

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 22 May 2018 at 10.00 am

Present: Cllr M Lewis (Vice-Chair), Cllr P Ham, Cllr B Filmer, Cllr John Hunt, Cllr J Thorne, Cllr G Noel, Cllr S Coles, Cllr A Groskop and Cllr L Leyshon

Other Members present:

Apologies for absence: Cllr T Lock, Cllr T Napper and Cllr A Wedderkopp

86 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chair of the Committee welcomed all those present to the meeting and paid tribute to her predecessor Cllr T Lock who had Chaired the Committee since 2013, noting that he would be a hard act to follow.

87 Minutes from the previous meeting held on 24 April 2018 - Agenda Item 3

The minutes of the meeting on 24 April 2018 were accepted as being accurate by the Committee.

88 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

There were no members of the public present, and hence no questions asked, statements/comments made or petitions presented.

89 SCC Draft Business Plan - Agenda Item 5

The Committee received a report outlining the Council's Draft Business Plan for 2018 which set out what the Council would aim to do over the coming year with its partners and communities to deliver the Council's Vision in the most efficient way possible for Somerset's taxpayers.

The Committee also benefited from a presentation of the Business Plan which showed how it would look 'on-line' as it would be web-based. It was noted that the Business Plan (attached to the report) was a 'text' version rather than a proposed design for a completed Plan.

It was explained that the Business Plan contains 4 'strategic outcomes' that translated the Council Vision. Beneath each strategic outcome were 4 key priorities for the Council and each priority was proposed to be delivered by a range of activities.

Members noted the Business Plan had been designed to provide information to the public, Councillors, partners and stakeholders on the business of the Council. Also it would be useful to staff in service planning, performance management and financial management. The interactive website would allow users to read the Plan but also 'click through' to additional information and

resources, showing how priorities and activities link together and provide performance information. It was described as being the equivalent as a Wikipedia for Somerset.

There was a discussion of the report and the following points were made by the Committee:

All of Somerset be included in the Plan/Vision, both geographically and by community through engaging with all Parish/Town/Village Councils;

Consideration be given to ensuring Hubs were available for people to be able to access the Plan, such as Libraries;

Help be available to ensure that all Somerset residents who wished to could access the Plan 'on-line';

It was suggested that the draft website and its contents and navigation were reviewed by people not familiar with the Council to ensure it was user friendly;

Thought be given to listing/naming the Council's various partners, as there were numerous references in the Plan to 'partners';

It was suggested that thought be given to ensure the final Plan/Vision reflected appropriately the Council's parlous financial situation as this appeared toward the end of text version of the Plan.

90 **Passenger Transport Strategy - Agenda Item 6**

The Committee considered this report which explained the current Passenger Transport Strategy was developed as part of the Local Transport Plan for Somerset (2011-2026) and known as the 'Future Transport Plan'. It was noted that the Plan had been developed to be a living document and updated and reviewed when needed.

The report, with the revised draft Passenger Transport Strategy 2018 to 2026, attached as Appendix A, asked for the Committee's views before the public consultation. Developed at a time of severe financial restraint and economic uncertainty, the draft strategy set out the issues that have influenced the present service and proposed an outline strategy for the future direction of service delivery.

It was explained that it would also provide guidance for developers and assist the Council in assessing various schemes and also be used to inform the Council's funding bids to Central Government, and other relevant funding opportunities and to inform conversations with government departments, operators and other stakeholders about the issues faced in Somerset. Also and importantly it would inform residents of Somerset of the strategic direction for public transport in Somerset.

There was a thorough discussion of the report, with Members making observations about the draft Plan and also asking question to which answers were provided. Cllr Munt asked about changes to Section 19 permits and the possible impact on Mendip Community Transport and Cllr J Lock asked about the changes to bus subsidies and the level of services provided since 2009 and both were promised written responses.

The Committee accepted the draft report and suggested that it would be important for Officers to ensure that in development areas consideration be

given to sustainable transport, particularly with regards to enabling communities to access education, employment and health settings. Members welcomed the draft Plan and noted the difficulties in a County with an aging population and limited resources to ensure a balance between reducing urban congestion and tackling issues related to rurality.

91 Highways Maintenance Contract - Agenda Item 7

The Committee received a very thorough presentation on the Highways Maintenance Contract that had come in to effect from 1 April 2017. It was noted that contract governance meetings were held every month to ensure good progress was maintained and the 23 key performance indicators and the 28 quality performance objectives were being achieved and delivered.

It was noted that over the first year of the contract the following milestones had been reached, through capital funding: Principal resurfacing - £2,700,000 - 35 schemes; Non-Princ - £2,200,000 – 85 schemes; Drainage Schemes - £1,700,000 – 69 schemes; Footway Schemes - £1,500,000 – 50 schemes; Earthworks – £300,000 – 11 schemes; Surface Dressing - £8,000,000; SRA Schemes £392,000; and, Surface Treatments - £250,000.

With regards to routine and environmental maintenance it was stated that the £351,000 planned verge cutting programme had been completed on schedule as had the planned noxious and invasive weed treatment and hedge trimming programmes. With regards to the £392,000 gully cleansing programme it was noted that the 66,000 plus gullies had been cleaned.

It was noted that the Winter Service had also had a higher than normal number of actions totalling 82 which was much higher than the long term average of 65, the previous year had seen only 52 actions. It was also noted, due to the prolonged period of cold weather experienced in Somerset that overall salt usage had exceeded 10,000 tonnes compared the stockpile of 6,850 tonnes.

The Committee responded to the presentation and during the discussion a number of Points were made, issues raised and/or questions asked/answered including: the use of Twitter to provide updates, particularly during the period of bad weather was welcomed and praised; the social value plan and the care leavers programme were also praised and welcomed and it was noted that there potential permanent placements at the end of the programme; the website was praised for the efficient way it allowed for potholes to be reported as was the subsequent swift response to those requests, it was noted that the Somerset River Authority had requested more frequent maintenance work and had paid for this to be completed at the mid-point of the annual work programmed; there would be a reviewed undertaken over the summer months to review the Winter Service so any learning could be used to inform and improve the service provided next year.

The update was accepted and it was suggested that work continue with farmers and those in rural areas to help build on existing good relationships.

92 Parking Services Update - Agenda Item 8

The Committee received a report that provided an update on the insourcing of the back office notice processing and associated services, an update on the extension of the Enforcement Services contract with NSL, an update on the Parking Services Budget, an update following the introduction of the revised resident parking policy, and also future initiatives.

It was reported that the parking contract that commenced in June 2012 for an initial period of 5 years to June 2017 contained options for extensions and due to the performance of the appointed contractor NSL, negotiations concluded with an agreement to extend the contract for a further two years. It was noted that the negotiations had resulted in a number of key outcomes: relocation of the Taunton operational base to Taunton library; the agreement of a discounted sum in respect of amortised the original set up costs incurred by NSL; an increase in the level enforcement to improve coverage across the County; and, the recruitment of home deployed civil enforcement officers.

In response to a question it was stated that overall the home deployment had been considered a success and this innovation has been recognised by being shortlisted in the Parking Innovation category of the British Parking Awards 2018. The home deployed CEO's and an increase in annual hours of deployment had resulted in improved coverage across the County with activity remaining in line with expectations.

There was a discussion about the insourcing of back office processing and this had delivered a number of benefits to customers, members of the public and residents. It was noted that although the average length of telephone calls had increased the service provided had improved as had correspondence; whilst the total number of penalties (including bus gates) had increased the trend for correspondence in relation to correspondence levels has decreased. Regular checks of correspondence had identified the standard of correspondence to be at the required level and in accordance with the published guidelines.

It was reported that legislation required that all income was to be used for parking related activities and that any surplus not required for such matters could only be used for traffic or transport related initiatives. The surplus in respect of 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 had been allocated towards traffic management initiatives and reinvested into the service. It was noted that the overall NSL contract cost had not reduced on a "like for like" basis as the extension discussions had agreed the overall level of chargeable enforcement (circa 7,000) would be increased, also the additional enforcement expenditure had been offset by increased revenues during the financial year 2017/2018.

It was stated that following the publication of the revised resident parking policy a number of requests had been received both direct from residents and with consultation with Members and the revised procedures were working smoothly. The update and report were accepted.

93 Connecting Devon & Somerset Broadband Programme Update - Agenda Item 9

The Committee agreed, due to time constraints, to defer consideration of this information report to a future meeting.

94 **Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee Work Programme - Agenda Item 10**

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

The Committee considered and noted its own work programme of future agenda items and the Chair and Vice Chair undertook to meet with the Scrutiny Manager to reconsider agenda planning/meeting workloads.

95 **Any other urgent items of business - Agenda Item 11**

The Chair invited the Scrutiny Manager to invite expressions of interest from Members for the Joint Scrutiny of both the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) and the Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP).

It was agreed that:

Cllr Lewis and Cllr Leyshon would sit on the SWP Scrutiny Panel and, Cllr Groskop and Cllr John Hunt would sit on the SRA Scrutiny Panel.

In addition Cllr Noel volunteered to attend the Joint Scrutiny meeting regarding the Local Enterprise Partnership on Wednesday 30 May in Devon.

(The meeting ended at 1.31 pm)

CHAIRMAN