

SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES AND PLACE COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee held in the Luttrell Room - County Hall, Taunton, on Tuesday 24 April 2018 at 10.00 am

Present: Cllr T Lock (Chairman), Cllr M Lewis (Vice-Chair), Cllr T Napper, Cllr A Wedderkopp, Cllr B Filmer, Cllr John Hunt, Cllr J Thorne and Cllr G Noel

Other Members present: Cllr C Aparicio Paul, Cllr S Coles, Cllr H Davies, Cllr A Groskop, Cllr D Hall, Cllr L Leyshon, Cllr J Lock, Cllr T Munt, Cllr L Redman and Cllr J Woodman

Apologies for absence: Cllr P Ham

78 **Declarations of Interest** - Agenda Item 2

There were no declarations of interest.

79 **Minutes from the previous meeting held on 06 March 2018** - Agenda Item 3

The minutes of the meeting on 06 March 2018 were accepted as being accurate by the Committee.

80 **Public Question Time** - Agenda Item 4

There were 3 Public Questions with regard to Item 6.

Trevor Tuck, Vice- Chairman, Sparkford Parish Council

Sparkford Parish Council has concerns over the design of the Hazelgrove Junction and associated slip roads for the east and west bound carriageways of the A303, and the raising of the A303 on an embankment through Hazelgrove Park to enable an under pass to be built to access and egress the east bound carriageway of the A303.

The design and layout of the Hazelgrove Junction is crucial to make access and egress from the A303 easily accessible and not protracted. At present, we have speeding traffic through the High Street, especially when the A303 is congested, to gain access to the east bound carriageway via the A359 slip road at Sparkford Sawmills rather than negotiating a very congested Hazelgrove round-a-bout.

We wish to ensure the long term future of Sparkford Services who employ over 100 staff between the Petrol Station and the restaurant. The Petrol station also provides a Spar shop which is the only shop in the village of Sparkford.

We also have concerns over noise levels if the A303 is constructed on an embankment as there is very little natural screening to the south of the proposed embankment.

Following a joint letter sent by West Camel, Queen Camel and Sparkford

Parish Councils to Highways England we wish to be given the opportunity of viewing and commenting on the improvement scheme before the development consent order (DCO) is submitted.

John Brendon, Chairman, Queen Camel PC

General support for A303 dualling and the efforts by SCC to make sure there is sound design and implementation of this section of the improvement with points of emphasis on:

1. Sharing SCC's concerns on junctions
2. Share West Camel's concerns regarding risk of more traffic, but other parishes must not lose benefits
3. Consider retaining a parallel old A303 local road to help local and NMU traffic
4. Need for a very rigorous traffic management measures during construction

Need for open dialogue in remaining stages of planning so that local issues are mitigated and opportunities maximised in the DCO.

Barry Gadsen

- 1) Will SCC support the proposal of West Camel Parish Council for a local roadrunning alongside the proposed A303 as outlined in the WCPC A303consultation response and support us to ensure that junction design doesnot encourage the fast moving through-traffic to use unclassified roadsthrough West Camel village, as per the current proposal.
- 2) The document from Mike O'Dowd Jones is comprehensive, but surely somewhere near the top of the SCC's concern list should be to consider thefuture impact on local roads and communities of the upgrade no matter how many junctions are provided at the start.

The members of the public received a brief verbal response from the Strategic Commissioning Manager – Highways and Transport and will receive a written response.

81 Local Transport Plan (LTP) Implementation Plan - Agenda Item 5

The Committee received a report outlining the draft Local Transport Plan (LTP) Implementation Plan 2018/19. Statutory requirements for transport plans require a long-term Local Transport Plan Strategy complemented by shorter term LTP Implementation plans which set out how funds will be used to implement schemes on the ground.

In March 2011, Somerset County Council (SCC) adopted its current LTP covering the period from 2011 to 2026. The Committee was asked for their views on the draft LTP Implementation Plan 2018/19 prior to it being taken to Cabinet in May. The document is a statutory requirement of the LTP process

and replaces the current plan that covered until the end of 2017. The plan is short term (2 years), to allow a review of the longer-term LTP Strategy during its implementation period.

The Implementation plan includes an update on progress since 2013, delivery against key priorities and gives an update on Major Schemes. The document also looks at how the Council might make the best of the opportunities currently available, what we plan to deliver in the near future, and at the challenges and risks involved. It was highlighted to members that £1.5m has been allocated to Small Improvement Schemes.

Full consultation was undertaken for the LTP strategy when it was developed and it is intended that further consultation will be undertaken next year as part of the planned refresh of the long-term LTP Strategy.

Committee Members expressed concern over the lack of funds over the lack of funds available for the central Somerset areas, particularly Glastonbury, Street & Frome. Members reported transport problems and were concerned that these areas were not benefitting from the infrastructure mitigation provided through the Hinkley Point C project. Members were reassured that central Somerset is a key area for SCC to bid for additional government funding and that all opportunities will be explored. Routes in those areas will be improved should funding arise but funding mechanisms recently have favoured larger urban areas. The Small Improvement Scheme will also provide opportunities and conversations are on-going with developers around Section 106 agreements supporting local road networks. If there is a strong case that Hinkley Point C has had a significant impact in an area, there is a route for making a case to channel funds into mitigating those problems.

There was a lengthy discussion about potholes and it was clarified that there is no intention to change the current intervention methods used. However, if a number of defects emerge the route will be looked at carefully and alternative treatments considered in order to reduce repeat problems. Members were encouraged to report any pothole defects so that these can be followed up with the contractor.

Members questioned whether there was sufficient resources and capacity to deliver the major projects. Capacity has been identified as a risk and there are joint discussions taking place between SCC and District Councils about how to structure resources. However, SCC is confident that it will be able to deliver and has no major concerns over non-delivery.

Members registered their on-going support for the Small Improvement Scheme which is considered to be very successful and well-received by residents. It was clarified that there are already enough schemes for a 3 year programme so it is unlikely that a new window for submissions will be opened over the next two to three years.

It was clarified that CIL funds are managed by District Councils and that SCC understands that there is around £2.5m in the Taunton Deane Borough Council pot. There is no agreement yet on how this will be spent and there is on-going dialogue on the governance arrangements around this. The funds may be

aligned to other developer funding pots but this will be addressed on a case-by-case basis as agreements are arranged. It is a statutory requirement for district councils to publish CIL figures.

A member raised concern over damage to the railway in West Somerset. It was confirmed that the Blue Anchor to Watchet route is at risk of coastal erosion. A Group is assessing and reviewing the route and the risks associated with this, including the railway. West Somerset District council are chairing this Group.

The Committee noted the report and the Major Schemes in place but expressed concern about funding for future schemes and about the resources of the authority to deliver the Schemes.

82 A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Response to Statutory Consultation - Agenda Item 6

The Committee received a report and presentation regarding the SCC response to the Highways England (HE) public consultation on the proposed A303 Sparkford to Ilchester dual carriageway improvement scheme. The public consultation precedes the formal process of seeking consent to construct. There is a strong business case as to the benefits of the scheme for the economic growth of the south West and the UK, increasing safety and improving connectivity and resilience.

As a nationally significant infrastructure project, the scheme will be dealt with under the Development Consent Order (DCO) process. The Committee were informed that the scheme will be delivered and operated by HE. SCC is a statutory consultee and has a limited role in the process. The consultation provides the last opportunity to influence the design of the scheme before it is submitted for DCO. Once in DCO it is difficult to vary.

The Committee heard that the key concerns raised by SCC in its response broadly echo those of the community with some concerns regarding safety and some regarding the traffic impact and lack of evidence based traffic modelling. HE are continuing to evolve the technical design and are in on-going dialogue with SCC. SCC have asked HE to take steps to mitigate the impact on local communities and have also asked for a mechanism for on-going dialogue with those communities directly affected. No commitment regarding this has been received from HE to date.

Members expressed concern over the lack of information provided by HE and questioned whether this is normal practice. This is a continuing concern and there is a similar picture on a national level. There are tensions between DCO applications and the need for communities to be well-informed. SCC continues to lobby about this and we have informed HE that we need more information earlier in the process.

Members raised the need to consider local road networks as well as highways. It was clarified that HE is trying to create expressways for high volume traffic and is not necessarily focussed on the local road network.

There was also concern expressed over lengthy disruption and negative impact on local communities. It was suggested that a liaison officer could be used to engage with local communities. There was support for the suggestion of Community Forums so long as they have the ability to influence decisions.

The Committee noted the report.

83 **Award of Contract for the provision of Temporary Labour - Agenda Item 7**

The Committee received a report outlining the proposal to award the contract for the provision of temporary labour to SCC.

The current contract is due to expire in December 2018 and a comprehensive review of the options available for supplying a cost-effective service for delivering temporary labour has been conducted in consultation with current users.

The current contract is with Reed and is provided via a master vendor solution and that model provides benefits to SCC through a single point of contact for the authority, reduced supplier margins, increased contract governance, improved performance of the supplier, transparent management information and process efficiencies in terms of the end to end booking process and P2P process.

The contract categorises temporary labour into a number of distinct groups including Admin & Clerical, Engineering & Surveying, HR, IT, Management, Procurement, Social & Healthcare (qualified and non-qualified)

Reed's agency fee within the current contract is charged according to a pre-determined rate for each category as a fixed £ per hour worked by the candidate which is aligned to SCC Spinal Column Points. Under MSTAR2 the rates remain as a fixed £ per hour but vary by wage rates within bands, job category and whether the worker is supplied from Reed's own workers or has been sourced from a third party through Reed as managed vendor.

There are no current concerns regarding the service from Reed. There have been difficulties at times in securing sufficient acceptable Qualified Social Work candidates. Reed have augmented their second tier support suppliers in an effort to resolve this but it is known that this is a marketplace with a high demand at the moment and resource is scarce within the region.

The Committee were informed that spend on temporary labour is reducing and this reduction is expected to increase. Temporary Labour adds flexibility to the workforce but is generally more expensive than the overall cost of a permanent employee. As an example, a temporary social worker costs c£80k pa whilst a permanent employee would be c£60k pa. There is a desire to reduce the reliance on temporary staff in this area and move to a permanent workforce but there is a shortage of supply in the region which impacts on our ability to transition workers to permanent.

The Committee questioned whether the social worker recruitment service could be provided in-house but it was clarified that this would not be cost effective. SCC has a number of graduates qualifying in the autumn so it is anticipated that the number of permanent social workers will increase which will in turn decrease the need for temporary social workers.

Members questioned what was being done to improve social worker retention and were reassured that there has been a big focus on this. Surgeries have been held to talk to staff at an early stage and discuss why people joined and why people might wish to leave. It is recognised that there has been increased pressure to address the Ofsted judgement but that feedback received suggests that social worker morale has improved.

The Committee noted the report but requested an interim report 12 months after the start of the new contract to review performance and staff morale.

84 Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee Work Programme - Agenda Item 8

The Committee considered and noted the Council's Forward Plan of proposed key decisions.

Following debate, the Committee requested the following addition to the work programme:

- An interim report to review the performance of the Temporary Labour Contract and impact on staff moral (Dec 2019, 12 months from start of contract)
- Hinkley Point C update (Sept)
- County Farms Disposals update
- Registration Service (July/Sept)

85 Any other urgent items of business - Agenda Item 9

A Committee Member asked that abbreviations and acronyms be expanded in future reports.

(The meeting ended at 12.30 pm)

CHAIRMAN