



Place Overview
Committee

8 April 2021

2.00 pm

Item

3

Public

**MINUTES OF THE PLACE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 2 MARCH
2021
2.00 - 3.45 PM**

Responsible Officer: Sarah Townsend
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Present

Councillor Joyce Barrow (Chairman)
Councillors Andy Boddington, Julian Dean, Simon Harris, Dan Morris, Pamela Moseley,
Paul Wynn, Roy Aldcroft (Substitute) (substitute for Paul Milner) and Nicholas Bardsley
(Substitute) (substitute for Rob Gittins)

94 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rob Gittins, Paul Milner and William Parr. Councillor Nick Bardsley was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor Rob Gittins and Councillor Roy Aldcroft was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor Paul Milner.

95 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Members were reminded that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on any matter in which they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

Councillor Simon Harris declared that he was the Deputy Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport.

96 Minutes of Previous Meetings

The minutes of the meetings held on 5th November 2020 and 9th December 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

97 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

98 Member Question Time

Questions were received from two Councillors.

From Councillor Nat Green: Councillor Green was in attendance to ask his question in relation to the number of gulley clearing vehicles available to Shropshire Council and the number of the county's gulleys that still needed clearing. A full copy of the question and response provided is attached to the web page for the meeting and also attached to the signed minutes.

Councillor Green was allowed to ask a supplementary question regarding whether those gulleys not yet cleared would be done so by the end of the financial year. The Head of Highways confirmed that this would be the case.

From Councillor David Vasmer: Councillor Vasmer was in attendance to ask his question in relation to the funding of the dog warden service over the last four years, the staff allocated to dog warden duties and the enforcement action taken over the last four years. A full copy of the question and response provided is attached to the web page for the meeting and also attached to the signed minutes.

Councillor David Vasmer was allowed to ask a supplementary question regarding whether the dog warden services had been reduced over the last few years. Councillor Steve Davenport, Portfolio Holder for Highways, confirmed that whilst this was the case, things would be done differently in the next financial year and he would email Councillor Vasmer with further clarification on this.

99 Highways Improvement Plan

The committee received the report of the Executive Director of Place which provided an update on improvements to the highway service. The Head of Highways was also in attendance to present this item and outlined the report.

The Deputy Leader was in attendance and made a statement acknowledging that the roads and footways across the county required improvement. He explained that whilst funds had been taken out of the Highways budget and put into Adult Social Care and Children's Services, this was the right decision at the time. Factors such as the 'Beast from the East' storm in 2018/19 and the volume of rain resulting in two flooding events had also contributed to the deterioration of the network and the amount of government funding that the council receives was not enough. He announced that as part of the Administrations plans for future years, an extra £40 million would be committed to be spend over the next four years to fix the county's roads and footways (£10 million pounds each year for each of the next 4 years). Several Members commented that this statement had been inappropriate to announce at an Overview Committee Meeting.

During the discussion and responding to questions from the committee, the following was explained:

- Why the KPI Scores e.g. KPI 1a, did not necessarily reflect the situation on the network and going forwards, the Highways Improvement Plan would address this.

- Members commented that they were not happy with how 'My Shropshire' was working. The Head of Highways acknowledged that there was currently a backlog of customer enquiries and that they had not had the ability to get on top of the number of demands and enquires received, the level of which was at times, unprecedented. How this level of demand could be met, along with ways in which the interface system could be improved, were currently being looked into by a working group.
- Regarding cycle paths being unmaintained and overgrown, it was acknowledged that the maintenance on existing cycle paths did need to and would improve. Maintenance was generally an area that had suffered and was one of the areas of focus in the Highways Improvement Plan.
- The work and activity undertaken by gully crews was logged. Drainage had been a significant area of focus in the past 12 months due to the direct correlation between ineffective drainage and potholes. The Head of Highways confirmed that he would look into the outstanding work within Broseley and would report back to Councillor Harris.
- There is a designated team of highway inspectors who inspect the network for highway safety defects in accordance with policy. In addition, there is also a technician responsible for each of the north, central and southern areas of the county's network.
- The Executive Director of Place commented that in terms of the highways context of the 'My Shropshire' Portal, as of the end of March, Kier would be adopting the council's confirmed system. Councillors would therefore have full visibility on highway issues.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

100 Highways Winter Maintenance

The committee received the report of the Executive Director of Place which outlined the current arrangements and identified areas of concern and planned improvements to the service. By engaging with councillors, it was hoped to identify further areas for further consideration within the review of the Winter Maintenance Plan. The Head of Highways was also in attendance to present this item and outlined the report.

During the discussion and responding to questions from the committee, the following was explained:

- Members welcomed hearing that the highways service was intending to undertake a review of its Winter Maintenance Plan, to ensure that the service better meets the needs of road users.
- In terms of joint working with Shrewsbury Town Council, there were good communication links in place between them and Shropshire Council. Resources had been forthcoming during past bad weather events, albeit the arrangements in place were fairly fluid.
- It was suggested that all Town Councils should be encouraged to adopt a protocol whereby additional resources be made available to Shropshire Council should a snow event occur. This would also allow for existing resources to be better used.

- It was commented that there should be more formalisation of arrangements such as snow wardens and that local communities should be empowered to assist with things e.g. the monitoring of grit bins and the clearing of footpaths.
- A comment was made that engagement should be undertaken with Parish Councils as they would be able to provide accurate local knowledge along with contact information e.g. for local farmers.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That a review of the current Winter Maintenance Plan be endorsed.
- (b) That areas of strategic concern for consideration within the review be identified.
- (c) That a Task and Finish Group be set up to engage members further in the development of the plan with there being at least one meeting held prior to the May 2021 election, in order to set the framework and the terms of reference for the group.

101 Analysis of People Killed or Seriously Injured in Road Traffic Collisions 2016 - 2020

The committee received the report of the Head of Transport and the Environment which presented the findings of analysis of road traffic collisions where people were killed or seriously injured (KSI). The report captured data from January 2016 until 15th December 2020. It was noted that data capture is based upon a calendar year and future reports would provide data from 16th December 2020 onwards. The Head of Transport and the Environment and the Team Leader – Performance, Intelligence and Policy were in attendance and explained that the general theme throughout the report was that accidents were reducing and the number of killed or seriously injured issues were declining.

During the discussion and responding to questions from the committee, the following was explained:

- The Council had a statutory responsibility to analyse the data and accident clusters and in doing so, worked with West Mercia Police.
- Information was provided regarding the various costs of someone being killed or seriously injured.
- Several comments were made regarding Shropshire's towns and villages and how the priority should not just be to necessarily reduce accidents, but also, to increase the opportunity for people to use the streets in a safe and more accessible way.
- It was suggested that Public Health needed to be involved in developing LTP4.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the content of the report be noted.

- (b) That a Working Group be formed to deliberate where future funds, or existing budgets could be reallocated, allied with any public messages or campaigns to consider any changes in approach following the data presented in the report.
- (c) That a Working Group be formed to deliberate the Sites of Community Concern Policy, LTP and Highways CIL to support a review of policy to align demand management, resources and outcomes of this work.

102 Place Overview Committee Work Programme

The Scrutiny Officer outlined the proposed agenda items for the committee's next meeting. Members suggested that the following additional items should also be added to the work programme, for future consideration:

- Biodiversity – Whilst the Scrutiny Officer confirmed that this was considered at the committee's September 2021 meeting, it was commented that the report was more of an overview on biodiversity and what the Council was doing. It did not allow them to consider how the Council could change in view of the ecological and climate crisis and how biodiversity could be promoted.
- The Council had recently voted for a Task and Finish Group on the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill and this needed to be progressed.
- Embodied Carbon in terms of both the Council's Place Plan and Local Plan.
- Shrewsbury Big Town Plan – Concerns were expressed regarding rural bus services and the proposals for them to be terminated at the Park and Ride rather than going into the town centre. The Executive Director of Place commented that the development of a Full Movement Strategy would address issues such as public transport, carparking, walking and cycling. It was noted that the Place Overview Committee would look at this at an early stage under the new administration.
- The Executive Director of Place suggested that members might like to consider receiving an item on the plans for the unlocking of places and how it was planned to get back to normal on 21st June 2021 following COVID -19.

The Scrutiny Officer commented that due to the available amount of officer time and the forthcoming election, members' focus would potentially be elsewhere. Therefore, regarding the various task and finish groups and working groups being proposed, members needed to think about what they wanted to happen now and what could wait until after the forthcoming election. It was agreed that a Winter Maintenance Working Group was a priority but that the other three task and finish groups could be dealt with by the new administration following the elections.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposed committee work programme, attached as appendix 1 to the report, be agreed.

- (b) That the Winter Maintenance Working Group be progressed and a report be considered at the committee's next meeting.
- (c) That the three task and finish groups be added onto the committee's work programme for consideration by the new administration following the May 2021 elections.

103 **Date/Time of Next Meeting of the Committee**

Members noted that the next meeting of the Place Overview Committee was scheduled for 2.00 pm on Thursday, 8th April 2021.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: