicles and food waste bins. There may also be some ongoing revenue support for collection authorities. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) as the Waste Disposal Authority will not receive any additional funding from the Government.

34.3 The impact on ESCC of having to dispose of more food waste as a result of the introduction of mandatory food waste collections will mean that some work will need to be carried out on the existing in vessel composting (IVC) facilities at the Woodlands facility in Whitesmith. There will also need to be some modifications to waste transfer stations and vehicles used to transport the waste. The Waste Team is working with Veolia on the likely costs to ESCC from the introduction of food waste collections.

34.4 The Team estimates that ESCC will receive around 16,000 tonnes of food waste a year for disposal, but will not know for sure until collections start. A waste composition analysis is being commissioned to provide an up to date estimate of the amount of food waste in black bag/bin, residual waste. Information from Brighton and Hove City Council in 2022 indicated that around 40% of black bag waste was food waste. In Surrey, where all councils currently operate a food waste collection service, around 25% of black bag waste was food waste.

34.5 The Woodlands IVC facility currently composts green waste and food waste from Lewes District Council (LDC). The composting process takes six weeks which sterilises the waste and produces a high quality compost which is used by local farmers and sold at the Household Waste Recycling Sites.

34.6 The Committee discussed the report and a summary of the questions and comments raised is given below.

Communications and quantity of food waste

34.7 The Committee commented that it would be good to have a communications campaign on food waste reduction and what residents can recycle. The Committee also asked about the amount of food waste that is likely to be collected and factors that may affect it. The Waste Team Manager outlined that there is usually an increase in the amount of food waste collected when collections are introduced and then volumes tend to go down. This could be due to residents being more aware of food waste which leads to a reduction or residents not participating in collections. The volumes of food waste collected by LDC have gone up and down, but the tonnage collected has been fairly low. This may be due to LDC having weekly residual waste collections rather than fortnightly ones which provide more of an incentive to put out food waste for collection. It was clarified that food waste percentages are measured by volume.

Can residents opt out of food waste collections

34.8 The Committee asked whether residents could opt out of food waste collections. The Waste Team Manager responded that residents could choose not to present food waste for collection, but councils have to provide a collection service.

Composting capacity and green waste

34.9 The Committee asked if the Woodlands facility had enough capacity to compost all the food waste and if there was enough green waste to mix with the food waste for the composting process to work properly. The Waste Team Manager confirmed that there was enough green waste to mix with the food waste for the composting process. He also outlined that the Woodlands facility has the capacity to process 43,000 tonnes of waste per year and should have sufficient capacity to deal with all the food waste. The Waste Team Manager added that a site visit to the Woodlands facility could be arranged for Committee members to see the composting process and what is involved.

Costs and cost effectiveness of the service

34.10 The Committee asked about the level of additional costs associated with disposing of food waste and whether it was cost effective given that ESCC has an incinerator and there may still be 20% food waste in the residual black bag waste after collections are introduced. The Waste Team Manager responded that the Team were still working with Veolia on the costs for the food waste disposal and there is a risk of additional costs to ESCC. This is subject to negotiation with Veolia as it will be a variation to the waste contract and is likely to include costs for sealed containers for the food waste, vehicles and the modification of waste transfer stations. The main driver for introducing food waste collections is to reduce carbon emissions from waste and it moves food waste up the waste and recycling hierarchy. However, the economics of introducing food waste collections are not entirely clear.

34.11 The Committee asked if Surrey County Council had carried out an analysis of why there was still around 25% food waste in black bag waste when there was a food waste collection service. The Waste Team Manager agreed to approach Surrey CC to find out if they had done any work on this.

Food waste contamination and biodegradable bags

34.12 The Committee asked whether the composting system could handle contamination of the food waste and how it would deal with biodegradable bags. The Waste Team Manager responded that the current garden waste has been incredibly clean, and the level of potential contamination is unknown. Screens and shredders are used in the process to filter out contaminants and Veolia is reasonably confident that the process can handle contaminants, but it is a concern. The standards for compost are very high and Veolia will reject waste if there is a high level of contamination. The process can handle compostable bags if they comply to the national standard. Some authorities have provided compostable bags to encourage food waste recycling, but this can lead to a reduction in food waste collected if they are withdrawn. It was clarified that food waste is usually collected in a separate vehicle.

34.13 The Committee RESOLVED to note the report.

35. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ROAD MARKINGS - UPDATE REPORT

35.1 The Contracts Manager, Highway Infrastructure Services introduced the report which is a final update report on the implementation of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Road markings report. The Department's updated response to the recommendations is contained in appendix 1 of the report.

35.2 The Committee considered the report and a summary of the discussion of the report is given below.

Frequency of line marking

35.3 The Committee asked whether the Council was now able to renew road markings more quickly than before. The Contracts Manager, Highway Infrastructure Services outlined that the highway maintenance base budget for road markings has been increased as part of the new highways maintenance contract and there is a one road marking team working all year round. Part of the capital budget is also spent on road markings which is used for the machine laid programme of renewing road markings. The Highways Team is also spending an additional £500,000 on road markings that was allocated by Cabinet after the scrutiny review. At present there are two teams working on renewing road markings around the county.

35.4 The Committee asked if ESCC has a duty to maintain road markings under the Highways Act. The Contracts Manager, Highway Infrastructure Services explained that local policy sets out how often line markings are renewed. Consequently, the frequency of maintenance is based on local, not national, policy.

35.5 The Committee enquired about the priority of maintenance for road crossings and other road safety markings. The Contracts Manager, Highway Infrastructure Services set out that all road markings are there to create a safe environment for road users and the maintenance frequency priorities are set by local policy. If road markings important for road safety are worn (e.g. for crossings), they will be refreshed. The Council uses a risk based approach and Highway Stewards can request road markings to be refreshed as part of their routine inspections.

Renewing road markings where road surfaces are deteriorating

35.6 The Committee commented that in some situations the poor condition of road surfacing may prevent road markings being renewed and asked what happens in these situations. The Contracts Manager, Highway Infrastructure Services responded that road markings are replaced when carrying out road repairs and the teams will look to renew road markings as part of capital road maintenance schemes. In general, road markings will not be renewed on road surfaces that are damaged and will be replaced after repairs have been carried out.

Autonomous Vehicles

35.7 The Committee commented that road markings are becoming important for the use of Autonomous Vehicles which need to calculate their position on the road. This may become an issue in future if Autonomous Vehicles come into widespread use and start using roads across the road network.

Road markings for parking enforcement

35.8 The Committee commented that a lot of the road markings in built up areas were associated with parking bays or parking restrictions and asked whether there was a case for using the parking enforcement budget further to keep road markings refreshed. The Contracts Manager, Highway Infrastructure Services commented that the highways team do respond to requests from the Parking Team to renew road markings for parking enforcement. However, the requests do not constitute a significant amount of work or cost.

Impact of the recommendations on road safety and traffic management

35.9 The Committee asked whether the scrutiny review report had made a difference to road safety outcomes and traffic management. The Contracts Manager, Highway Infrastructure Services responded that ESCC is responsible for providing a safe road network and the service does not have a high level of safety issues related to the way the network is managed. It is difficult to provide direct evidence of the impact of the report, but it has helped maintain the status quo of a safe environment for road users.

35.10 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- 1) note the updates to the recommendations and action plan set out in Appendix 1; and
- 2) sign off the review as complete, with all recommendations now being embedded as business as usual.

36. WORK PROGRAMME

36.1 The Chair and Senior Scrutiny Adviser introduced the report on the Committee's work future work programme.

Scrutiny reviews

36.2 The Committee discussed and agreed the priorities for the scrutiny review topics as set out in the report, starting with scoping of a scrutiny review of Speed Limit Policy to be followed by Footway Maintenance and then Highway Drainage. The Committee asked what capacity there was to undertake the scrutiny reviews and whether it would be possible to undertake all four topics before March 2024. The Senior Scrutiny Adviser outlined that it would be possible to undertake the Speed Limit Policy review in the next six months and one other review, but this would be dependent on the agreed scope of reviews. The Chair suggested that the Committee start work on the first two reviews and then leave the others on the work programme to follow if time and resources permit. The Committee were in agreement with this approach.

36.3 The Committee agreed to establish a scoping board for a potential scrutiny review of Speed Limit Policy. Members of the Committee were invited to indicate if they wished to take part in this review work. Councillors Beaver, Hilton, Murphy, Redstone and Wright indicated that they would like to take part as well as Councillors Hollidge and Kirby-Green who had previously indicated that they wished to take part. The Committee agreed the above councillors would form the membership of the scoping board.

36.4 The Chair asked Committee members to let him, or the Senior Scrutiny Adviser, know after the meeting if they wished to take part in the scrutiny review work on the topics of Footway Maintenance or Highways Drainage.

Additional work programme items

36.5 The Committee discussed the suggestions for additions to the work programme as outlined in paragraph 2.5 of the report. Councillor Murphy commented that he had used the services at The Keep and would recommend a visit to understand the work that is undertaken at The Keep. Councillor Hilton suggested that the parking policy item where it relates to Electric Vehicles (EVs) is included in an update report on the provision of EV charge points as a way of combining items on the work programme. Councillor Hollidge outlined that he considered that the parking policy should be urgently reviewed on the grounds of fairness as there is a disparity in charging between the different areas within the county (e.g. people pay more for residents parking permits in Hastings than in Bexhill) and other issues that determine the use of road space. Councillor Brett commented that there may be linkages between the Active Travel ratings and the Speed Limit Policy review and that might be a way of including this item.

36.6 The Chair suggested that the Committee could agree to include these additional items in the work programme and the Committee could undertake work on them if there is sufficient time. The Senior Scrutiny Adviser commented that the best way to include the item on The Keep may be to undertake the suggested work as part of a site visit and outlined that the Committee had carried out a previous review of services at The Keep which had included details of the income generation activity that was undertaken by the service to offset costs. In regard to the Active Travel ratings the Committee could see if this fitted within the scope of the Speed Limit Policy review and if not treat it as a separate report item on the work programme. The Senior Scrutiny Adviser suggested that the four additional items could be included in the work programme if the committee was in agreement with the suggested approaches. The Committee members confirmed they were happy with this approach.

Forward Plan and Training activities

36.7 The Chair asked the Committee to let him know if there were any items on the Forward Plan that they wished to include in the work programme and advise him or the Senior Scrutiny Adviser if there were any training topics they would like to cover.

Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) Working Group

36.8 The Committee agreed to re-establish the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) Working Group with the existing membership and Chair, together with any other Committee members who wished to take part in this work.

Reports for information/briefings

36.9 The Committee asked for timings for the two reports/briefings listed under this section of the work programme on the Future use of County Hall, and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) software technology within the Council. The Chief Operating Officer outlined that work was being undertaken on both of these topics over the next two months and reports or briefings for the Committee would follow on after that work.

36.10 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- 1) agree the agenda items for the future Committee meetings, including items listed in the updated work programme in appendix 1;
- 2) agree the topics and priorities for Scrutiny Reviews to be included in the Committee's future work programme as set out in the report;
- 3) note the upcoming items on East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) Forward Plan in appendix 2;
- 4) notify the Chair and Senior Scrutiny Adviser of any requests for training and development activities including the topics for 'bitesize' training sessions; and
- 5) agree to re-establish the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) Working Group to provide scrutiny input into an update of the corporate climate emergency action plan on behalf of the Committee as set out in section 5.4 of the report

37. ANY OTHER ITEMS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED UNDER AGENDA ITEM 4

37.1 Councillor Murphy raised the issue of highway drainage on Old Swan Lane in Hailsham (linked to minute 2.18 of the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023). The road is regularly covered in water to a depth of six to eight inches (15 – 20cm) at times of heavy rainfall, and the land either side of the road onto which the highway should drain is owned by Southern Water. The highway drains on the seaward side are not working and Councillor Murphy asked if the Committee could write to Southern Water to take action on this issue.

37.2 The Committee RESOLVED that the Chair should write to Southern Water on behalf of the Committee to request that they take action on this issue.

The meeting ended at 12.44 pm.

Councillor Matthew Beaver (Chair)