

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 17 JUNE 2019 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.00 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Shirley Boyt, Paul Fishwick, Guy Grandison, Clive Jones, Abdul Loyes, Ken Miall, Barrie Patman and Malcolm Richards

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Imogen Shepherd-DuBey, Pauline Jorgensen and John Kaiser

Officers Present

Neil Carr (Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist), Mark Cupit (Assistant Director Delivery & Infrastructure), Chris Easton (Service Manager - Transport, Drainage and Compliance), Martin Heath (Traffic Management, Parking and Road Safety Manager), Clare Lawrence (Assistant Director – Place Based Services), Susan Parsonage (Chief Executive) and Callum Wernham (Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist)

1. ELECTION OF A CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED That Guy Grandison be elected Chairman for the 2019/20 municipal year.

2. APPOINTMENT OF A VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED That Ken Miall be appointed Vice Chairman for the 2019/20 municipal year.

3. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 March 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Some Members raised concerns that Deputy Members of the Executive should not sit on Scrutiny Committees which discussed areas of their portfolio, in line with the Statutory Government Guidance on Scrutiny which was published in May 2019.

A declaration of interest was submitted from Malcolm Richards on the grounds that he was a Deputy Executive Member with a portfolio relating to agenda item 9.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

7. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chairman invited Members to submit questions to the appropriate Members.

7.1 Imogen Shepherd-DuBey has asked the Chairman of the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee the following question:

Question

There are a number of pieces of work that have not been finished as part of the Market Place project. While we have heard rumours that that Market Place has been sealed, we would like this checked, as this is not performing as it should do and we do not believe this

has been done properly. We are also missing the insets to mark out the disabled parking bays. Along with these, there are other minor issues that seem to have not been tackled. Please can you advise on when these tasks will be carried out?

Answer

Ahead of the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 17th June 2019, a report on the Market Place has been prepared and is included as Item 8 within the available meeting agenda. The report includes a brief section entitled 'Next Steps' at the bottom of page 13. It states that following the completion of the final Road Safety Audit (stage 3) and a risk assessment, the design team are finalising a list of works which if found to be necessary, will be commissioned during the summer for completion. These works will also include the installation of the disabled logo markings, which are to be inserted within each of the identified disabled bays.

Regarding the Market Place surface being sealed, I can confirm that this has been undertaken. Sealing a material such as stone does not keep it clean, it only makes cleaning easier as the sealant helps prevent grim, dirt and oil for example, from penetrating into the stone. Without the sealant it would be harder and more costly to remove marks and stains.

Supplementary Question

When I saw this report at the bottom of page 1 it says that there was an overspend of only five percent on the budget, and I thought that that might mean that we might get some of our contingency money back, I am talking about Wokingham Town Council. Because all of the contingency was spent on this project I was a little surprised to see that, and when I read the numbers sure enough it does include the contingency. I'd like to know when contingency money was considered a part of the project because as far as I am concerned that is being held to deal with emergency problems and not part of the project, because the original project was £3.8 million and that is what we expected it to be.

Supplementary Answer

I think this is something that requires a proper written answer and also I suspect this will come out when we are discussing this topic on Agenda item 8.

8. MARKET PLACE HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The Committee received and reviewed a report, set out in agenda pages 11 to 48, which gave details of the final road safety audit and financial position of the Market Place Highways Improvement Scheme.

Mark Cupit (Assistant Director Delivery and Infrastructure) and Chris Easton (Service Manager - Transport, Drainage and Compliance) attended the meeting to present the report and answer any Member questions.

The report gave details of the final road safety audit (RSA) which had allowed a six month 'settling in' period prior to the final audit's completion, and identified no safety concerns with the final completed project. Following the disability engagement workshop held in November 2018, a risk assessment (undertaken by WSP - Wokingham Borough Council's (WBC's) design consultant) had highlighted seventeen risk areas. Lessons had been learned relating to design issues and WBC now had an in-house design team which provided greater value and financial savings. The tactile studs met the appropriate standards, were identified as an issue within the RSA and different chemicals could be used to alter their colour and make them stand out from the paving surfaces and improve

their usability. Officers were in the process of working through the list of issues highlighted by the risk assessment.

The report outlined that not all of the work carried out as part of the Market Place Highways Improvement Project was solely for this project. Other works such as highways maintenance and drainage upgrades were carried out in order to upgrade the existing systems, thereby saving time and money by not having to dig up the area again in the near future. WBC now had access to a more developed and precise ground radar investigation tool which would be used on all future projects.

Reports of accidents had fallen dramatically since the initial opening of the newly upgraded Market Place. Reports of accidents were now less common with the new surfacing than with the previous red brick surface, which could be slippery in wet conditions.

The report outlined that the original cost assessment for the project in September 2016 was £4.6m; this was reduced to £4.2m in October 2016 following discussions with the contractor about holding further risk and value engineering. In April 2017, discussions were had about those changes and further value engineering and transfer of greater project risk to the Council, following this the final budget was agreed at £3.8m with £400k contingency, totalling £4.2m. The report went on to add that £220k was overspent on the project, equating to an approximate 5% overspend total. This figure included costs for works undertaken for maintenance, asset renewal and repairs which were business as usual costs. A sum of up to approximately £40k could be expected to be returned to WBC following finalisation of financial transactions with utility companies.

During the ensuing discussions Members raised the following points and queries:

- How were the costs reduced from £4.6m to £4.2m in April 2017? Officer response - More risks were taken on by the Council and away from the contractor, including utility risks;
- Various project management issues occurred during this project, what was the reasoning behind these issues? Officer response – The Market Place scheme used externally procured project managers which did not always give the greatest level of continuity. In house project managers would be used going forward.
- A number of metal studs were missing in the Market Place, what would be done to address this? Officer response – All missing metal studs would be repaired and replaced and this issue would be monitored going forwards. Assurances were given that the studs would not be removable (by the public) and Officers would now actively investigate the underlying issue. The metal studs met guidance criteria and complied with all relevant standards.
- What was being done to monitor the traffic and speed restrictions within the Market Place? Officer response – Officers were looking at placing a camera on the town hall to assist with traffic monitoring. Traffic management measures were in place and there was good courtesy contact within the Market Place highway.
- When first completed, a number of accidents were reported online via social media, how could WBC be confident that accidents were not currently occurring as a result of

the changes to the Market Place? Officer response – WBC had received no legal claims which suggested that there had been no significant trips or falls recently.

- How had disability groups been contacted throughout the improvement works, both at planning and delivery phases? Had these groups been contacted post completion for comment? Officer response – Relevant groups were invited to a workshop in November 2018. Now that the RSA and risk assessment documents were public, these would be available to these groups and others to allow for comments and suggestions.
- Would the provided disability and consultation list be kept up to date and made available for all future projects? Officer response – The list was a live document which would be managed by the Communications team. Members, Officers and the public were welcome to suggest other relevant organisations and groups to be added to this list. The list would be centrally held and made available for future projects and consultations.
- Did WBC have a dedicated access Officer? Who was responsible for access related issues for past and current projects? WBC did not currently have a dedicated access Officer, this service came under the responsibility of the safety auditors in conjunction with the project manager. Safety auditors were qualified to identify and resolve accessibility related issues, and externally procuring allowed for best practice every time.

RESOLVED That:

1. Mark Cupit and Chris Easton be thanked for attending the meeting to answer Member questions;
2. the final Road Safety Audit related to the Market Place Improvement Project be noted;
3. the Financial update related to the Market Place Improvement Project be noted;
4. the Committee continue to monitor the Market Place and ensure that lessons have been learned;
5. the consultation and engagement list be continually reviewed and updated, with Members, Officers and members of the public invited to suggest further relevant groups and organisations to be added.

9. BOROUGH-WIDE PARKING MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN – RESULTS OF CONSULTATION

The Committee received and reviewed a report, set out in agenda pages 49 to 68, which gave an update on the draft Borough-wide Parking Management Action Plan for 2019-2025 and the summary of responses received following consultation amongst Ward Members.

Clare Lawrence (Assistant Director – Place Based Services), Martin Heath (Traffic Management, Parking & Road Safety Team Manager) and Pauline Jorgensen (Executive Member for Highways and Transport) attended the meeting to present the report and answer any Member questions.

The report provided a summary of issues raised by Members following consultation, including issues related to:

- Future and Technology;
- Pricing, Tariffs and Incentives;
- Park and Ride;
- On Street Parking Management;
- Civil Parking Enforcement; Parking meters;
- Parking Meters;
- Off Street Parking Management;
- Planning of New Developments and Appropriate Parking.

The report stated that historically many issues such as antisocial parking behaviour or dissatisfaction with perceived enforcement protocols were managed independently within the Council, however there was now a clear need to address these and other issues more holistically through the introduction of a practical Borough-wide Parking Management Action Plan.

Wokingham was in the process of undergoing a significant road transport transformation, with various regeneration and infrastructure projects in addition to expansive residential community developments taking place across the Borough. This expansion had placed pressure throughout the Borough on existing parking provision and management measures. In order to support the Council's plans for continued economic growth and sustainability, a progressive programme of parking control measures that would help in supporting the local economy was required. The plan would need to focus on keeping the Borough's road network, particularly in core areas and close to rail, bus and major road corridors, free from congestion and the detrimental effects of traffic and pollution.

The report outlined that the Borough had seen an increased percentage of car use and ownership, which had increased the demand for on-street parking restrictions both by Members and residents. The absence of a defined and comprehensive parking service plan had contributed to the confusing parking management landscape for the Council's customers, and this had made a clear case to develop a comprehensive and inclusive Borough-wide Parking Management Action Plan.

During the ensuing discussions Members raised the following points and suggestions:

- How would Town and Parish Councils be consulted and included in the development of the Borough-wide Parking Management Action Plan? Officer and Executive Member response – Town and Parish Councils would be written to directly in order that they may provide a formal response. In addition, the Executive Member for Highways and Transport would make contact and visit the Town and Parish Councils to engage them in the process.
- Would new (and existing) Members be given the opportunity to respond to the consultation? Executive Member response – The consultation would be reopened for Members, allowing a month for responses to be returned. The Chairman agreed to resend his invitation to the consultation to all Members.
- How would the Council ensure that yellow and double yellow lines were fit for purpose, maintained and enforced? Executive Member response – Ward Members were

encouraged to make contact with the Highways team to highlight any yellow lines in the Borough that were in need of maintenance, or ones that were regularly being abused.

- What would be done to improve parking provision and travel plan related issues with schools within the Borough? Officer and Executive Member response – Travel plans were not always followed by parents and the key to improving the parking situation at schools was to tie up existing infrastructure with goals for walking or cycling to school. The ‘My Journey’ team now had more resources and could go in to schools to engage with pupils and explain the benefits of walking or cycling to and from school. Civil Parking Enforcement had the resources for extra Enforcement Officers, and the system needed to be balanced with the incentives of walking and cycling to school and complying with parking restriction, and the disincentives of contravening parking restrictions.
- The Council should look to promote low carbon taxis within the Borough.
- Was a permanent space being provided in the Wokingham Town Centre for the use of the specialised disabled friendly bus? Officer and Executive Member response – The operator had been provided with three options within the town centre for them to choose from. The operator had identified one of the options as being their preferred choice and Officers were liaising with them directly.
- Regarding suggestions for a permanent parking enforcement Officer in Earley, had this been considered? Officer and Executive Member response – Earley experienced parking issues at particular peak times of the day, which would make it difficult to position an Officer there permanently. Officers were evaluating a range of other options to aid with parking enforcement within Earley, and it was important that the right solution was found and adopted. Prevention and education were key areas of parking enforcement and management that were to be addressed across the Borough.

RESOLVED That:

1. Clare Lawrence, Martin Heath and Pauline Jorgensen be thanked for attending the meeting and answering Member questions;
2. the Member consultation invitation be resent to all Members, allowing a month to respond;
3. Town and Parish Councils be engaged and consulted with throughout the development of the Borough-wide Parking Management Action Plan;
4. the Committee receive an update on progress relating to the Borough-wide Parking Management Action Plan in due course.

10. WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

The Committee received and reviewed a report, set out in agenda pages 69 to 72, which outlined the Committee’s work programme for the 2019/20 municipal year.

The Committee considered the schedule of upcoming meetings, and were advised that several extraordinary meetings would be required in order to allow time to effectively scrutinise the 2020/21 budget and budget setting process.

RESOLVED That:

1. items regarding Wokingham's Bus Strategy and Civil Parking Enforcement be scheduled for the Committee's 2nd September 2019 meeting;
2. items regarding the Borough Design Guide and the Borough's Burial Ground Capacity be provisionally scheduled for an extraordinary meeting of the Committee on 4th December 2019, with a view to monitor the need for this extraordinary meeting in relation to capacity at other scheduled and extraordinary meetings of the Committee;
3. an item relating to budget scrutiny be scheduled for the Committee's 25th November 2019 meeting;
4. extraordinary meetings be provisionally scheduled on 24th September 2019 and 30th October 2019 in order to hold budget scrutiny items, whilst noting that these dates were subject to change in order to align with the budget development process;
5. the date of January Committee, currently 13th January 2020, be considered to move to 6th January 2020 in order to better align with the budget setting process;
6. an informal Committee Member briefing be scheduled prior to the Council meeting on 23rd January 2020 in order to update Members of the Committee on the final budget proposals;
7. items regarding the Community Safety Partnership and Updates from the Police and Fire services be scheduled for a meeting of the Committee in January 2020.

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