

## **COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2020**

**PRESENT:-** Councillors Matthew Courtliff, Jim Grant, Steve Heyes, Janine Howarth, Vinay Manro and Caryl Sydney-Smith.

Also in attendance: Councillor Maureen Penny (Cabinet Member for Highways, Maintenance and Waste Services) and Councillor Gary Sumner (Cabinet Member for Strategic Infrastructure, Transport and Planning).

An apologies for absence was received from Councillor Vera Tomlinson.

### **8. Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. No declarations were made.

### **9. Minutes**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020, be confirmed and signed.

### **10. Public Question Time**

Mr Roy Worman asked public questions relating to the scheduling and management of major traffic schemes by the Council. The Cabinet Member for Strategic Infrastructure, Transport and Planning responded at the meeting.

Mr Roy Worman asked supplemental questions relating to (i) costs occurred as a result of traffic schemes not being completed on schedule and the recovery of such costs, and (ii) Covid-19 precautions taken by the workforce during work on highway schemes. The Cabinet Member for Strategic Infrastructure, Transport and Planning responded at the meeting.

Mr Roy Worman asked public questions relating to the operation of the Council's garden waste service. The Chair responded at the meeting.

### **11. Covid-19 Update**

The Council's Director of Operations submitted a report setting out how the Operations Directorate has supported Council staff and services to continue to work safely throughout the pandemic in accordance with the pandemic the Council's Recovery Plan approved by Cabinet in July 2020.

The Director of Operations, Chief Operating Officer and Head of Streetsmart introduced the report and responded to Members' questions and comments in respect of:

- The majority of operational services have been maintained during the

pandemic lockdown period albeit with issues of maintaining the delivery of supplies, ensuring the workforce is socially distanced and shielding.

- Waste and Recycling teams due to social distancing went from three to two in cabs with other staff being transported to sites, which was labour intensive.
- Services were prioritised, as set out in paragraph 3.14 of the report, and lessons learnt in maintaining services during the initial lockdown were applied to the current lockdown.
- An increase in the volume of rubbish and recycling, possibly due to more homeworking, had led to pressures on capacity and time taken to complete collection rounds.
- The Council's Household Waste and Recycling Centre was initially closed but reopened on 20<sup>th</sup> May with the use of a booking system which had proven to be largely successful. Feedback had been positive with requests to keep the booking system currently in operation.
- Essential highway repairs had continued through the lockdown period although there had been an issue with the availability of materials and in maintain social distancing.
- Minor repairs and replacement capital works (ie bathrooms and kitchens) to the Council's housing stock had been suspended but this service had recommenced in September.
- Positive feedback from residents in relation to the household and recycling collections undertaken during the pandemic period.
- The need to advertise the ability to book an appointment at the Council's Household Waste and Recycling Centre via telephone for those unable to book electronically. It was noted that a successful secret shopper exercise, both electronically and by telephone, had been undertaken by the Cabinet Member for Highways, Maintenance and Waste Services during the lockdown period.
- The need to ensure the public had access to appointments at the Council's Household Waste and Recycling Centre, which appeared to have a lot of small tradesmen using it through block bookings online.
- Co-ordination with Parish Councils in respect of the provision of services during the lockdown period and the need for better communications.

Resolved – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Cabinet Member for Highways, Maintenance and Waste Services and officers be thanked for their attendance and presentation.

## **12. Strategic Transport Planning - Proposed schemes 2020/21**

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Infrastructure, Transport and Planning submitted a report setting out strategic transport schemes being delivered during the 2020/21 municipal year and their impact on the delivery of the Council Vision's Priority One "Improve infrastructure and housing to support a growing, low-carbon economy".

The Cabinet Member introduced the report and responded to Members' questions in respect of:

- The scope of major schemes currently planned for 2022/21, including some major schemes whose delivery began in the Municipal Year 2019/20.
- The delivery of major schemes that had commenced in the current Municipal Year and whose delivery would continue into the forthcoming Municipal Year.

- A summary of the schemes set out within the appendix to the report and the capital commitment and funding streams, including Government grants available for their delivery.
- The adverse effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the delivery of the planned work programme.
- Delays to some schemes arising from contractor staffing levels, the need to ensure safe working practices in respect of the pandemic and work being undertaken by utility companies.
- The need to schedule adjoining schemes, especially in the New Eastern Villages, to ensure a smooth delivery of infrastructure and to minimise any disruption caused.
- Reduced traffic levels during the pandemic lock-down period that had reduced disruption arising from some highways work.
- The delivery of some highway infrastructure outside of normal working hours to reduce disruption.
- Delays to works arising from the need to access third party property, for instance land owned by Network Rail for the delivery of works at the White Hart Junction.
- The ambitious and complex nature of some of the schemes such as the Southern Connector Road, which linked Commonhead Roundabout to the New Eastern Villages.
- The ambitious and complex nature of some of the schemes such as the Southern Connector Road and green infrastructure and ecology alongside it which linked Commonhead Roundabout to the New Eastern Villages.
- The principles and safety features supporting the design and delivery of major infrastructure schemes.
- The use of technology, such as traffic sensors, to improve traffic flow in new major highway infrastructure schemes.
- The effective use of social media to reduce disruption either through construction/maintenance work.
- Consultation with ward councillors prior to the commencement of road works.
- Improvement in congestion and air quality arising from traffic management schemes such as Oxford Road.

Resolved – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Cabinet Member for Strategic Infrastructure, Transport and Planning be thanked for his attendance and presentation.

(Councillor Matthew Courtliff had a personal declaration and non-prejudicial of interest in respect of this item as he was employed by Network Rail).

### **13. Work Programme 2020/21**

The Committee considered a report by the Chief Legal Officer setting out the Committee's proposed Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2020/21.

The Chair reported that there had been an informal meeting of the Parking Grass Verges Task Group to discuss the parameters of the work it would undertake. The Chair invited additional comments in respect of key issues for the Task Group to consider. The Chair confirmed that the Task Group would endeavour to conclude its work during the current Municipal Year and would its findings to the Cabinet.

Resolved – That the report be noted and Work Programme for the current Municipal Year be approved.