

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2018 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.40 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Guy Grandison (Chairman), Rachel Burgess, Clive Jones, David Sleight and Shahid Younis

Officers Present

Peter Baveystock (Service Manager – Cleaner and Greener Services), Alex Deans (Highways and Transportation Services - Reprocurement Lead), Francesca Hobson (Senior Specialist (Drainage Flooding Advice)), Sean Murphy (Public Protection Partnership Manager) and Callum Wernham (Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist)

11. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Bill Soane, Dianne King and Mike Haines.

12. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 June 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

13. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

14. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

15. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

16. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION CONTRACT RENEWAL UPDATE

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 9 to 40, which provided an update on the progress on the process of letting major contracts relating to highways and transportation services.

The report outlined the process of letting the contracts, as well as the key priorities that had been considered in the process including:

- Promoting sustainable transport;
- Promoting economic prosperity;
- Ensuring a fully trained set of highways workers and staff are present.

Alex Deans, Highways and Transportation Services – Reprocurement Lead, outlined that during the process careful consideration had been given to resolving issues such as flood risk impact of highways, maximising resources (including the workforce and the Council's budget) and achieving value for money for the Borough and its residents. Alex Deans informed Members that they would receive the part 2 papers outlining the full report including the financials at the upcoming meeting of the Council.

Alex Deans stated that the upcoming full report would outline the following:

- The differentiation between the different contracts;
- The governance process overarching the contracts;
- How the contracts would be managed;
- How accountability and transparency would be achieved;
- The full financial information with regards to the contracts.

Rachel Burgess asked what would be done to minimise service disruption in the mobilisation/de-mobilisation period when the contracts would switch over. Alex Deans stated that WSP had put a de-mobilisation plan in place whereby a 2 to 3 week period either side of the contract end date would be used to continue carrying out essential works and to help integrate and familiarise the new provider with the current and future workload. He added that there was a 6 month plan in place covering October 2018 to March 2019 which mapped out the mobilisation/de-mobilisation process.

David Sleight queried the future of the Shute End based WSP staff after their contract expired. Alex Deans stated that some of the internal staff would be offered a role as a Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) employee, if conditions such as length of service on the contract and no WSP retention were met. He added that details of this would be included in the upcoming part 2 papers.

Shahid Younis queried how the monitoring process of the contracts would be carried out in the future. Alex Deans clarified that the performance criteria (as set out in Appendix B of this report) would be constantly subject to review. He added that to achieve the 100% monetary incentive the provider would have to achieve 100% in each of the performance categories. Alex Deans stated that this information would periodically be fed back to Audit and that the process had been in collaboration with the 21st Century Council programme.

Clive Jones queried that if WBC could retain the internal WSP staff on budget, had WBC been overpaying in the past for their services? Alex Deans stated that the previous financials had been based on a 2008 indexation formula, whereas the new contracts would be based off of a government promoted indexation formula. He added that the rates paid for the in house staff had been competitive, but that off-site works had been more expensive.

Rachel Burgess queried how the applicants for the contracts had been assessed in terms of addressing resident concerns including traffic congestion issues. Alex Deans stated that residents expectations needed to be managed going forward, for example that WBC was required to build a large amount of new properties as set out in the local plan which would inevitably and unavoidably cause congestion. He stated that the contract provider would be working in collaboration with the local town and parish Councils to identify the local issues and needs of the local residents.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Highways and transportation Contract Renewals Update be noted;
- 2) Alex Deans be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 3) a further update on Highways and Transportation contracts come to the Committee in due course.

17. PUBLIC PROTECTION SHARED SERVICE AND FEES AND CHARGES

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 41 to 70, which provided an overview of the Public Protection Shared Service and the process for setting fees and charges.

Sean Murphy, Public Protection Partnership Manager, outlined the key areas of the Public Protection Partnership which included the following:

- It was a very new and different arrangement to that present in 2017;
- The theme for the partnership was a single level of service across all 3 Local Authorities (Wokingham, West Berkshire and Bracknell Forest) ;
- The budget would be split between the 3 Local Authorities in accordance to their required workload. For example, Wokingham Borough Council's (WBC's) 2018/19 contribution to the budget was £1.14M which equated to approximately 33.6% of the budget;
- The fees and charges would be set on the basis of full cost recovery, which equated to £55 per hour;
- The next joint Committee would decide on the new budget. Once agreed, this would then go to each respective Local Authority to be considered at their Annual Budget Council meeting;
- Looking to the future, the partnership would look to generate income via working with other local Authorities by selling the partnership's expertise.

David Sleight asked whether the partnership had been considered a success thus far, taking in to account the £70K per year saving for WBC. Sean Murphy stated that the service had been successful, especially when considering the vast change that it had undertaken since 2017. He added that further savings were proposed for WBC in the future. Sean stated that the shared service had built up a large range of experience amongst staff and that it had also delivered resilience across the service for all 3 Local Authorities.

Rachel Burgess asked what had been lost as a result of the move to a shared service. Sean Murphy stated that upper management had been reduced as a cost cutting measure, which had meant that the frontline service delivery had been preserved. He added that most priorities identified by each Local Authority were unilaterally shared which made the service delivery easier.

Clive Jones asked whether there had been any cuts in the frontline service delivery. Sean Murphy stated that some frontline staff had been lost, but with the move to a shared service came a lot more flexibility and resilience. He added that the main issues for the service at the moment were IT and accommodation related.

Shahid Younis asked whether any further saving could be made by extending the shared service to other Local Authorities. Sean Murphy stated that there had been some interest from other Local Authorities and that the service was constantly in discussion regarding this.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Public Protection Shared Service report be noted;

2) Sean Murphy be thanked for attending the meeting.

18. FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT END OF YEAR UPDATE

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 71 to 76, which provided an update on flooding issues and partnership working in Towns, Parishes and community groups.

Francesca Hobson, Senior Specialist (Drainage Flooding Advice), stated that Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) had a variety of flooding responsibilities including:

- Flood risk management strategy;
- Section 19 flood investigation;
- Maintenance of the asset register (for example, ditches and manholes);
- Land drainage bye-laws;
- Responsibilities to serve notices on irresponsible landowners;
- Sustainable drainage strategy;
- Increasing community engagement via the use of flood wardens;
- Carrying out a variety of capital and revenue works.

Rachel Burgess asked what feedback residents had given at the community engagement events. Francesca Hobson stated that residents had generally given more positive feedback recently as a result of increased resources in flood prevention and management when compared to 2 years ago. She added that residents made Officers aware of local issues and concerns which could then be addressed. Francesca stated that some residents could be angry and upset as a result of flooding issues, but when they had engaged with Officers they generally tended to get more involved in the future flood prevention process.

David Sleight asked what had been done about a recent issue of an unregistered contractor drilling through a water main. Francesca Hobson stated that the issue had been dealt with by the highways team and by the flooding team. She added that the flooding Officers had liaised closely with both Thames and South East Water to make sure that the issue had been fully resolved.

Guy Grandison asked when the Section 21 regulations (including the asset register) would be completed. Francesca Hobson stated that there were a variety of levels to the asset register. She added that WBC had moved from an Excel spreadsheet format to a GIS based system which was not currently publically available but was due to be made so in time. The GIS based system would allow residents to see an overview of assets in their area and would allow them to report issues that arose. Francesca stated that WBC were approaching stage 4 of the asset register, whereas many other local authorities were still on stage 1 or stage 2.

Clive Jones asked the Flooding Officer's opinion on the dredging of rivers. Francesca Hobson stated that much of the recent academic research had shown that dredging rivers increased the flow of the river which could then cause significant issues in other areas of the river. Francesca added that there had been research outlining the benefits of dredging rivers, but this tended to be much older academic research.

Francesca stated that WBC were working with the Environment Agency on delivering a large capital flood alleviation scheme to help with the flooding on the River Loddon.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the flood risk management end of year update be noted;
- 2) Francesca Hobson be thanked for attending the meeting.

19. RESPONSE TO APPROACH FOR FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL ON FOOTWAYS, KERBSIDES AND ROAD SIGN ISSUES

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 77 to 86, which gave an update on the progress of issues relating to footways, kerbsides and road signs in Finchampstead following the scrutiny request that came to the June Committee.

Peter Baveystock, Service Manager – Cleaner and Greener Services, outlined the progress that had been made in responding to the issues raised at the June Committee as follows:

- An action plan had been developed in response to the issues raised. Peter added that the Cleaner and Greener Team had been pleased with the results thus far;
- Democratic Services had sent out an email to local town and parish Councils asking for information regarding similar issues in their respective local areas. Woodley Town Council had responded to the request and had provided examples of issues such as dirty signage and kerbside problems;
- Further effort was needed to get residents to report issues directly to the Council. This would allow for Customer Services to assign them an individual dynamics case number and follow up the issue which would lead to a quicker response.

Guy Grandison asked what was the procedure to get private landowners to resolve issues (such as overgrown trees) after the Council had sent them a 2nd letter. Peter Baveystock stated that there was a 3rd letter which stated to the landowner that if they did not take action then the Council would carry out works to resolve the issue and charge back the costs. He added that landowners usually remedied the issue themselves once in receipt of this letter.

Rachel Burgess asked whether the intention was to take the action plan Borough wide. Peter Baveystock stated that the Cleaner and Greener team were working closely with the town and parish Councils to identify their specific issues and to incorporate them in to the wider action plan. He added that with the move to 21st Century Council, the localities team would be working alongside the community engagement team to tackle issues from them being reported through to resolution.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the update on the progress of issues relating to footways, kerbsides and road signs in Finchampstead be noted;
- 2) Peter Baveystock be thanked for attending the meeting.

20. WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 87-92, which gave details of its proposed work programme for 2018/19.

Members asked that an email be sent out by Democratic Services to all Members of the Council asking for any questions relating to local policing and the local fire service ahead of the Extraordinary meeting of the Committee in October.

Members asked that the Town Centre Regeneration item scheduled for the November Committee be primarily focussed on the impact of the Market Place regeneration works and include an update on the other town centre regeneration works. Members added that they would be interested in the Executive Member for Regeneration attending the meeting as well as a range of stakeholders. Members stated that they would appreciate the Town Centre Regeneration item being publicised via social media in advance of the November meeting.

Members asked that the following items come to the Committee's January meeting:

- Monitoring the Council's Capital and Revenue expenditure;
- Reviewing the proposed development of the Coppid Beech Park and Ride site;
- Investigating the impact of changes to train services.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) an email be sent out by Democratic Services to all Members of the Council asking for any questions relating to local policing and the local fire service ahead of the extraordinary meeting of the Committee in October;
- 2) the Town Centre Regeneration item scheduled for the November Committee be primarily focussed on the impact of the Market Place regeneration works and include an update on the other town centre regeneration works;
- 3) the Executive Member for Regeneration be invited to the November Committee meeting;
- 4) a range of stakeholders be invited to the November Committee meeting to discuss the Town Centre Regeneration;
- 5) the Town Centre Regeneration item be advertised via social media in advance of the November Committee;
- 6) the January Committee meeting include monitoring the Council's Capital and Revenue expenditure; reviewing the proposed development of the Coppid Beech Park and Ride site and investigating the impact of changes to train services.