

## **STREETSMART AND HIGHWAYS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, 21 JANUARY 2015**

PRESENT:- Councillors Andrew Bennett, Alan Bishop, Roderick Bluh, Mary Friend, Neil Heavens, Fay Howard, Colin Lovell, Nick Martin, Derique Montaut, Kevin Parry (Chair), Eric Shaw (Deputy Chair), Timothy Swinyard, Vera Tomlinson, Joe Tray, Steve Wakefield, Peter Watts, David Wood and Robert Wright.

Also in attendance were Councillors Brian Ford, Dale Heenan and Des Moffatt.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Abdul Amin.

### **26. Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded members of the need to declare any known interests in any matter to be considered by the Committee. No interests were declared.

### **27. Public Question Time**

The following questions were asked in accordance with Standing Order 28:

#### Questioner

Mr Richard Symonds, Shaw, Swindon

#### Questions

Mr Symonds asked a set of questions regarding: his not yet having received a response to his question regarding bus stops sited within the confines of pedestrian crossing protective zig zag lines as submitted to the last meeting; residual water not draining away along the newly resurfaced section of the Western Flyer and the safety issues this causes for pedestrians and cyclists; and who takes responsibility for the removal of building materials on a site where work has been undertaken by an external contractor.

#### Response

The Chair thanked Mr Symonds for his questions and comments.

Councillor Brian Ford, Cabinet Member for Streetsmart, responded at the meeting and advised that a written response would be provided as previously agreed. The Head of Highways and Transport also agreed for officers to meet with Mr Symonds at the Western Flyer to discuss the specific locations of residual water.

### **28. Minutes**

Resolved – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2014 be accepted as a correct record.

The Committee received a report regarding the staff absences and vacancy rates within Parking Services, and underlying issues contributing to this such as physical threats and violence towards parking enforcement officers, as requested by the Committee at its meeting on 26 November 2014.

Councillor Brian Ford, Cabinet Member for Streetsmart, presented apologies from Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Skills, who was unable to attend to present this report, and apologies from the Parking Services Manager who was also unable to attend.

Gwillam Lloyd, Head of Highways and Transport, introduced the report and noted that there had been six reported incidents of officers being subjected to physical threats in the last twelve months, and two reported incidents the year before. Mr Lloyd also highlighted that the Service Manager has taken on temporary staff to combat the impact of vacancies, and asked members to note the violence and aggression course that all staff have to attend.

After the presentation of the report, members asked questions and made observations on the following issues:

- The rate of pay to temporary staff in comparison to the rates of pay to permanent members of staff.
- The issue of chest helmets and body cameras being worn in frontline positions and the risk assessment and cost analysis required before taking this forward as a policy.
- The possibility of Streetsmart Officers taking on the powers and responsibilities of Enforcement Officers.
- It was noted that the third recommendation in the report is ambiguous. It was agreed that this would be re-worded to show that all staff attend a course to train them in how to handle and respond to violence and aggression.
- Information missing from the report which would allow members to have an informed discussion. It was agreed that the report would be brought back to the next meeting and should include: completing a staff survey on their safety; the possibility of introducing body cameras; historical instances of where staff have left the service due to threats and stress and what the Council is doing to provide their duty of care to staff; is the effectiveness of the Action Plan being undermined because people now have to ring in to report instances and wait for an officer to attend; the conflicts and demands on the service and how they are responded to, for example when special parking is required for events; the training offered to members of frontline staff and its adequacy; and more comprehensive data to substantiate the level of any problems with sickness absence e.g. numbers of days lost, comparisons with the Council's baseline of absence figures.

**Resolved** – (1) To note that the historic vacancies of Parking Enforcement Officers have now been filled.

(2) To note the present zero vacancy rate of Civil Enforcement Officers.

(3) To note that all staff attend a handling of and responding to violence and aggression course and must adhere to the risk assessments for carrying out this role.

(4) To request that this report be brought back to the next meeting of this Committee containing the enhanced information as set out above.

### **30. Performance Dashboard**

The Committee received a report presenting a monthly performance dashboard relating to services provided within the Committees remit. The report presented an overview of operational performance and is expected to be an enabler to inform future work by the Council and within the Committee's work programme.

Karen McMahon, Head of Business Services and Support, introduced the report and noted that the overall performance of the Service Centre during November and December was similar to the previous years' figures. She highlighted that there had been a reduction in contact to the Members' Hotline in December, and that there had been an increase in the number of complaints received in November compared to the previous year. Complaints are being proactively analysed to ensure that services are being improved. Members also noted that there had been a reduction in the overall complaints received for Streetsmart in November when compared to October, and that the number of complaints regarding highways has been steady. Feedback was also welcomed from members regarding the Ward Reports they have recently received.

After the presentation of the report and the performance dashboard, members asked questions and made observations on the following issues:

- The management plans in place to improve performance in those areas highlighted as having a red performance status under the Contact Centre call handling volumes, which has included appointing a dedicated trainer who is focussing on multi-skilling all of the call centre staff.
- The push within other organisations towards contact quality rather than a narrow focus on achieving targets, and comparisons with similar authorities on national issues and areas where all organisations have difficulties.
- The reporting of Streetsmart issues in parished areas that employ the use of a Parish Lengthsman.
- The avoidance of waste collection rounds during rush hour traffic and possible alternative collection routes and times to avoid traffic build up.
- It was agreed that future performance dashboards should contain more headline information to assist members in utilising the data and contributing towards more meaningful discussions, and learning points and service improvements being raised from the complaints being received.
- The uncertainty over the previous year's figures of waste and recycling complaints when looking at comparisons with this year's figures, and work being done to achieve monthly improvements and analysing current complaints in an attempt to pre-empt complaints being received.
- Possible telecom faults due to the Members Hotline being unavailable recently.
- The level of complaints being received about employee behaviour within Parking Services and the behavioural workshop being run for the staff to improve their performance.
- The management of the timelines involved with answering calls to the Careline number, and the quality of the subsequent conversations.
- The high level of calls being recorded for housing repairs, and the logging of

these onto the council's internal database.

- It was agreed that the Task Group on Green Waste would be reinstated with a request that they report back to the next meeting of this Committee.

Resolved – (1) To note the report and its appendices, with future reports to contain headline information and service level improvements.

(2) To reinstate the Green Waste Task Group and request that it reports to the next meeting of this Committee.

### **31.**

#### **Work Programme 2014-2015**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Law and Democratic Services regarding the development of its work programme for 2014/15.

Concern was expressed by members at the date of the next meeting due to its proximity to the May election. It was agreed that a potential alternative date in March would be investigated.

Resolved – (1) That the Committee's updated work programme, detailed in the report, be noted.

(2) In respect of the Road Works and Streets Works Working Group, to provide an extension of time for the provision of the final report to the next meeting of the Committee.