

Communities, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee

22 January 2024 – At a meeting of the Communities, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee held at 10.30 am at County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ.

Present: Cllr Britton (Chairman)

Cllr Oakley
Cllr Albury
Cllr Baldwin

Cllr N Dennis
Cllr N Jupp
Cllr Kerry-Bedell

Cllr Payne
Cllr Quinn
Cllr Gibson, Left 12.32pm

Apologies were received from Cllr Greenway, Cllr Kenyon and Cllr Sharp

Also in attendance: Cllr J Dennis

39. Declarations of Interest

39.1 No interests were declared.

40. Urgent Matters

40.1 No urgent matters were raised.

41. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee

41.1 Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2023 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

42. Responses to Recommendations

42.1 The Committee noted the responses to recommendations made at the previous meetings.

42.2 A member asked that, with regard to the extension of the booking scheme to all household waste recycling centres, the Committee be updated, by email, on what public engagement is being undertaken about the change, to ensure the widest possible visibility and reduce issues arising at the gate where visitors were not aware or did not understand the change.

42.3 The Committee noted that no date had been fixed yet for the visit to the Community Hub.

43. New Process for Traffic Regulation Orders and Community Highways Schemes

43.1 Members of the Committee asked questions and a summary of those questions and answers follows.

43.2 Applicants were advised to make early contact with the area highways manager to discuss the problem at the site, consider different solutions, undertake consultation in the area with local people to gain support as this provides more weight to the application, provide map and technical information, get support from town and parish councils recorded in meeting minutes, and to seek support from the local County Councillor.

43.3 Applications for speed reductions were not being given any lesser priority but often other schemes tended to score better as they often met more of the SPACE (Space, People, Access, Costs, Environment) assessment categories and had a greater cost/benefit ratio.

43.4 External funding, such as Section 106 developer contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding could be used to subsidise schemes and this information should be included in the application.

43.5 There had been an increase in the number of Community Traffic Regulations Order (CTRO) applications but unfortunately many were rejected because they exceeded the £3,000 threshold. It was hoped that the increase to a £5,000 threshold would see more applications approved. Members sought data on how many CTROs were rejected because of the cost threshold and a naivety about the cost of highways works. **Action:** Officers agreed to provide a list, by division, of applications and outcomes and a menu of prices for works on the highways such as installing a pedestrian crossing, speed limit changes involving signage updates, etc.

43.6 Sometimes schemes that were accepted but needed adjustment to meet technical thresholds on site but they still met some of the objectives of the original application. The applicants were kept up-to-date with any changes.

43.7 Officers used accident data covering in excess of the last five years and acknowledged anecdotal evidence from local residents, the police, and from any correspondence received.

43.8 Members were keen that local county councillors were involved at an early stage. The members could not apply for CTROs as local member support formed part of the assessment process. Members were also keen to be advised of the outcomes of local applications and were told that this should already be happening. **Action:** Officers undertook to check the process and ensure that it did occur.

43.9 The service reported that recruitment was underway to increase the number of staff involved in supporting the application process and that funding was in place to cover this. Members were reassured that processes were in place in the event of staff turnover to ensure background information on applications was available to any officer taking over. Members welcomed an early introduction to any new highways manager in their locality and were keen to be involved in drop-in sessions being set up for members in their local highways' depot.

43.10 Members were keen to ensure that local town and parish councils were aware of the availability of the Community Highways Schemes (CHS)

and Community Traffic Regulations Orders (CTRO), and officers agreed to review the information available on the County Council website, and focus on local level engagement.

43.11 Several members raised questions about applications in their division and officers agreed to respond to them directly outside of the meeting.

43.12 Resolved – That the Committee:

1. Wishes for applicants of rejected schemes to have a clear understanding of why the scheme had not been successful and to understand how that is communicated to increase levels of customer satisfaction.
2. Welcomes feedback on the result of applications to local members, with information that can help members to support their communities more in the future.
3. Welcomes that the service will be recruiting more staff to work on these applications during the next financial year and that there is financial resource available to do this.
4. Were reassured that changes in personnel would not affect the progress of scheme applications.
5. Welcomes the proposed increase in budget for TRO schemes from £3,000 to £5,000.
6. Expresses concern about traffic incidents in rural areas not being reported, so that officers are aware when they are reviewing applications.
7. Welcomes the opportunity of proactive engagement with parish councils at collective briefing sessions.
8. Looks forward to receiving the county-wide data on schemes, sorted by division, and outcome.

44. Major Schemes - Lessons Learned

44.1 Members of the Committee asked questions and a summary of those questions and answers follows.

44.2 Changes in legislative requirements and culture, etc, had led to an issue with insufficient land being available to accommodate cycle lanes and cycle paths. It would be addressed at the earliest possible stage in future planning processes.

44.3 Members expressed concerns that residents who do not access on-line methods might be excluded from taking part in consultations on major schemes. Officers reassured members that information had been made available in libraries and community areas and that those residents were not excluded.

44.4 The impact of Lane Rental charges is unlikely to make a difference to the interaction of utility companies with the County Council's Major Highway Projects, however the County Council is keen to work closely with utility providers to ensure better mapping of utilities and to influence providers to work with them for the benefit of communities.

44.5 A member questioned, under paragraph 8.2, if sub-contractors work could be of a differing standard to that of the main contractor. Officer explained that the main contractor is responsible for ensuring that the quality of work by any sub-contractor is to the standard specified in the project contract. **Action:** Officers agreed to look at the wording to make this clearer.

44.6 Pressure on the legal contracts team had not delayed the project but officers are now conscious of the need to ensure that all supporting agencies are aware of project timetables so they can make sure they are adequately resourced to undertake the work needed.

44.7 It was acknowledged that it was difficult to recruit staff with project management skills for major projects like these two schemes. The service had therefore undertaken to train staff to upskill the current workforce and allow for succession planning. If staff with project management skills were not available then external consultants are used.

44.8 The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges sets out criteria for environmental matters such as noise. As part of a major project, noise modelling is done on the existing road conditions, checked against on-site measurements and adjusted to take account of new road layouts to show where there are any increases in noise. If increases are beyond prescribed levels over a period of time, officers will design acoustic barriers where possible. If landowners experience a perceptible increase in noise levels there is a process through which they can submit a claim for loss of property value.

44.9 Data is collected on the wider impact of the network prior to a scheme and after its implementation. Monitors are set up to see how traffic patterns have changed on the A-road network. Complaints about rat-running that were received prior to the completion of the A259 project have now fallen away suggesting traffic is using the main road again.

44.10 Resolved – That the Committee:

1. Welcomes the report and presentation.
2. Expresses concern at the wording around the robustness of contracts in paragraph 8.2 and welcomed officers agreeing to review the wording.
3. Welcomes the information on training of staff to undertake project management to strengthen staff skills and to allow for succession planning.

4. Acknowledges the lessons learnt on ensuring supporting services are aware of timetables and timescales to ensure the right level of support is available at the right time.

45. Work Programme Planning and Possible Items for Future Scrutiny

45.1 The Committee reviewed the Work Programme and the Forward Plan of key decisions and:

45.2 Noted that the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan 2024-27 (CAAP) scheduled for the March meeting would now come to the June 2024 meeting.

45.3 Chairman and officers to consider whether all or part of the Major Events – Lessons Learned item should be considered in a Part II meeting.

45.4 There was no date yet for the Committee to review the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.

45.5 Active Travel Strategy – in consultation now. Officers to review timing for the Committee to review.

46. Business Planning Group

46.1 Resolved – That the Committee agreed that Cllr Quinn be appointed to the Business Planning Group.

47. Requests for Call-in

47.1 The Committee noted that there had been a call-in of the proposed decision by the Cabinet member for Environment and Climate Change concerning Recycling Centres – Extension of Booking system to all sites IKD34 (23/23) – decision published on the Executive Decision Database on 12 December 2023. The Committee also noted that the Monitoring Officer had declined the request and the decision had become effective on 22 December 2023.

48. Date of Next Meeting

48.1 The next meeting would be held on 4 March 2024 at 10.30am.

The meeting ended at 2.06 pm

Chairman