
SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES AND PLACE COMMITTEE SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

19 June 2018
(Published on 21 June 2018)

Declarations of Interest - Agenda item 2	Action
There were no declarations of interest.	
Minutes from the previous meeting held on 22 May 2018 - Agenda item 3	Action
<p>It was agreed that Minute 88 would be amended to reflect that there were members of the public present although no public questions were asked.</p> <p>With the exception of this change, the minutes of the meeting on 22 May 2018 were accepted as being accurate by the Committee.</p>	
Public Question Time - Agenda item 4	Action
<p>There were two public questions regarding Item 5.</p> <p>Dr Clive Wall, Stawley Parish Council The information provided by CDS and Gigaclear is poor and inconsistent. It lacks clarity and the necessary detail to enable specific householders and businesses to establish if, when and how they will receive faster broadband, including whether it will be via FTTP or another method (e.g. microwave). The situation is made worse by the fact that communication with these two bodies by individual members of the public is virtually impossible and the role of ISP's confusing. Both CDS and Gigaclear must be forced to make themselves and their detailed plans properly available to the public, and in this context I suggest (as a Parish Councillor) that CDS actively makes use of the local council structure to disseminate specific local information. I urge the Scrutiny Committee to ensure that this happens with immediate effect.</p> <p>Maurice Stanbury</p> <p>My own experience of attempting to access information on the broadband upgrade programme echoes that of Dr Wall – with broadband speeds of significantly less than 1 mb/s in Kittisford, a hamlet in Stawley parish, the need is great. However, when interrogated the Gigabyte post code checker has provided conflicting information, even now it states the the system is in the design stage, which can mean anything or nothing, and gives no specific dates on installation and commissioning.</p>	

<p>However, as a result of recent contact with Katriona Lovelock we have been provided with specific installation and commissioning dates. Clearly the information is there but has not been made generally available. I find it ironic that a programme intended to improve communication fails in meeting it's very own objectives.</p> <p>I would be pleased to add detail to that statement if requested, outside of this meeting.</p> <p>A short verbal response was given thanking the members of the public for attending and for their feedback. It was confirmed that a meeting has been arranged to discuss this in more detail and this will then be followed by a formal, written response.</p>	
<p>Connecting Devon & Somerset Broadband Programme update - Agenda item 5</p>	<p>Action</p>
<p>The Committee considered this report which provided an update on the Connecting Devon & Somerset (CDS) Broadband Programme.</p> <p>The report highlighted that Phase 1 of the Programme has concluded and slightly exceeded its targets. Construction for the Phase 2 Extension Programme for Exmoor and Dartmoor has now been completed and the number of premises able to connect is expected to meet the contractual targets.</p> <p>Members were informed that the procurement for the Phase 2 SEP contract is progressing following a delay caused by the receipt of additional funding. There have been other difficulties with the mobilisation of this contract such as the compulsory liquidation of the construction company Carillion, however, additional resource has now been sourced.</p> <p>The voucher scheme is currently paused whilst changes to contracts are implemented and it is anticipated that this scheme will re-open over the summer.</p> <p>Whilst there has been significant investment in broadband services there are still premises that do not have a satisfactory broadband service. These premises are generally the more remote and difficult to reach given current technology constraints. Further funding will be required, both capital to build the infrastructure and revenue to pay for technical, project management and officer support. The service is currently lobbying to secure additional funding but also seeking to work with commercial and community partners to find alternative solutions.</p> <p>The Committee discussed: problems with accessing information; whether it is realistic to expect broadband to be a universal service; the importance of broadband service to rural businesses and residents; and alternative rural solutions such as satellite.</p>	

<p>The Committee noted the report.</p>	
<p>South West Heritage Trust Annual Report - Agenda item 6</p> <p>The Committee received a report and presentation which provided an update on the South West Heritage Trust following its third year of operation.</p> <p>The report highlights the successful delivery of Agreed Activities specified within the Grant Agreement to ensure that Somerset's rich heritage is better protected, celebrated and made available as well as demonstrating financial savings to Somerset County Council.</p> <p>The Chief Executive of the Trust highlighted that the organisation depends on a large number of volunteers to make the service possible. The Trust is a contemporary organisation that looks to the past to inspire the future and continually strives to ensure that young people engage with its provision.</p> <p>The Committee discussed: decreasing number of children attending events; future funding; the future plans for Castle Green in Taunton and the recent purchase of the Roman Lead Ingot.</p> <p>The Committee noted the report.</p>	<p>Action</p>
<p>Revenue Budget Monitoring Report Q4 2017/18 - Agenda item 7</p> <p>The Committee received this report which outlined the actual expenditure (or Outturn) compared with the Revenue Budget for the 2017/18 year, and the consequent effect on the Council's levels of reserves. The report also detailed under or overspend at each service level, individual schools and early years providers balances and the current debt position by service area.</p> <p>The Authority's outturn shows an overspend of £2.180m when compared to the Revenue Budget which represents 0.70% of budget. In itself this is a significant achievement given the pressures on budgets and the known specific pressure within Children's Social Care. The majority of Council services have, therefore, either stayed within budget or delivered an underspend. However, the large variance in one area (Children's Services) is clearly a key concern and the Peer Review work highlighted what is a number one priority for the Council in addressing the current and future budgets for Children's Social Care. The Council as a whole is focussed on identifying, with the Local Government Association's assistance, the appropriate level of budget for the service at the same time as analysing where we can reduce costs safely.</p> <p>The Council is working with external support from consultants to assess</p>	<p>Action</p>

<p>what the base budget for Children's Services should be.</p> <p>The Committee discussed: levels of reserves; aged debt; school transport legislation; a new budget for children's services; 3rd part spending; and the freezing and deleting of job posts.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Director of Finance and Performance for all of his hard work and support for the Committee and wished him success for the future. The Committee noted the report.</p>	
<p>Corporate Performance Monitoring Report Q4 2017/18 - Agenda item 8</p>	<p>Action</p>
<p>The Committee considered this report which provided an update on performance across the organisation.</p> <p>The report summarised that there is one red segment (C4) and one segment with a declining performance (C1). 50% of objectives are green, 42% are amber and 8% are red. The report was presented to Cabinet on 12 February 2018.</p> <p>The Committee discussed those segments which fell under the Committee's remit. Regarding C1, the Committee were informed that the Contact Centre had previously operated under a corporate commercial process with matching KPI's. The Contact Centre has been transformed to operate in a very different way and these KPI's are now incompatible resulting in the service being judged to be declining in performance. A new set of suitable performance indicators covering quality, satisfaction and timeliness of delivery will be introduced for the new reporting period.</p> <p>Changes to the blue badge application system were clarified and the Committee noted that that future reports will be presented in a new format which should enable more timely reporting of performance.</p> <p>The Committee noted the report.</p> <p>The Committee noted the report.</p>	
<p>Consultation on Draft Air Quality Strategy - Agenda item 9</p>	<p>Action</p>
<p>The Committee considered this report which outlined a proposal for public consultation of a draft Air Quality Strategy for Somerset.</p> <p>The Strategy has been drafted by the multi-agency Somerset Air Quality Steering Group which includes all five district councils as well as SCC. The document identifies traffic pollution as the only major air quality</p>	

concern in the county, and in particular in major urban areas. It proposes several measures to address this concern in the context of the current resource constrained environment including:

- Develop a Somerset Air Quality website as a high-quality resource providing information and guidance to all interested parties on addressing air quality, including the public, fleet operators, employers, public authorities, developers, transport operators and the media. The intention here is to provide an authoritative information resource, utilising links to existing third-party websites as much as possible, so as not to duplicate effort.
- Application of EPUK guidance “Land Use and Development Control: Planning for Air Quality” consistently in relation to large developments and cumulative impact. The intention here is to provide consistency in approach across the county, providing a degree of certainty for both planners and developers as to when air quality impact assessments will be required.
- Consider using financial, procurement, and regulatory mechanisms to encourage and enable transition to less polluting vehicle types across all fleets and for employees. This recommendation recognises the need to use business-as-usual mechanisms as an opportunity to influence vehicle choice and fleet composition.
- Bring forward proposals for monitoring PM2.5* particle (black carbon) pollution, in order to gain an understanding of where this is problematic in the county. There is a poor understanding of fine particle pollution due to a lack of monitoring to date. The equipment required is not expected to cost more than £5,000 between the partners, if approved. (*PM_{2.5} is a technical term for very fine particles that can pass from the air breathed into the bloodstream, sometimes called black carbon. These particles can be carried deep into the lungs where they can cause inflammation and a worsening of heart and lung diseases).

It was confirmed that all other areas of Somerset are well below the legal limits and it was clarified that issues such as wood dust, lorry movements and food smells from factories are not covered by the Strategy. Instead these are local nuisance issues that should be addressed through District Councils and the environment Agency.

The Committee discussed: the impact of traffic flow; the need to provide the infrastructure to support zero emissions vehicles; the impact of wood burning stoves.

The Committee noted the report and supported the proposal to commence a public consultation. They recommended that further explanation was added to make it clear that the Air Quality Strategy does not cover issues such as wood dust and food smells.

Property Disposals update - Agenda item 10

Action

<p>The Committee considered this report which provided an update of the Council's disposal programme to include the sales of parts of the County Farm Estate.</p> <p>Property disposals in the last financial year amounted to capital receipts of approximately £7.7M. In the last 10 years the Estates team have raised £72M in capital receipts. Once a property is identified as surplus, consideration will be given to the best mode of sale. Many disposals are dealt with each year ranging from relatively simple sales of land to highly complicated developments. Each disposal is considered to achieve best consideration in the light of market factors. The preferred method of sale is by auction as this sets the time parameters and the basis of which we are prepared to sell. However, there are some properties that are not suited to auction, perhaps because we have identified a special purchaser in which case we would conclude a sale by negotiation/private treaty. It was confirmed that where sales take place via auction, local searches are carried out in advance.</p> <p>Members heard that SCC have every little investment properties and property rentals are usually from those providing a commissioned service. It was clarified that a list of Council owned assets is available on the SCC website.</p> <p>It was confirmed that discounted sales have only been granted to tenants with a Farm Tenancy Agreement in place and the maximum discount is 20%. With regard to permitted development rights, it was clarified that SCC aims to ensure it captures any rise in value usually through the use of covenants.</p> <p>Following a vote, the Committee passed a motion to move into confidential session to discuss Appendix B.</p> <p>The Committee noted the report.</p>	
<p>Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee Work Programme - Agenda item 11</p>	<p>Action</p>
<p>The Committee considered and noted the Council's Forward Plan of proposed key decisions.</p> <p>In considering the forward programme, concern was expressed over the length of future agendas. Following discussion it was agreed that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Governance Manager would work with the Chair to re-prioritise planned agenda items • Officers would be asked to limit the time of their presentations • Members would email officers outside of the meeting regarding any local or minor queries • Consideration would be given to adding an additional meeting per 	

<p>year to supplement the august recess</p> <p>Following debate, the Committee requested the following addition to the work programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDS update – 13 Nov 	
<p>Any other urgent items of business - Agenda item 12</p>	<p>Action</p>
<p>The Chair reminded Committee Members that the July meeting will be held in the Taunton Library Meeting Room.</p>	