

ECONOMY, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Economy, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room - County Hall, Lewes on 22 November 2017.

PRESENT Councillors Richard Stogdon (Chair), Godfrey Daniel, Simon Elford, Darren Grover, Pat Rodohan, Jim Sheppard (substituting for Claire Dowling) and Barry Taylor

LEAD MEMBERS Councillors Bill Bentley and David Elkin

ALSO PRESENT Rupert Clubb, Director of Communities, Economy and Transport
James Harris, Assistant Director, Economy
Karl Taylor, Assistant Director Operations
Jon Wheeler, Team Manager, Strategic Economic Infrastructure
Lisa Simmonds, Principal Transport Policy Officer
Sarah Valentine, Project Manager - Infrastructure Design and Delivery
Dale Poore, Contracts Manager
Lucy Corrie, Head of Communities
Victoria Eaton, Team Manager Emergency Planning
Jim Alexander, Team Manager Gypsy and Travellers

22 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2017

22.1 The Chair asked for clarification of a number of matters in the minutes of the previous meeting. The Assistant Director, Operations confirmed that the performance targets for the categories of highway repair (minute 16.7) are being achieved. He will liaise with Councillor Taylor to provide an update on the drainage issue at the rear of the Grand Hotel in Eastbourne (minute 16.9). The Assistant Director, Operations will also advise the Committee if there has been an increase in resources for highway enforcement (minute 16.11).

22.2 The Committee RESOLVED to agree as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2017.

23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

23.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Claire Dowling (Councillor Sheppard substituting) and Councillor Nick Bennett.

24 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

24.1 Councillor Godfrey Daniel declared a personal, non- prejudicial interest in the highways drainage, item 6, which refers to Borough and District councils as his partner is a Hastings Borough Councillor.

25 URGENT ITEMS

25.1 There were none.

26 PROVISION OF DROPPED KERBS - UPDATE

26.1 The Team Manager, Strategic Economic Infrastructure introduced the report. He outlined that in response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review, limited funding was made available for the provision of dropped kerbs up until 2010. After that time, no dedicated funding was available and dropped kerbs requests were unlikely to be funded through the capital programme due to the prioritisation process. This has resulted in fewer dropped kerb schemes reaching fruition. Where possible, requests for dropped kerbs are delivered through Local Transport Plan (LTP) project work, Section 106 Planning agreement works, or through the Community Match programme.

26.2 The Team Manager, Strategic Economic Infrastructure explained that there is no agreed policy for prioritising requests for dropped kerbs. This is because there has been no dedicated funding for their provision since 2010. It is proposed to address this situation through the development of the Walking and Cycling Strategy and associated policies. The Strategy work involves undertaking an audit and then developing the draft Strategy for consultation in the summer of 2018.

26.3 The Committee discussed the current situation regarding funding and the provision of dropped kerbs. It asked for further information on the number of requests and the cost of providing dropped kerbs. The Team Manager, Strategic Economic Infrastructure responded that approximately 1,500 dropped kerb requests had been received since 2010, and each dropped kerb costs around £2,000 to install. Each request is assessed initially, so the department can see if the dropped kerb can be installed if an opportunity to fund it arises.

26.4 The Committee asked the Assistant Director, Economy to provide an estimate of how many of the 1,500 requests for dropped kerbs are outstanding. The Assistant Director, Economy agreed to give the Committee an idea of how many of 1,500 requests have been met and those that have been assessed as not appropriate.

Funding for dropped kerbs

26.5 The Committee considered that there should be an identified budget for the provision of dropped kerbs. It also noted that the Community Match scheme did not provide an opportunity for funding dropped kerbs in areas where there are no Parish or Town councils, or where the Borough or District council is unable to provide match funding. The Committee asked if funding could be provided from parking surpluses or other revenue or capital budgets.

26.6 The Director of Communities, Economy and Transport (CET) outlined that since 2010 over £20 million had been taken out of the department's budget as savings, and there are competing priorities for the funding that is available. If the department were to deliver all the outstanding requests for dropped kerbs, the money for this would have an impact on service delivery elsewhere. It should be noted that the strategic transport budget is already heavily over-subscribed.

26.7 The Assistant Director, Economy acknowledged that the Community Match scheme may not be an approach that can be followed everywhere, but there may be other sources of funding that could be examined. The Assistant Director Operations explained that some of the parking surplus is being used to fund concessionary fares and there are other demands that will draw on the parking surplus (e.g. the programme to replace parking meters). So it may not be possible to use this as a source for funding dropped kerbs.

26.8 The Committee asked if the Walking and Cycling Strategy is the proper place to deal with the provision of dropped kerbs. The Assistant Director, Economy responded that the future work on the Strategy may provide an opportunity to fund some dropped kerb requests through the LTP and other funding sources. It will be necessary to use a range of funding sources to address the provision of dropped kerbs.

Protecting dropped kerbs

26.9 The Committee noted the problems with protecting dropped kerbs from obstructions and suggested using white lines as an alternative to double yellow lines, as they are simpler to implement (e.g. white line 'H' bars). The Team Manager, Strategic Economic Infrastructure explained that there is a cyclical process for reviewing double yellow and white lines on a 12-18 month cycle as part of Traffic Regulation Order reviews. Any reported problems with double yellow lines (missing or requiring extension), will be dealt with as part of one of these regular reviews.

Summary comments

26.10 The Committee noted that there had been around 1,500 requests for dropped kerbs since 2010. Although funding for dropped kerb requests came from a number of sources, it appears that such requests are not being treated as priorities. The Committee considered that there is evidence of an unmet need and such needs require to be addressed to enable the County Council to meet its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act. The Committee agreed that ideally there should be an identified budget for dropped kerb provision and a prioritisation process for requests. The Committee understood that the work on the Walking & Cycling Strategy aimed to address these issues.

26.11 Committee RESOLVED to have a further report in six months time to see how the Walking and Cycling Strategy work has addressed these issues.

27 HIGHWAY DRAINAGE UPDATE

27.1 The Contracts Manager introduced the report which provides an update on the work being undertaken to improve the effectiveness of the highway drainage network. The report describes three strands of work which targets £3 million of expenditure to improve the drainage infrastructure. Good progress is being made and the Team is building up momentum in dealing with these issues. The report provides details of completed and planned work, covering:

- Blocked gully outlets - Around 1,000 of the 2,700 blocked drains identified from routine gully maintenance programme have been investigated and cleared or remedial action taken.
- Flooding hot spots - All 270 of the original reported hotspots have been examined leading to the identification of 137 validated flooding hot spots requiring action. A number have been investigated and resolved. Of the remaining 100, 50 are under investigation.
- Fence to fence design - Known drainage issues are being tackled as part of the surfacing programme (e.g. making sure the existing drainage infrastructure is working and re-profiling road surfacing to improve drainage).
- Ditch and grip work - Work programmes have been started to re-instate ditches and grips where they need to be re-constructed, and routine maintenance programmes have been put in place. For the work on the ditch network, the county has been divided into four zones.

- Improving knowledge – Work is continuing to digitise existing paper records and to resolve drainage network ownership issues. This is where problems relate to drainage infrastructure that is the responsibility of others to maintain.

27.2 The Committee asked a number of questions about the work that is being undertaken, which are summarised below. The Contracts Manager clarified that the drainage zones include the urban areas and divide the county into four zones: Zone 1 North West; Zone 2 North East; Zone 3 South West; Zones 4 South East.

Gulley Emptying

27.3 The Committee asked if there is a policy to remove parked cars to get access to blocked gullies. The Contracts Manager explained that in areas where there is a problem, residents are pre-notified of when gulley emptying work is going to take place by placing notices on lampposts. The contractor will return on a second date, but if it is still not possible to complete the work, the locations are recorded. They are then gathered up into a batch and a car lifter is employed to gain access. This is done approximately twice a year. Committee asked if it would be possible to include Councillors in the notification process.

Flooding Hotspots

27.4 The report provides details of the work undertaken on flooding hotspots and gives examples of the issues that are found as a result of investigations. These are typical of the types of work that are needed e.g. collapsed drains requiring excavation and replacement, root encroachment, lining, replacement to increase capacity etc.

Fence to fence approach

27.5 The Fence to Fence approach is tackling highway drainage first as part of projects to tackle other work (e.g. when surfacing is undertaken). The sort of work undertaken can be improving or changing drainage assets and profiling the carriageway. In rural areas the ditches and grips will be reinstated. In all cases priority will be given to those projects where there is a risk of flooding.

Improving our knowledge

27.6 The Committee asked how much of the drainage network remains to be mapped. The Contracts Manager responded that the Team prioritise mapping information that is obtained from investigations (e.g. for blocked gullies and flooding hotspots) and then the historic data, usually from old plans. The Team does not have a complete picture of whole County yet, but is continually improving the knowledge base.

Drainage network ownership issues

27.7 The Contracts Manager outlined that there are parts of the network where third parties, such as Southern Water or private landowners, deny owning the drainage infrastructure and therefore the responsibility for maintenance. Responsibility for these drains and their construction may have been transferred between responsible bodies over time. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) is often reliant on historic records to resolve these issues (e.g. St. Michaels Terrace in Lewes). Negotiating a solution to these issues can be complex, costly and difficult. Around 15%-20% of investigations have this level of complexity and take more time to resolve.

27.8 The Committee RESOLVED to note the progress made on the action plan and did not require a further update report. It may request Officers to provide further progress updates in the future.

28 EMERGENCY PLANNING UPDATE REPORT

28.1 The Head of Communities introduced Victoria Eaton to the Committee who is the Team Manager for Emergency Planning. She introduced the report and outlined that the structure of the team is an excellent example of partnership working with other councils and organisations. This, coupled with the recruitment of the final member of the professional team, enhances the Team's ability to provide best value and shared expertise. The Team is comprised of 5.2 full time equivalent posts (including a job share) with additional staff support provided from Public Health and the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (ESFRS).

28.2 The Committee asked how the size of the ESCC team compared with other local authorities, and about the balance between reactive and planned work of the Team. The Team Manager, Emergency Planning responded that West Sussex County Council's emergency planning team has 11 staff, but does not provide a service to District and Borough councils. Surrey County Council's emergency planning team has 14 staff.

28.3 The Team Manager, Emergency Planning explained that a large part of the Team's activity is working proactively with a range of partners in order to be prepared as much as possible for a range of incidents and emergencies. The Team also provide a leadership role in dealing with incidents and emergencies when they occur. The Lead Member for Communities added that their role also includes working with local businesses and communities on the importance of emergency planning.

28.4 The Committee enquired whether further funding or income was available from partners such as the ESFRS and Sussex Police. The Team Manager, Emergency Planning explained that the ESFRS makes a contribution in staff time by providing a member of staff who works with the Team. Sussex Police have their own team and therefore do not buy into the service. The Director of CET commented that the Police role is different in the event of an emergency incident as a first responder. The local authority's role is to provide recovery and resilience in getting communities back up and working after an incident.

28.5 The Committee asked if the Team give assistance to Parish councils in emergency planning, and whether they make a contribution to the Teams' budget. The Team Manager, Emergency Planning responded that the Team does provide assistance to Parish councils and has held a conference on emergency planning for Parish councils. There is a statutory obligation in the Civil Contingencies Act for ESCC, as a category 1 responder, which Parish councils do not have. Therefore ESCC does not charge for services to Parishes.

28.6 The work with Parishes provides self-help and guidance for Parishes in their work. This is to help build community resilience and raise awareness of that for which Parish councils are responsible. The Lead Member for Communities offered to circulate the presentation slides from the conference and will check to see if ESCC councillors were invited.

28.7 The Committee noted the net cost of the Service and asked if there was any scope for savings. The Head of Communities replied that the Team is as lean as possible and there is no scope to seek further income from the District and Borough councils. The Team is as efficient as possible and gets maximum benefit from joint working.

28.8 The Committee commented that a breakdown of the time spent on different categories of work the Team undertakes throughout year would be helpful, together with some case studies. The Team Manager, Emergency Planning outlined that the Team is working to raise awareness of emergency planning, and is happy to give an outline of the work that is being undertaken.

28.9 The Committee RESOLVED to have an update report on the activities and achievements of the Emergency Planning Team in a year's time.

29 GYPSY AND TRAVELLER TEAM UPDATE

29.1 Team Manager Gypsy and Travellers introduced the report and outlined that the Gypsy and Travellers Team undertakes a range of work to manage four permanent sites; the transit site at Bridies Tan; and unauthorised encampments in East Sussex. Partnership work with the Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) Traveller Team, West Sussex County Council and Sussex Police has been successful in reducing the number of unauthorised encampments. The Team has started working with Surrey County Council which does not have a transit site, which means they are experiencing a higher number of unauthorised encampments.

29.2 The Team undertakes liaison and support work with Traveller families to improve health and education outcomes, as well as working to build links and bridges between both Traveller and Settled communities. The Team also engages with site users at the transit site to ensure health or education needs are met and has a link with local doctor for health issues.

29.3 The Committee discussed the report and made a number of comments, which are summarised below.

Site provision

29.4 The Committee asked if ESCC has been able to influence the Borough and District councils to make additional site provision. The Team Manager Gypsy and Travellers outlined that he has quarterly meetings to discuss this issue with the Borough and District councils. At present there are 25 families that are on the waiting list for a permanent site. The transit site is resource for people moving through East Sussex, but it does not answer the need to create more permanent provision. The Traveller Team are managing sites to maximise occupancy and will fill any vacancies.

Budget

29.5 The net budget for the Service is £110,000 per annum, with income coming from two sources. Part of the income comes from contributions from the five Borough and District councils and Sussex Police. The remaining income is made up from fees and charges for pitches. There are limited opportunities to increase income and the Team would struggle if it were reduced in size. A reduction in staffing might also have an impact on rent collection and the financial contributions from partners.

29.6 The Committee noted that all the Borough and District councils are charged the same amount, so some are paying more per capita than others. The Committee asked if it is possible to change the basis of charging. The Director of CET responded that the service is not related to the population of a given area, and the service provided changes and fluctuates. It may, therefore, be inappropriate to introduce a more complicated charging mechanism.

29.7 The Committee RESOLVED to note the report and indicated that it would like to undertake a visit to the Traveller sites in future, if possible.

30 RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES (RPPR) FOR 2018/19

30.1 The Director of CET introduced the report and described the corporate position. For CET, the savings required for 2018/19 mainly come from libraries, grass cutting and waste services. The Committee has established a Review Board to examine the opportunities to make savings through the waste contract and the operation of the household waste recycling sites (HWRS). There is also a 'task and finish' Review Board looking at proposals for savings in highway grass cutting. The Director noted the important role Scrutiny has in shaping the savings proposals and examining impacts.

Savings plan

30.2 The Committee commented there were some uncertainties around the savings targets, and that it was not altogether clear whether all the proposed savings will be achieved. For the Libraries Transformation Programme the projected savings are £653,000 against a target of £750,000 if the draft Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy is implemented.

30.3 The Waste service has a savings target of £800,000. Work so far suggests some of the savings could be achieved from the review of the contract, and the balance from charging for non-household waste. There is some uncertainty around the potential income from charging, and it may be necessary to examine other ways of achieving savings.

30.4 The Director of CET responded that some uncertainty is inherent in the savings process corporately, but there is a need to include savings targets for planning purposes. If there is a shortfall, the department will have to look at how to plug any savings gap across the rest of the department before looking at the shortfall corporately.

Parking

30.5 The Committee asked if the parking surplus is an area that could be looked at in order to support the savings targets. The Director of CET outlined that the shortfall in funding for concessionary fares is already being met from the parking surplus. The Assistant Director, Operations added that the parking surplus will also have to pay for the replacement of parking meters. This work is out to tender at present and it is estimated that it will cost around £2 million over the next five years. The Committee requested further information of what is being proposed for the parking meter replacement programme. The Assistant Director, Operations agreed to provide the Committee with further details after the meeting.

30.6 The Committee asked if there is scope to review or increase parking charges. The Assistant Director, Operations provided some background to the current charging levels and reminded the Committee that ESCC could not set charges to make a profit. The County Council must use any surplus over and above operating costs for transport related schemes. He explained that ESCC was also discussing the introduction of civil parking enforcement schemes with Wealden and Rother District Councils.

Savings Requirements for Future Years

30.7 The Director of CET explained that the department may need to find a further £1 million to £1.5 million of savings in future years. It is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve further savings. The Committee discussed the potential savings requirement for 2019/20 and 2020/21 and other areas that could be considered for savings.

30.8 The corporate income generation group has examined areas where further income could be generated. The department currently generates income from planning fees, environmental advice and other fees or charges. Staff are being invited to make suggestions through the "My Bright Idea" campaign on how further income or savings can be achieved. One of the challenges is how ESCC commercialises opportunities. The Spaces programme has also looked at how the shared use of public buildings can be utilised to achieve savings (e.g. the Registration Service in Hastings re-locating to Hastings Town Hall).

30.9 The Committee noted that it may have to look at the level of service in the future, and it may not be possible to keep teams fully staffed. Therefore, it is important for the Committee to understand what services are delivered and the impact of reducing resources for particular teams (e.g. Emergency Planning has additional pressures from counter terrorism and other areas).

30.10 The Lead Member for Communities commented that Officers need to give realistic targets and that none of the solutions may be palatable. There is a need to consult and go through statutory processes when making changes to services. Wealden and Rother may join the civil parking enforcement scheme which may have an impact. He was confident that the department will achieve the savings for this year, but is not so confident about future years which will be more difficult.

Areas of Search

30.11 The Committee asked the Director of CET if there are further areas which the ET&E Scrutiny Committee should be considering for review. The Director of CET outlined the areas of expenditure where the Committee could examine the possibility for further savings in its future work.

- Highways – are there other areas where spending could be reduced/stopped.
- Concessionary fares – the Committee could look at eligibility.
- Public Transport – still has subsidised services. It may be necessary to commercialise or reduce subsidised bus routes.
- Road Safety – School Crossing Patrols are not statutory and there may be other areas of saving.

30.12 The Committee RESOLVED to note the report and the future areas of search for savings.

31 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Work programme

31.1 The Committee discussed the work that was ongoing with Review Boards examining grass cutting savings, the waste service review and Libraries. Highways site visits were also taking place. The Committee agreed that the Review Boards could make comments on the savings proposals directly to Cabinet if necessary.

31.2 In the context of further reviews, it was agreed that a site visit to the Travellers sites to see how the service is being operated would be helpful. The Committee noted that it is unsighted on Business Operations and it would be helpful to know more about how Orbis is contributing to the corporate savings targets. The Director of CET responded that another Scrutiny Committee will be looking at these issues.

Review of Scrutiny

31.3 The Senior Democratic Services Advisor outlined the work that is underway to review scrutiny arrangements in the Council and the opportunity for all Councillors to contribute to the process. The Lead Member for Communities outlined the difficulties for his portfolio and opportunities for cross cutting reviews e.g. community safety. He reiterated the support there is to enable scrutiny to look at detailed evidence. The review of scrutiny arrangements will also look at how other councils organise scrutiny work and the way the Local Government Association recommends scrutiny is undertaken.

32 FORWARD PLAN

32.1 The Committee RESOLVED to note the Forward Plan.

33 ANY OTHER ITEMS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED UNDER AGENDA ITEM 4

33.1 There were none.

The meeting ended at 12.52 pm.

Councillor Richard Stogdon
Chair