

ECONOMY, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Economy, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Lewes on 14 September 2016.

- PRESENT Councillors Richard Stogdon (Chair) Mike Pursglove (Vice Chair), Claire Dowling, Pat Rodohan, Judy Rogers and Barry Taylor
- LEAD MEMBERS Councillor Chris Dowling, Lead Member for Community Services
Councillor Carl Maynard, Lead Member for Transport and Environment
Councillor David Elkin, Lead Member for Resources
- ALSO PRESENT Nick Skelton - Assistant Director, Communities
Karl Taylor - Assistant Director, Operations
Lucy Corrie - Head of Communities
Charlotte Marples - East Sussex Road Safety Programme Project Manager
- Councillor John Barnes
- Martin Jenks, Senior Democratic Services Advisor

10 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 JUNE 2016

10.1 The Committee RESOLVED to agree as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2016.

11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

11.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rosalyn St. Pierre and Rupert Clubb, Director of Communities, Economy and Transport (CET).

12 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

12.1 None.

13 URGENT ITEMS

13.1 Communication with Highway Stewards for Councillors and members of the public (see minute 17 below).

14 REPORTS

14.1 Reports referred to in the minutes below are contained in the minute book.

15 UPDATE ON THE EAST SUSSEX ROAD SAFETY PROGRAMME

15.1 The Head of Communities introduced the report on the East Sussex Road Safety Programme. Charlotte Marples, the Project Manager of the East Sussex Road Safety Programme, was introduced to the Committee.

15.2 In East Sussex 90-95% of Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) road accidents are caused by human error, which can be attributed to a number of different factors. It is important to have strong evidential data in order to target interventions that will have the most impact on reducing KSI's. The feedback from the consultation with partners on the Programme has been very positive. The Behavioural Insight Team (BIT) is keen to work with the project, particularly because reducing KSI's is a new area to apply behaviour change techniques.

15.3 The Programme Board for the project met on 22 August 2016, and is comprised of representatives from East Sussex County Council (ESCC), Sussex Police, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (ESFRS) and Highways England. The chair of the East Sussex Road Safety Coordination Group (ESRSCG) has also joined the Programme Board.

15.4 The Action Plan for the Programme is in appendix 3 of the report and will be reviewed in the light of further evidence and data analysis. Some strands of work have begun, such as work with the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership (SSRP) to review the 40% KSI reduction target; measures targeting occupational drivers and; the implementation of speed reduction schemes. An update report will be brought back to the Committee in June 2017, once further analysis and progress has been made on the project.

15.5 The Committee made a number of comments on the East Sussex Road Safety Programme, which are summarised below.

People Driving for Business / Occupational Drivers

15.6 The Committee commented that there are increasing numbers of delivery drivers as a result of internet shopping. It is important for businesses to appreciate their responsibilities for safer driving. Many delivery drivers are self-employed whose earnings are related to the number of packages they deliver. The Committee asked if companies such as Amazon and others would be held accountable for their drivers.

15.7 The Head of Communities responded that the project will tackle this issue through the delivery of the Company Operator Safer Transport Scheme (COSTS) programme. This is a Department for Transport (DfT) programme that advises companies on their liabilities, obligations and the law when employing drivers for work. The COSTS programme will target small and medium sized businesses that may not have the same resources as larger companies for driver training.

15.8 The Lead Member for Community Services outlined that the SSRP COSTS project is delivering presentations to the business community as Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) may be unaware of the current legislation. There is also a need to contact businesses and raise awareness through the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Chambers of Commerce and other business organisations.

Older Drivers

15.9 The Committee is aware of a number of serious accidents in East Sussex that have involved older drivers. The Committee asked if the Programme will include older drivers in the

target groups. The Head of Communities responded that although older drivers are not a priority group identified by SSRP at present, the Programme can choose to focus on them.

15.10 The Committee noted that some insurance companies require the use of 'black boxes' which record driver behaviour, for inexperienced drivers. The Committee asked if this type of technology could be used for older drivers to monitor their ability to drive safely. The Head of Communities replied that the project will look at the use of new technology and added that people can report poor driving through Sussex Police's Operation Crackdown.

Non Residents

15.11 The Committee observed that a number of people involved in KSI's are not East Sussex residents and therefore it will be important for the Programme to spread further afield. The Head of Communities responded that the Programme will use data analysis to see how many KSI's involve non-residents, and then devise measures accordingly. The project team will liaise with neighbouring authorities to share information and outcomes from the Programme.

National Initiatives

15.12 The Lead Member for Transport and Environment commented that KSI's are not just an East Sussex issue and asked if the project, in terms of evidence gathering, is looking at what central government is proposing on this issue. For example, is there anything coming into statute for 16-24 year olds (e.g. the use of black boxes fitted to vehicles) and actions to deal with the use of mobile phones whilst driving. The Head of Communities replied that the project will be speaking to the DfT about this and any other future developments that may affect KSI's and driver behaviour.

Use of New Technology

15.13 The Committee asked about the capabilities of the 'black boxes' used by insurance companies for people who want to reduce their insurance premiums. The Head of Communities explained that the 'black boxes' can record what you do and how you drive which is linked to a Global Positioning System (GPS) system. It may be possible to expand the application of this sort of technology, but the devices do not record sound at present (e.g. to see if people are using mobile phones whilst driving).

Programme Budget

15.14 The Committee asked if the £1million budget for the Programme was affected by the savings proposals which are part of the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process. The Assistant Director, Communities confirmed that the £1million budget for the Programme is ring-fenced and not subject to savings as the funding comes from the Public Health budget.

KSI Reduction Target

15.15 With regard to the target of a 40% reduction in KSI's (paragraph 2.1.4 of the report), the Committee asked if the proposal is to remove the target and if so, what would it be replaced with. The Head of Communities responded that there are a lot of factors that ESCC cannot influence as a County Council that affect the KSI figures, and therefore the current target may be unrealistic. West Sussex County Council has a "vision zero" aspiration (i.e. they aspire to have no road deaths) and state that they are trying through a number of methods to get the number of KSI's down.

15.16 The Lead Member for Community Services commented that there are issues around data collection and comparability that could be contributing to the higher than average KSI figures for East Sussex. However, in his view, not to have a KSI reduction target would be unwise.

15.17 Members of the Committee observed that at Wealden District Council, the KSI targets were removed and replaced with an aspiration statement, as the Council could not influence

KSI's on their own. The aspiration to reduce KSI's is still recorded in the Wealden District Council Plan.

15.18 The Committee's view is that targets need to be achievable (i.e. based on factors that are within ESCC's control) and it may be better to have aspiration to reduce the number of KSI's. There is also a need to have benchmarks to measure progress on what we are doing and to focus interventions. The Committee is not so concerned about the retention of the 40% KSI reduction target, but would like to have some measures in order to focus the efforts and resources to reduce KSI's.

15.19 The Lead Member for Community Services commented that benchmarks are important but it is also important to focus on the causes of the accidents to understand what more can be done. Also, there needs to be more effort made to publicise the work ESCC and its partners are doing to reduce KSI's and to provide more information about the causes of accidents. The Lead Member for Transport and Environment stated that it was important to deal with some of the misinformation that is in the public domain about the causes of accidents.

15.20 The Committee agreed that the current KSI reduction targets need looking at further and that the Head of Communities can report back the Committee's views to the SSRP.

Concluding Comments

15.21 The Committee welcomed the report as the number of KSI's is a serious issue for East Sussex. The Lead Member for Community Services pointed out that KSI's are an issue, particularly in the rural areas of the county such as Wealden. The Road Safety Programme's approach to interventions is not "one size fits all" and this is very encouraging as the interventions can be tailored to the local community.

15.22 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- 1) note progress on the project; and
- 2) agree that an update report will be brought back to the Committee in June 2017.

16 RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES (RPPR) 2017/18

16.1 The Assistant Director, Operations introduced the report setting out the background to the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) budget setting process for the financial year 2017/18. This is the start of the annual RPPR process which is looking at the budget for 2017/18. The Council is currently in the first year of the three year Savings Plan (Medium Term Financial Plan – MTFP) agreed by the Council in February 2016. The report asks the Committee to look at areas of interest and establish an RPPR Board that will meet in December.

16.2 The Chair proposed that the Committee to start by looking at the existing savings plan which a particular focus on the savings for the current financial year and those proposed for 2017/18.

Transport and Operational Service

16.3 The Assistant Director, Operations explained that this saving referred to the net cost of the subsidised bus transport scheme. The proposal is to fill the gap in funding between the money received from central government and the actual cost of operating the subsidised bus transport scheme with money from the parking surplus.

16.4 The Committee asked if there will be any adjustment to these savings figures. The Assistant Director, Operations responded that there are no proposals to adjust the savings figures. However, the department is undertaking a piece of work to look at the operation of the

parking enforcement service and how much surplus ESCC can generate. The department is confident that it is going to achieve the surplus required, and is not proposing to increase the contribution from the parking surplus.

Waste Operation - Leachate Disposal

16.5 The closed landfill sites that ESCC is responsible for are open to the elements. There is a requirement to collect the rain run-off and leachate which is taken off-site by tanker and treated. There is an existing scheme, funded from the capital budget, to build a retention tank at Pebsham and then feed the leachate into the Southern Water waste water treatment plant at Pebsham. The department is on target to deliver the project and achieve the £85,000 savings outlined in the plan. A planning application will be submitted to Rother District Council shortly. There are no opportunities to increase savings in this area.

Waste Disposal

16.6 The Assistant Director, Operations explained that this item is a reduction in the amount of revenue money transferred to the waste reserve. The department has reduced the contribution to the waste reserve in line with an assessment of the risk to the Council. There is a saving of £1,780,000 in 2016/17, which the department is on target to deliver. The £25,000 in 2017/18 will come from savings made as a result of a review of the waste contract. A report will be presented to the Committee in November to outline the areas of potential savings and efficiencies that have been identified by a review of the contract.

Transport Hub

16.7 The restructure of the transport hub has been completed with the merger of the Public Transport and Home to School Transport teams. This will achieve the savings for 2016/17 and 2017/18, but there is no scope for further savings.

Rights of Way and Countryside Management

16.8 The £50,000 savings have been achieved for 2016/17 and £50,000 savings in 2017/8 are dependent on the implementation of the Countryside Access Strategy. The Assistant Director, Operations is fairly confident these savings can be achieved.

Planning and Environment Service

16.9 The savings for this year have been achieved and the department is on track to achieve £40,000 savings in 2017/18. The Transport Development Control team have increased the number of staff funded from income, so the whole team of 20 staff will be funded from external income. Although the Transport Development Control team is completely funded by external income, the remainder of the Planning team is not.

16.10 The Committee commented that there are other teams within Planning Services that are not highlighted in the Savings Plan. The Committee asked for further information on the other services to be provided at the November meeting.

Trading Standards

16.11 Both the savings targets for 2016/17 and 2017/18 will be met. This will be achieved through staff changes and additional income streams from Check a Trade and income from training provided for local businesses. The Committee asked if the Trading Standards team could generate more income or achieve further savings.

16.12 The Assistant Director, Communities informed the Committee that the Trading Standards Team is currently looking at income from Check a Trade and potential new income streams to see if it is possible to achieve a modest increase in the income generation target. The Trading Standards Team has reduced in size by 42% since 2011/12 and any further reduction in the current staffing level would not be possible without compromising services.

16.13 The Committee asked if Devolution will provide opportunities to work more closely with neighbouring authorities to achieve savings. The Assistant Director, Communities replied that this issue has been discussed by Trading Standards South East and the ESCC Team has had discussions with West Sussex, Kent and Surrey County Councils about sharing specialisms across the South East.

16.14 The Committee asked if there is a risk to services if the Team is no longer as proactive as they would like to be. The Head of Communities responded that the Team are now more focussed on vulnerable adults and less on those who are able to take action for themselves. The Assistant Director, Communities added that the Team are undertaking all statutory duties, but any further reduction in net budget would lead to a negative impact on services.

Concluding Comments

16.15 In terms of the key areas of interest, the Committee requested a table with all service areas on it (including the other sections within Planning and Environment), to provide information on:

- team sizes;
- a narrative of what the service does;
- the service net budget with details of revenue costs and income; and
- the scope for further savings and/or increased income generation.

16.16 The Committee agreed that it would also be useful to have further detail on where teams are funded from (e.g. revenue budget, capital, income from fees, grants etc.) and to highlight the areas of the departmental net budget where it would be extremely challenging to make further savings. The Committee asked for this information to be provided at the November meeting.

16.17 The Lead Member for Resources informed the Committee that there may be additional budget pressures that require further savings as highlighted by the Q1 Council monitoring report. It is likely there will be an additional savings requirement of around £7m across the Council.

16.18 The Committee RESOLVED that:

- 1) the RPPR Board will be made up of all the Committee members; and
- 2) to have a further report at the November Scrutiny Committee meeting to review the information on the department's services as requested in paragraphs 16.15 and 16.16 above.

17 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

17.1 The Committee considered the future work programme.

17.2 The Committee discussed the progress of the Countryside Access Strategy and requested that the Senior Democratic Services Officer establish a date for the Committee to look at the outcome of the public consultation on the draft strategy. This is likely to be sometime in October or November.

17.3 The Committee discussed the potential future scrutiny work topics. The Committee agreed that it would like to have a briefing paper on the A27 road improvements at the November Scrutiny Committee meeting. With regard to the Climate Change Adaptation work, the Committee agreed to keep this on the work programme with a view to look at this after the County Council elections in May 2017.

Highways Contract

17.4 The Committee noted that it is due to have an update report in March 2017 on the implementation of the new Highways Maintenance contract. However, members of the Committee have experienced difficulties with, or have received complaints about, communication with Highway Stewards and the contact centre. What the Committee is detecting is that there are issues with poor communication from Highways Stewards. The complaints are not about the quality of work but more concerned with a lack of feedback and updates on issues from Stewards to Members.

17.5 The Highway Stewards were previously very responsive before the start of the new contract in May, but the dialogue with them has deteriorated and the feedback from residents is similar. There appears to be a problem in getting feedback from Stewards and from reports made via the website.

17.6 The Assistant Director, Operations responded that he is grateful that the Committee has raised this issue with him, but is disappointed to hear things are not as they should be. The Contractor has retained the 12 Highway Stewards, and there are plans to increase the number to 18 to make the areas they cover smaller. These changes have been deferred until the boundary review is completed, so that the Stewards' areas can be aligned with the Council division and ward boundaries. Hopefully everyone knows who their Steward is and the six strong Highway Liaison team. There has been a shift in work so the Highway Liaison team are more responsible for updating Councillors and residents in response to emails and calls. The Highway Stewards are focussing more on highway inspections.

17.7 The Assistant Director, Operations suggested that Councillors use the Members' hotline if things have gone wrong, which is 0345 0712 715. Councillors are also encouraged to use the Members' area on the East Sussex Highways web site. The Highways team have offered training for the web site to all Councillors and will do this at Ringmer or at County Hall. Residents are also being encouraged to make use more of the website to find information about their requests, problems and work being carried out in their area.

17.8 The Assistant Director, Operations explained that the contact centre do manage call lengths and anticipate peaks in call volumes related to weather and other events. They do use an evidence based approach to call wait time, but this may not be the same as commercial organisations. The contact centre can record call waiting times and sometimes people are not accurate about how long they have been waiting for an answer to their call.

17.9 The Committee commented that the issue may be more about responses to emails and the lack of an acknowledgement of reports and other communication. As the preferred method of communication by Members is via email, the Committee asked if the contact centre is responding to emails as quickly as they should be. The Committee added that email communication is better as there is a record of the request and it is possible to include the residents in the communications. Some of the Committee commented that they were happy to ring the hotline as you keep the human element in communication.

17.10 The Assistant Director, Operations explained that the department will keep all means of communication open as different people have different preferences. However, if there are problems, then Councillors can always contact him directly.

17.11 The Committee emphasised that good and effective communications were a fundamental part of contract review and they are an important part of the new contract.

17.12 The Assistant Director, Operations undertook to address the issue with the contractor on behalf of the Committee and feedback to the Chair.

17.13 The Committee RESOLVED to make the changes to the work programme as outlined in minute 15.22, minute 16.18, minute 17.2 and 17.3 above.

18 FORWARD PLAN

18.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan of key decisions.

18.2 The Committee RESOLVED to note the Forward Plan.

19 ANY OTHER ITEMS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED UNDER AGENDA ITEM 4

19.1 The discussion of the item raised under agenda item 4 (minute 13.1 above) is minuted under the Scrutiny Committee Future Work Programme (minute 17 above), as it relates to the new Highways contract report due in March 2017.

The meeting ended at 12.20 pm.

Councillor Richard Stogdon (Chair)