

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

held on Monday, 20th January, 2020 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor JP Findlow (Chairman)
Councillor L Crane (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors S Akers Smith, S Brookfield, J Buckley, T Dean, A Farrall,
P Groves, M Hunter, D Jefferay, C Leach and K Parkinson

In attendance

Councillor C Browne-Deputy Leader of the Council
Councillor S Corcoran-Leader of the Council
Councillor N Mannion-Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration
P Bayley-Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services
M Davenhill-Contract Asset Manager
S Davies-Operations Manager, Highways
C Hindle-Head of Infrastructure
F Jordan-Executive Director-Place
A Ross-Director of Highways & Infrastructure
C Young-Policy and Partnerships Officer

47 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

48 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2019 be approved
as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

49 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

50 WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

No declarations of a party whip were received.

51 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public present wishing to speak.

52 WELL MANAGED HIGHWAYS INFRASTRUCTURE

Consideration was given to a report going to Cabinet on the Well Managed Highway Infrastructure. In addition Members received a presentation on the Winter Service update. Included within the presentation was information on the following:-

- Assessment criteria
- Area Highways Groups-Engagement Process
- List of roads proposed by the AHGs
- AHG roads to be added to the network post re-assessment
- Roads added/removed as a result of the route validation process
- Next steps

Members made comments as follows:-

- i. Clarification was sought regarding the response to the consultation from the Knutsford Areas Highway Group in respect of the removal of some of the gritting routes. It was confirmed no comment's had been made in respect of Knutsford, however there had been a few relatively minor concerns regarding Mobberley. Officers responded to this in the meeting, confirming that there had not been any concerns raised by the group formally, however at the AHG meeting comment was passed regarding the access to Mobberley Railway Station, which had been addressed.
- ii. Members queried what the justification was for removing routes from the gritting programme and requested that if previously removed routes were identified as an issue then the possibility of including them in a future programme of works be looked at in the future. It was clarified that the criteria used for the risk assessment process was available.
- iii. Whilst the list of gritting routes was comprehensive, there were concerns that smaller routes/short cuts some of which were located near to primary schools had been omitted from the gritting schedule. In response it was outlined that the risk assessment process used applied criteria uniformly across the network to ensure it was consistent. It was reiterated that short cuts were not automatically included in order to encourage vehicles to use the treated network on more major routes. It was confirmed that the routes would be reviewed annually, however the process was about best allocation of resource and that drivers should consider routing according to the weather conditions.
- iv. Clarification was sought as to how many routes close to primary schools were currently gritted and how many (if any) had been removed from the programme of works. In response to both the above points and officers clarified that primary schools were not automatically included in the treated network and a number of

factors were included such as was the school rural or urban and if there were any other amenities in the area. It was noted that at the moment primary schools were not automatically treated, however secondary schools were.

- v. It was suggested that any money being saved through the cuts to routes should be used to provide additional gritting bins. It was agreed that this would be considered where appropriate on the network and that a new grit bin assessment form had been developed to consider the placement of grit bins.
- vi. It was felt important that officers looked at gritting footpaths in order to encourage more people to walk instead of driving.
- vii. Clarification was sought as to the current situation regarding people helping themselves to grit from the bins that were in existence throughout the Borough. It was explained that this was a national problem and perhaps should be tackled with a corporate media campaign.
- viii. Concerns were raised that there had been no cycling groups/bodies involved in the formulation of the resilient network strategy. It was explained that the resilient network was fairly high level and was largely linked to strategic connectivity over longer distance routes and ensuring resilience should these routes be at risk or unavailable due to engineering/environmental issues. It was then explained that the resilient Network was a requirement under the DfT Incentive fund and had specific requirements.
- ix. Gullies were constantly filling up and little was being done to unblock them despite numerous Councillors reporting the matter to officers as a priority. Concerns were also raised that a number of gullies were not being assessed often enough particularly those in rural areas and that the service provided needed to be reviewed. Members were receiving more complaints about gullies than potholes. Due to the number of comments on this issue it was agreed that a report on highways drainage including the management of gullies would be brought back to a future meeting.
- x. It was considered that further information should be provided on what the criteria were for a risk assessment to be undertaken. Officers outlined what further information could be included.
- xi. Rather than dealing with the same complaints year after year it was important for officers to look at the policies of the Council and see how much funding was allocated to this particular service;
- xii. It was felt important that officers analysed how repairs of potholes were carried out as there appeared to be an issue with a number of them sinking. Officers explained the difference between making

safe a defect once identified. This had to be completely quickly in order to remove the hazard and to meet the response times. Any structural issues would then be investigated and the necessary action taken to repair.

- xiii. A 50mm pothole could cause a serious injury to a cyclist and that perhaps there was a necessity to revisit the intervention levels. Officers explained that the new policy if implemented would result in greater consideration of cyclists.
- xiv. Clarification was sought as to what was meant by a resilient network. It was explained that the resilient network helped to prioritise major investment and Winter service priority. Furthermore that pot hole defects were still assessed on risk and many factors were considered with regards to this.

The debate about gritting routes led to an in-depth discussion regarding highways drainage issues and it was agreed that officers would bring to a future meeting of the Committee a report addressing the concerns raised by Members as well as looking at the wider issue relating to drainage matters.

The Committee was also reminded that a Member Engagement event was taking place at the beginning of February which would cover awareness and challenges of maintaining the assets.

RESOLVED

(1) That the recommendations to Cabinet be endorsed and that all of the matters raised be reported to Cabinet.

(2) That a further detailed report on highway drainage including the cleaning of gullies be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

53 ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the Economic Strategy. In addition Members received a presentation which provided information on the development of the strategy, the consultation process, the consultees, the consultation results and what was meant by inclusive growth, community development, sustainable travel and growth.

Members welcomed the report stating that it was very thorough and well written and thanked officers for their time and efforts in producing a cohesive and informed strategy.

Further comments were made in respect of the following:-

- (i) Parking-Spaces should be sufficient in size and tariffs should be affordable;
- (ii) Further representations to central Government regarding business rates was necessary;
- (iii) Transport-There needed to be a proper integrated public transport system which was accessible, affordable and efficient;
- (iv) Government funding was essential in order for the Council to fulfil its priorities;
- (v) It was queried as to how housing tenure linked in with the Local Plan and that it was important to focus on housing numbers rather than types of housing;
- (vi) Reference within the strategy to the differences in deprivation depending on the area concerned was welcomed;
- (vii) It was important to expand on the variety of housing and tenure and to capitalise on HS2 and that the strategy should be modified on accordance with those comments;
- (viii) It was important to seek out new opportunities in respect of developing visitor assets;
- (ix) It was encouraging to see that attempts had been made to engage younger people in the consultation process;
- (x) Sustainable travel options needed to be driven down through the organisation;
- (xi) It was necessary to ensure that the performance of Northern Rail was and not just HS2 was analysed;
- (xii) There needed to be a more robust approach to meeting 30% affordable housing targets and that any growth should not come at the expense of the loss of green belt land;
- (xiii) In order to attract graduates back to the Borough there needed to be a better choice of housing and better employment opportunities;
- (xiv) There appeared to be a lack of making any changes to reducing the carbon footprint and that there needed to be a more robust approach to achieving active travel;

RESOLVED

(1) That the comments above be reported to the Portfolio Holder for information.

(2) That the draft documents for the Economic Strategy contained within appendices I, II and III be recommended to the Portfolio Holder for final sign off.

54 PERFORMANCE SCORECARD

Consideration was given to the performance data for services within the Council's Place directorate for quarter 2 of 2019/20. Particular focus was given to any areas of poor or worsened performance.

The Executive Director-Place explained that performance indicators PEN011 and PEN012 were showing as red because there was a resourcing issue. Currently the Council had four full time vacancies. One of the factors in failing to recruit individuals related to the rate of pay and the need for the Council to offer a more competitive salary compared to other organisations. Whilst there was the possibility of using agency staff this was not a long term solution.

In respect of performance indicator PEN014 it was requested that further details be provided as to how the Air quality Action Plans were going to reduce air quality. It was suggested that this could possibly be included as a future item for discussion on the work programme.

In respect of performance indicator PH007 it was welcomed that the % of repudiation of highways insurance claims had increased.

RESOLVED

That the performance scorecard be noted.

55 FORWARD PLAN

Consideration was given to the areas of the Forward Plan which fell within the remit of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the Forward Plan be noted.

56 WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the work programme.

It was agreed that reports on the Cheshire East Carbon Action Plan and highways drainage be included for discussion at the March meeting.

In addition it was agreed that an item on the Waste Strategy be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be approved subject to the amendments as outlined above.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.32 pm

Councillor JP Findlow (Chairman)

