![Somerset Council logo]

Notice of Meeting of

# SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - CLIMATE AND PLACE

# Wednesday, 17 May 2023 at 10.00 am

# Luttrell Room - County Hall, Taunton TA1 4DY

To: The members of the Scrutiny Committee - Climate and Place

Chair:          Councillor Martin Dimery
Vice-chair:     Councillor Adam Boyden

| | |
|---|---|
| Councillor Alan Bradford | Councillor Bente Height |
| Councillor Edric Hobbs | Councillor Henry Hobhouse |
| Councillor Marcus Kravis | Councillor Dave Mansell |
| Councillor Matthew Martin | Councillor Harry Munt |
| Councillor Connor Payne | Councillor Tom Power |
| Councillor Alex Wiltshire | |

---

For further information about the meeting, including how to join the meeting virtually, please contact Democratic Services democraticservicesteam@somerset.gov.uk.

All members of the public are welcome to attend our meetings and ask questions or make a statement **by giving advance notice** in writing or by e-mail to the Monitoring Officer at email: democraticservicesteam@somerset.gov.uk by **5pm on Thursday, 11 May 2023**.

This meeting will be open to the public and press, subject to the passing of any resolution under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A: Access to Information.

The meeting will be webcast and an audio recording made.

Issued by (the Proper Officer) on Tuesday, 9 May 2023

# AGENDA

**Scrutiny Committee - Climate and Place - 10.00 am Wednesday, 17 May 2023**

**6      Infrastructure and Transport: Highways Service Responsiveness update (Pages 5 - 8)**

Members are asked to consider and comment on a verbal update and presentation from Interim Deputy Director, ECI Operations.

This page is intentionally left blank

Somerset Council
Scrutiny Committee
– 17th May 2023

Review of Highways and Transport Services Communication Interfaces and Service Responsiveness
Lead Officer: Mickey Green
Author: David Carter
Contact Details: David.Carter@somerset.gov.uk
Executive Lead Member: Councillor Martin Dimery
Division / Local Member: N/A

## 1.    Summary

**1.1.** A priority for the new Somerset Council (and, in particular, the new Climate and Place Directorate) is to improve the responsiveness of the Highways and Transport Service, recognising that responsiveness to some enquiries has been a cause of concern for the public and members.

**1.2.** Further phases of work will look at how we can approach the expectation gap (what we can afford vs what the public/communities want) but we believe that tackling responsiveness is the right place to focus first.

**1.3.** The public (and parish councils and local members) have the right to expect prompt answers to queries and requests for service, and even if the answer is not always what they want to hear, we should explain the reason for that clearly.

## 2.    Issues for Consideration / Recommendations

**2.1.** The desired outcomes (better Member and Public satisfaction) are straightforward, but the reasons for the issues, both perceived and actual, are more complex.

**2.2.** We are therefore recommending that the Climate and Place Scrutiny Committee endorse the establishment of a task and finish group to consider the concerns of Elected Members and the public to better inform a service redesign.

## 3.    Background

### 3.1.    Suggested Work/Enquiry for the Task and Finish Group

To seek evidence of the experience of the responsiveness of Highways, Traffic and Transport Services from those raising enquiries and interfacing with the services; public, elected members and businesses in Somerset and Business Support staff (who operate the front end of the enquiries process) to be able to frame the current user/customer experience.

**3.2.** It will be important to elicit both factual evidence and general sentiment as the reputation of services needs to be restored through positive interaction and it matters as much what people think about the services from word of mouth whether they have directly used them or not.

**3.3.** Business Support can provide considerable data insights into the level and type of correspondence and the current response rates to enquiries received to help the Task and Finish Group understand the volume of enquiries the services receive over a typical year.

**3.4.** Desirably the Task and Finish Group would compile a brief report that summarises the customer experience highlighting consistent issues, positive and negative practices and offer a view of areas for improvement, actions and change. The report will be used to guide the development of an action plan for change through the staged process set out below.

**3.5.** As a minimum, it is suggested that the Task and Finish Group seek the views of and liaise with:

- Elected Members including the Leader of the Council and the Lead Member for Transport
- A selection of Parish Councils
- Businesses – Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses
- Officers, Senior, Middle Management and front-line staff from Customer Services and Operations

**3.6. Timescale**

- Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference to be agreed in June. Detailed proposal to be developed from the above.
- Research and Interviews during June/July.
- Draft report to be available in early September.
- Task and Finish Group to meet fortnightly through the working period.

**3.7. Stage 1**
- Developing an agreed action plan on the key tasks and define the mandate, if necessary, set within parameters.
- Understand the problem – perception, real world, what are our customers saying? Task and Finish Group.
- Acquire the data - gather basic information on the area or activity to be investigated, including external sources if necessary. What is the Task and Finish Group reviewing – what is 'Highways' in the minds of our customers'?
- Secure the PM and officer / member resources to complete the task. Including Customer Service and the Localities Directorate Task and Finish Group.
- Agree minimum acceptable outcomes in terms of service level and quality.
- Identify the risks.

**3.8. Stage 2**
- Action the work programme i.e., doing the work based on Stage 1

- The key elements are:
  - The products/outcomes to be produced.
  - The activities needed to create the products/outcomes.
  - Any dependencies on partners or external agencies.
  - Programme of change.
  - IT systems e.g. CRM tool.
  - Monitoring and reporting points.
  - Allocation of responsibilities.

**3.9. Stage 3**
- Developing measures and solutions based on Stage 2.

**3.10. Stage 4**
- Reporting on the impact, learning, and outcomes and making recommendations, in the final report to the relevant committee, based on:
  - The evidence
  - Visiting other organisations - partners, user groups, other councils
  - Research
  - Management systems
  - Stakeholder / public seek views on an issue

**3.11. Establishing a Task and Finish Group**
A protocol exists to guide the establishment of any Task and Finish Group. Key points include:
 • The Committee Chair & Vice-Chair (who may or may not chair the group) will work with the relevant Director & the Governance Manager to discuss the detailed scoping of the Group.  This will then be agreed at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee [i.e. July] as well as Group membership.
• As a guideline, Task and Finish Groups will normally consist of three to five members depending on the nature and complexity of the review.  Political balance of membership is not required.  The Group should be chaired by a member of the Scrutiny Committee but this does not have to be its Chair or Vice-Chair.  Substitute members should be discouraged, on the basis that members have built up a knowledge and expertise on the review subjects and it may be difficult for a new member to join the Group part way through a review or to attend single meetings and participate effectively.

**3.12.** Accordingly, and due to the pace with which we want to establish this group, it is proposed to seek 3-5 volunteers at the 17th May Scrutiny Committee meeting to form the Task and Finish Group and for the Chair and Vice-Chair of Scrutiny: Climate and Place to finalise the scope and terms of reference in June, taken for information to the July Scrutiny Committee.

**4.    Consultations undertaken**

**4.1.** N/A

**5.      Implications**

**5.1.**   Findings from the Task and Finish Group will help inform a service redesign. The changes are likely to involve changes in how we work, the systems and processes we use (how our 'front end' facing the customer works), and our culture.

**6.      Background papers**

**6.1.**   None