

MINUTES of the meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.30 am on 3 July 2017 at Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Thursday, 5 October 2017.

Elected Members:

- * Mr Bob Gardner (Chairman)
- * Mr Wyatt Ramsdale (Vice-Chairman)
- Mr Richard Walsh
- Mr Stephen Cooksey
- * Mrs Mary Angell
- * Mr Bill Chapman
- * Mr Paul Deach
- * Mr Jonathan Essex
- * Mr Matt Furniss
- * Mr Eber A Kington
- * Mrs Bernie Muir
- * Mr John O'Reilly
- * Mr Stephen Spence
- * Mrs Lesley Steeds
- Mr Richard Wilson

- * Present

In attendance

Mike Goodman, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport
Colin Kemp, Cabinet Member for Highways

1/17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Stephen Cooksey, Richard Walsh and Richard Wilson. David Goodwin substituted for Stephen Cooksey and Keith Witham substituted for Richard Wilson.

2/17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 2]

No declarations of interest were received.

3/17 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 3]

There were no questions or petitions received.

4/17 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 4]

Key points raised in the discussion:

1. Members suggested having an item on the forward work programme reviewing the service changes impacted by this years decisions made to the budget. The Chairman explained that budget and finance were no longer included within the remit of the Committee and that issues regarding financial matters were going to be scrutinised and determined by the newly formed Overview and Budget Select Committee (OBSC).
2. It was noted that the Committee should consider a report on the results of the Community Recycling Centres (CRCs) consultation and the implications of switching off street lights between 12.00am-05.00am as concerns were raised that there is a possible rise in statistics for car related crimes.
3. The Committee received apologies from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport for not including an item on the agenda covering the changes to CRCs. The Cabinet Member assured the committee that a further meeting would be organised to review the results of the consultation before it progressed to Cabinet in September.
4. The Chairman proposed items on flood recovery and income generation opportunities for inclusion on the Forward Work Programme and noted items raised by committee members.
5. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport suggested that going forward the Committee would be asked to consider speeding policies. The Committee was advised that speed policies were considered by the select committees and individual road speed limits would be considered by Local Committees.
6. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport explained to the Committee that the Quality Impact Assessments in relation to the CRCs consultation had not been carried out and advised that further information would be circulated at a later date to inform members of its publication.
7. The Chairman noted all the relevant suggestions for the forward work programme and assured these would be considered when put forward to OBSC.

5/17 PROPOSED WINTER SERVICE POLICY CHANGES REQUIRED TO REALISE COST SAVINGS [Item 5]

Witnesses:

Colin Kemp, Cabinet Member for Highways

Jason Russell, Deputy Director for Environment and Infrastructure

Amanda Richards, Networks and Asset Management Group Manager

Kristian Fields, Winter Operation Manager, Kier

Declarations of interest:

None

Key points raised in the discussion:

1. The Chairman advised the committee that the report proposed policy changes and process changes that will deliver Winter Service cost savings in 2017/18 and 2018/19. The report also identifies a number of one off compensating savings to help achieve savings in 2017/18. The Select Committee are asked to consider the proposals before they are taken to Cabinet.
2. Members were informed of an update to this report by email on 28 June. This was in reference to the table on page 4 of the agenda regarding (Policy Change 1: Reducing season length to 26 weeks) which had two errors. This was in relation to 'weeks on standby' for both Knowsley and Bristol City Council. In the original report the 'weeks on standby' for both these authorities was 26 weeks. This has now been corrected to 21 weeks on standby.
3. It was noted in the previous Council term, a Winter Maintenance Task Group was set up as part of the old Scrutiny Board. The task group was responsible for updating the Board on winter performance and scrutinising the winter policy for the Council.
4. It was explained three members made up the membership of the task group. Of these, only one member remains on the newly formed Environment & Infrastructure Select Committee, Cllr Stephen Cooksey.
5. Members noted that prior to this meeting, officers discussed report recommendations with Stephen Cooksey and feedback was noted.
6. It was explained a similar report on winter cost savings came to the previous Scrutiny Board in 2016 but the £340k savings pressure from the Winter Service budget could not be achieved and compensating savings from elsewhere in the budget had to be found.
7. The Committee were advised when considering officer recommendations in the report, members needed to take account of the current financial situation facing the council. £340K savings need to be found from the Winter Service budget.
8. Officers explained that the current report was reviewing different solutions which reduce the impacts on levels of service compared to

the previous report. Officers gave a summary of the proposed policy and process changes informing members that the proposed changes would enable the service to meet the £340K savings required with the potential to create additional savings.

9. The Chairman queried why the service did not review the option to remove a mini gritter at an earlier stage seeing as one of the mini gritters had not been used for the last 6 years. The Kier representative informed members that both mini gritters had been utilised previously however one mini gritter could meet the demand for the whole County and the other could be released under the contract.
10. Members queried the set up costs of the additional depots at Beare Green and Chertsey. The Cabinet Member for Highways explained that these depots belonged to the Council and would be refurbished to save costs. It was explained that these sites were currently owned by the Council and work was underway to improve these assets rather than acquiring new assets. Officers advised the Committee that a report on these two depots came previously to scrutiny and was approved by Cabinet last year.
11. Officers clarified that policy amendment 1 proposing to not survey or fill any non-members grit bins intended to stop the survey in 2017/18 only but not discontinue the filling or repairing of grit bins where highways are made aware filling is required, informing members that eleven orders had been currently placed to do so.
12. Members questioned whether farmers received guidelines on maintaining their ploughs and asked officers to consider this going forward. It was agreed by officers that forwarding guidelines to farmers would be considered going forward.
13. The Cabinet Member for Highways assured the Committee that grit bins would remain and the policy amendment was for one year only. Members noted grit bins would possibly be removed in certain places, for example where funding for member funded grit bins has expired and the location does not achieve sufficient points against the agreed criteria for a grit bin to be in that location.
14. Following the discussion on grit bins the Deputy Director for Environment and Infrastructure expressed the view that policy amendment 1 was sensible and pragmatic, assuring the Committee that the proposed saving would allow the Council to respond and maintain services.
15. Members suggested a revision to the wording of policy amendment 1 to ensure there would be no further confusion on what was proposed, which was to not survey grit bins for 2017/18 only but to continue the filling of grit bins where highways are informed of low salt levels by residents or members.

16. In relation to saving recommendation 3 officers were asked to clarify which routes would be removed and whether there was a fair system in place to determine this. The Cabinet Member for Highways explained that a system was in place and that routes would be assessed against a set criteria which is detailed within the approved Highways Cold Weather Plan.
17. It was noted that the in house solution to replace the Kaarbontech grit bin management software was capable of being delivered by local highways officers despite members raising concern with the changeover of managing the grit bin inventory information and survey.
18. It was explained that there was no dedicated budget for grit bins, if grit bins met the set criteria it would be funded, alternatively if the grit bin did not meet the criteria it would be removed, placing the unused funds in reserve.
19. The Cabinet Member for Highways clarified that the treatment time began from the point the salting vehicles left the depot and returned within the 3 hour treatment window.
20. Members raised the concern with the removal of grit bins, expressing the view that grit was essential for utilising in other areas other than the road, for example, gritting pavements.
21. There was a discussion around Policy Change 5 and members sought more clarification around the salting treatment, how this would be determined and what the implications would be going forward. Officers advised that the choice of salting treatment would be reviewed appropriately in line with best practice and explained how Thawrox+ was referenced as an example to show the benefits of moving to an alternative.
22. It was noted that the service was not proposing to change the gritting criteria however were reviewing whether current routes on the network met the set criteria. Members requested officers provide local committees with the criteria to allow them to assess how routes will be re-evaluated.
23. There was a discussion around Policy Amendment 1 and how it would be re-worded. Members suggested that it should be amended to encourage the public to contact the Council to report low levels of salt in grit bins on inspection. Officers advised the Committee that this information was available online for members of the public.
24. Members raised the importance of local committee involvement when reassessing lengths of network that did not meet criteria. Members agreed that saving recommendation 3 should be amended to read 'reassess lengths of network against the criteria in consultation with local committees'. The Cabinet Member for highways agreed with this amendment.

25. Members of the committee were given the opportunity to vote for each of the individual proposals put forward. Members voted in the majority to support the recommendations in the report.

Recommendations:

The Environment & Infrastructure Select Committee endorse the report recommendations, subject to the following amendments to Policy Amendment 1 and Saving Recommendation 3,

- a. Policy Amendment 1 to be amended to read: 'Do not survey any non-member funded grit bins',
- b. Saving Recommendation 3 to be amended to read: 'Reassess lengths of network against the criteria in consultation with Local Committees'.

Actions:

For the Cabinet Member for Highways to provide the E&I Select Committee with more details around the salt barn replacement.

6/17 LOCAL HIGHWAY FUNDING 2017/18 [Item 6]

Witnesses

Jason Russell, Deputy Director

Colin Kemp, Cabinet Member for Highways

Declarations of interest:

None

Key points raised in the discussion:

1. It was noted that on 12 June 2017, Democratic Services Support Officers received a request from Cllr Eber Kington asking for an item on Local Highway Funding for 2017/18 to be included on the next Environment and Infrastructure Select Committee agenda. As a result, an officer report has been prepared for the Committee's consideration.
2. Cllr Eber Kington introduced the report by informing members that the report was requested as there were concerns regarding the reductions with the local committee's highway budget, expressing the view that the impact of these reductions would affect the level of service to residents. Members agreed that the reduction to this budget would impact local decision making at the local committee level.
3. The Cabinet Member for Highways assured members that discussions with local committees was on the agenda going forward to address the situation and discuss what solutions could be reached. The Cabinet Member stated that although money had been reduced from the local committee highways budget more was being spent on the highways network overall.
4. It was noted that there were other resources available for local committees these included CIL funding and parking funds which could

be reassessed to maximise alternative funding for local choice and funding.

5. A member stated that the allocated £40K for Runnymede local committee would not allow members to deliver services at levels experienced in recent years and that there should be scope for fundamental re-assessment of the savings proposals.
6. Officers identified that further reductions were possible within the highways discretionary allocation which would endorse additional savings however members raised concerns this would diminish their role as a councillor further as discretionary funds were managed by the Local Committees and promoted local decision making.
7. Following the reduction in capital investment and on going revenue pressures, members noted that investment would be targeted in line with the available budget to minimise future liabilities and the deterioration of highway assets.
8. It was noted that there was currently a re-structure within the Environment and Infrastructure directorate. The Deputy Director of Environment and Infrastructure assured that this would not cause significant impact upon the delivery of service however would maximise efficiency by utilising officer skills more effectively.
9. Members sought clarification around the term 'reactive maintenance' and officers explained that works included in this category referred to grass cutting, safety defects, environmental maintenance, drainage winter service, traffic systems, sign and lines and structures. However members noted that there were delays in this area due to contractual constraints.
10. There was discussion in amending the recommendation to highlight the importance of reassessing the focus on local highways funding. Members supported the view that the report recommendation should be amended to note 'with concern' the reduction in the highways funding. The Select Committee requested that Cabinet review the highways funding for local committees.
11. The Cabinet Member for Highways emphasised that local members were empowered with influencing decisions despite concerns raised with the reduced level of involvement at local level and referred to capital schemes where local and joint committees play a significant role.
12. The Committee concluded proceedings by agreeing to support the recommendation to be put forward to Cabinet for consideration.
13. The Chairman commended Cllr Eber Kington for requesting the report and bringing this discussion to the forefront of scrutiny.

Recommendations:

- a) That the Environment and Infrastructure Select Committee notes with concern the report and background to the reductions in the Highways and Transport budget and asks the Cabinet to review the highways funding of local committees.

Actions:

None

7/17 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY 5 OCTOBER 2017 [Item 7]

The next meeting of the Environment and Infrastructure Select Committee will be held on Thursday 5 October 2017 at 10.30am in the Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames.

Meeting ended at: 1.20 pm

Chairman

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