

Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee

14 September 2020 – At a virtual meeting of the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee held at 10.30 am.

Present: Cllr Barrett-Miles (Chairman)

Cllr S Oakley
Cllr Baldwin
Cllr Barnard
Cllr Goldsmith

Cllr McDonald
Cllr R Oakley
Cllr Oppler
Cllr Quinn

Cllr Waight
Cllr Walsh

Apologies were received from Cllr Barton

Absent:

Also in attendance: Cllr Crow and Cllr Elkins

Part I

14. Declarations of Interest

14.1 In accordance with the Council's code of conduct, the following declarations of interest were made:

- Cllr. S. Oakley declared a personal interest in item 4 as a member of Chichester District Council.
- Cllr Walsh declared a personal interest in item 6 as the Leader of Arun District Council.

15. Minutes of the meeting of the Committee on 24 June 2020

15.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the Committee held on 24 June 2020 be approved as a correct record, and that they be signed by the Chairman.

16. Minutes of the Call-in meeting of the Committee on 2 July 2020

16.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the Call-in meeting of the Committee held on 2 July 2020 be approved as a correct record, and that they be signed by the Chairman.

17. Urgent Matters

17.1 The Committee noted that further to the recently announced changes to the planning system, member of the Committee will be offered the opportunity to consider and comments on the Council's response to the Government consultation on the future of the current planning system. Two meetings, chaired by Mr Oakley, would take place: the first the week beginning 21 September 2020 which will consider the changes to the current system; the second the week beginning 12 October which will consider the proposed future planning system as per the Government's consultation.

17.2 Individual Committee members were asked to contact Ninesh Edwards, Senior Advisor directly should they wish to be involved.

18. Responses to Recommendations

18.1 The Committee noted the response to the recommendations made at the 24 June meeting regarding the Climate Change Strategy from the Cabinet Member for Environment.

18.2 The Committee noted the response to the recommendations made at the 24 June 2020 meeting regarding the also Reallocating Road Space in Response to Covid-19 from the Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure.

18.3 The Committee requested that the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport undertakes to:

- Be mindful of the Committee's concerns regarding shortfalls in budgeted parking income and impacts on sustainable transport improvements and other initiatives as a result of this.
- Provide an expanded update to the Committee on the current position of the CPZ Review Programme.
- Review the Chichester and Worthing temporary cycleways before the end of October 2020 and provide an update to the Committee.

19. Serious Violence

19.1 The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director of Place Services and the Acting Director of Communities (copy appended to the signed minutes).

19.2 The Committee received presentations from Jim Bartlett, Acting Head of Community Safety & Wellbeing and Emma Fawell, Violence Reduction Unit Lead; Nick Bowman, Chief Inspector, Sussex Police; Mark Burden, Head of LDU, National Probation Service, and Sophie Whitehouse, Lead for Early Help and Wellbeing at Adur & Worthing Councils. The presentations outlined the key points in the report, noted issues specific to individual agencies and the details of operations and initiatives to address serious violence in West Sussex.

19.3 The Committee made a number of comments including those that follow. It:

- Noted:
 - That the report was comprehensive and valuable.
 - The issues around easy access to knives and was supportive of campaigns for the production of kitchen knives and pen-

knives to be blunt ended and campaigns to stop the sale of single kitchen knives.

- Concerns about the disproportionate numbers of children looked after and children with additional needs who end up in trouble with the police.
- That there is an ongoing need for training and information to be provided in schools about the risks and consequences of knife crime to children at risk of being involved in or becoming victims of serious violence.
- Sought clarification and information on:
 - The impacts of Covid-19 on serious violence.
 - Targeted work being undertaken in Arun district.
 - Actions taken in relation to minimising the number of children and young people being excluded from school.
 - Serious violence involving migrant workers and crime within these communities and what help and support is available.
 - How success is measured.
- Raised concerns that sentencing is often inadequate to act as a deterrent and sought clarification on sentencing.
- Was supportive of the Youth Violence Commission's report on the root causes of and solutions to serious youth violence. The Committee echoed the Commission's concerns about the impacts of short-term funding and lack of youth services including youth clubs.
- Raised concern about public confidence in police action being taken following intelligence and crimes being reported to them, but noted that the Police must maximise resources based on threat, harm and risk, and suggested that positive news stories and social media would help to address public confidence.

19.4 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Fire thanked the Safer West Sussex Partnership and Violence Reduction Units for the work they do. He noted that funding is an issue and guaranteed funding for future years would be helpful for planning ahead. And, that the requirement for partnership working will continue.

19.5 The Committee resolved that it:-

1. Regrets the demise of youth clubs and youth provision and would lobby the government for funding for these services.

2. Agrees that there is a need for a greater police presence following intelligence-led reports from the public and it would like to see more resources being made available. The Chairman will write to the Police and Crime Commissioner on these points.
3. Will receive a report from the Acting Director of Communities regarding the measures of success, including high level criteria provided to the Violence Reduction Units – to illustrate what would constitute success.
4. Supports the intention of the Safer West Sussex Partnership to increase publicity on the good work of the partnership and partnership members.
5. Supports continued education and advice to children and young people on dangers of knives and will look to the Safer West Sussex Partnership regarding ways of getting these messages across.
6. Agrees that exclusion from school is one of the causes of serious violence and agrees that The Chairman will write to the Cabinet Member for Education about how limiting school exclusions can be explored further.
7. Agrees that the Chairman will write to chairman of Corporate Parenting Panel and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People to highlight that the issue of serious youth violence and disproportionate numbers of children looked after and children with additional needs who end up in trouble with the police.

19.6 The Committee recessed at 12.48 p.m. and reconvened at 12.55 p.m.

20. Highways and Transport Contract Delivery Update

20.1 The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director for Place Services and Director of Highways, Transport and Planning (copy appended to the signed minutes).

20.2 The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport introduced the report, advising that report provided an update on progress to date, the adequacy of resources and the strategy for the long-term management of highways assets.

20.3 The Committee received presentations from Guy Bell, Head of Highways – Planned Delivery and Michele Hulme, Head of Local Highways Operations. The presentation outlined the key details of the contract model, delivery programme, service preparedness, management of the network, investment matters, size of the task and road conditions and maintenance.

20.4 The Committee made a number of comments including those that follow. It:

- Sought clarification and information on:
 - Costs to stop deterioration of the condition of the county's roads.
 - The amount of funding, including from block funding, provided to different aspects of road maintenance.
 - Methodologies and crewing for litter picking and filling of potholes.
 - How quality assurance is undertaken.
 - How the contracts are working in practice and the ability of contractors to deliver the contract outcomes within agreed timeframes, , including those contractors with multiple-contracts.
 - Previous and new road surfacing practices and materials and the impact on road conditions and safety and costs.
 - The Council's ability to inspect and manage the quality of road works and resurfacing carried out by external companies, e.g. utility companies and developers.
 - What is being done to address blocked drains and flooding, particularly in light of heavy weather incidents.
 - About preferred lorry routes in West Sussex and the impacts of HGVs on road conditions.
- Noted:
 - That in order to avoid the county's highways deteriorating borrowing is likely to be needed.
 - That there has been a significant improvement regarding cats eyes and white lining and that investment must continue.
 - An issue with sunken drainage covers (ironwork), particularly on minor roads and that this matter should given a higher priority.
 - That if improvements could be made to drainage resulting in reduced road surface water caused by poor drainage this would have a positive impact on the Council's ability to encourage more walking and cycling.
 - That public finances are not keeping up with the degradation of highways infrastructure and this needs to be born in mind when the Council agrees funding for other matters.

20.5 The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport advised there has been a noticeable improvement in quality of repairs; that

competition is helping in delivery and capacity, and there have been improvements in the inspection regime. Additionally, he noted the improvements as a result of the funding received from the pothole fund but that continued investment will be required. The Cabinet Member advised that a review will be undertaken after the contract have been in place for a year.

20.6 The Committee resolved that it:-

1. Notes that officers and the Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure are very positive about start of new contracts, which are allowing more control over what is being delivered and quality.
2. Will review the contract in one year to consider what the actual experience has been.
3. Has strong concerns regarding the state of the county's roads and that without investment the state of the County's highways will continue to deteriorate. The Committee recommends to Cabinet that that additional investment is allocated to the county's roads to ensure the deterioration does not continue. Furthermore, the Committee recommends the Council lobby the government for additional funding to resolve the issues of deterioration of the county's roads.
4. Has concerns about the capacity of contractors with multiple contracts to fulfil their contractual obligations, particularly in light of the compressed programme. It notes that the Council must allocate contracts fairly and may not refuse a contract on the basis that a company already has other contracts with the County Council. However, the compressed programme requires carefully monitoring.
5. Notes that the quality of potholes repairs is improving and this is due to contractual arrangements and improved internal quality insurance.
6. Welcomes the question and answer paper to be provided by Highways on potholes that will allow members to respond to their residents on this subject.
7. Welcomes the investment in white lines and cats eyes, but requests that this should not be a one off investment and it must continue.
8. Requests that action should be taken regarding the damage caused to vehicles by ironworks.
9. Notes the optimism of officers that a planned programme of maintenance can be carried out in 6 months and hopes it can be delivered, particularly over the winter months.

21. Work Programme

21.1 The Committee considered the Committee's current Work Programme (copy appended to the signed minutes).

21.2 Resolved – That the current Work Programme be noted.

22. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

22.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan dated 1 September (a copy appended to the signed minutes).

22.1 The Committee noted that the Review of the Integrated Parking Strategy is likely to be pushed back.

22.2 Resolved – That the Forward Plan be noted.

23. Possible Items for Future Scrutiny

23.1 The Committee noted that it may wish to review the Integrated Parking Strategy at the Committee or via a Task and Finish Group.

24. Date of Next Meeting

24.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 25 November 2020 at 10.30 am. Probable agenda items include:

- West Sussex Tree Plan

24.2 Any member wishing to place an item on the agenda for the meeting must notify the Director of Law and Assurance by 13 November 2020.

The meeting ended at 2.09 pm

Chairman