



Place Overview
Committee

6 February 2023

10.30 a.m.

Item

3

Public

**MINUTES OF THE PLACE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 10
NOVEMBER 2022
2.00 P.M. - 3.35 P.M.**

Responsible Officer: Sarah Townsend

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Present

Councillor Joyce Barrow (Chairman)

Councillors Steve Davenport (Vice Chairman), Julian Dean, Geoff Elner, Roger Evans,
Dan Morris, Pamela Moseley, Peggy Mullock, David Vasmer and Paul Wynn

26 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence from committee members.

Mark Barrow, Executive Director of Place, sent his apologies.

27 Disclosable Interests

None were declared.

28 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Place Overview Committee meeting held on 29th September 2022 be approved as a correct record.

29 Public Question Time

There were none.

30 Member Question Time

A member question was received from Councillor Julian Dean regarding Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards in non-domestic buildings, including the council's own assets. Councillor Dean was in attendance to ask his question and the Overview and Scrutiny Officer read out the reply, in the absence of officers. (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 Dean provided a brief context to his question and as the officers who had provided the response had been unable to attend the meeting, he was advised to either email his supplementary question directly to them or submit it to the next Place Overview Committee meeting.

A comment was made that it is Cabinet members who reply to issues raised by the Scrutiny Committee and not the service area. The Chairman responded that the relevant Portfolio Holder would be advised regarding any questions that are received.

31 **Chairman's Remarks**

The Chairman provided an update on the work that the Place Overview Committee was carrying out, or had previously carried out, as follows:

- She had attended Cabinet last month to provide them with the committee's response to the proposal for a waste minimisation strategy. This response had been shared with officers and they had been asked to ensure that the final proposal to Cabinet took into account the committee's response to the proposals. She expected that the strategy would return to scrutiny in due course before Cabinet make a final decision on the matter.
- A further request had been made to Cabinet that the council responds to the recommendations of the committee's 2019 Signs and Banners Task and Finish Group. The Leader had agreed to instruct officers to prepare a response for Cabinet to consider.
- She would attend Cabinet again later in the month, to share the committee's recommendation that the council makes equal the period of consultation on planning applications given to town and parish councils and to elected members of Shropshire Council.

32 **Highways Capital Programme**

The committee received the report of the Head of Highways. However, prior to considering it, members commented that it did not cover the objectives detailed within the committee's work programme and that the information required was also missing.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Regulatory Services was in attendance and explained that the Assistant Director of Infrastructure had been responsible for the report, but was unfortunately off work for a few months. In his absence, the Head of Highways had picked up the report and produced it with a very limited brief and in a short space of time. They both confirmed that they were happy that the report be deferred.

Members requested that the following information be provided within the report:

- Percentage breakdown on how capital funding is spent between carriageways, footways and cycleways.
- A re-look at the climate change appraisal section as if cycleways and footways were being prioritised, there would be a climate change benefit.
- Active Travel.
- Footpaths.
- Asset Management System and the reasons behind various statements contained within the dashboard.
- Capital spend in relation to the current year.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Regulatory Services commented that information concerning the current year and where the highway service had come from up to where it was now, could be provided. However, as the budgets for the next financial year had not yet been agreed, information that could be provided on forward projections was somewhat limited.

RESOLVED:

That consideration of the Highways Capital Programme be deferred to the next meeting of the Place Overview Committee.

In responding to a question, the Head of Highways explained that Multevo were a supply chain partner of Kier and had been brought into the contract approximately eighteen months ago. He would circulate a briefing note to all councillors providing further information about them.

33 Communicating Highways Works and Repairs

The committee received the report of the Head of Communications which looked at how and why Shropshire Council and its highways partners communicate with residents, road users and stakeholders around highways maintenance work, as well as the importance of good communications and the improvements made in the past eighteen months in the way that communications around highways maintenance is carried out.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Regulatory Services was in attendance to present the report on behalf of the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Communications, along with the Council's Senior Communications Officer and Kier's Communications Manager.

Members were informed that in spring 2021, it was acknowledged that there was a need for a communications strategy and a new approach to communications, to show and evidence the work that was being carried out to improve the county's roads and to explain the context of why roads are as people find them.

Attention was drawn to a recent independent national highways and transport survey (the NHT survey) in which a higher percentage of Shropshire residents replied in comparison to national figures. The Council was marked as improving in eight out of twelve areas of communication by residents against the same results last year. This was a marked improvement and the Head of Highways agreed to email the statistics

to the Overview and Scrutiny Officer, in order that they could be emailed out to committee members.

Committee discussion, comments and suggestions covered:

- The level of communication and engagement with Councillors and Town and Parish Councils had greatly increased, although it was recognised that there was more work to be done.
- Now that the Fix My Street app had been launched and was up and running, the second phase of implementation was due to commence, whereby improvements to the feedback loop would be made and the public would be able to interact more effectively with the council through the app. This would seek to address the commonly reported issue that people receive little detail on the progress of reports that they have made to the council and that when feedback is received, it is not always meaningful.
- With regards to a query regarding a manhole cover that kept on collapsing and had been temporarily repaired on numerous occasions but required a more permanent repair, the Head of Highways requested that the member email him the details in order that he could follow it up.
- Discussion took place regarding communications on the highways where diversion signs and road ahead closed signs were in place when there was no work being undertaken or when the works were a significant distance away. Members were informed that this was often because of safety issues and to stop vehicles getting stuck, with all types of vehicles needing to be accommodated and not just cars. Regarding businesses, 'businesses open as usual' signage was displayed where road closures and / or road works were in place.
- Several members spoke about road closure issues that they were currently encountering and they were asked to email them to Kier's Communications Manager (Mark.A.Fox@kier.co.uk) and the Council's Head of Highways for investigation.
- As funding was now consistent in terms of the four year plan, the cycle of having to close roads quickly would be reduced. This would allow more sufficient time to plan.
- Councillors are a key part of the communications channel and the importance of them receiving road closure information as early as possible was highlighted, in order that it could be cascaded onto their local residents.
- It was questioned whether local Traffic Management companies could be used where possible as they would be more familiar with and more likely to have the local knowledge of a particular area. The Head of Highways commented that local providers were valued and ways of bringing them into the service was proactively being looked into. However, for a variety of reasons, it was not always possible to use them.
- In order that everyone was working towards a Shropshire Highways alliance, some rebranding was taking place in order that everyone was working under the same brand and contractors felt part of the process and the Highways Department. This had resulted in both the work and quality of the work increasing.
- It was noted that the level of complaints had fallen over the last two years from 34% of all complaints to 27%. Improved service, greater investment and improved communication were all likely to have contributed to this. It was

commented that the report should have included the actual figures of the number of complaints and not just the percentages.

- The highways maintenance pages of the council's website were kept up to date and were reviewed on a regular basis.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a report be provided to the next Place Overview Committee meeting, for information regarding what has been done to employ more local Traffic Management companies than there are currently.

34 Place Overview Committee Work Programme

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented the Place Overview Committee's proposed work programme for the 2022-2023 municipal year. He explained that the Economic Growth Strategy was being considered by the Communities Overview Committee at their meeting on Wednesday, 23rd November 2022. It had originally been suggested that a joint committee meeting be held on this topic, but Legal and Democratic Services had advised that there was no mechanism in place to do so. However, the Communities Overview Committee could invite the Place Overview Committee to participate in their meeting and therefore, Councillor Macey, Chairman of the Communities Overview Committee, had invited all members of the Place Overview Committee to do so. Members requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Officer go back to Legal and Democratic Services to establish whether members of the Place Overview Committee would have voting rights at this meeting.

It was noted that a meeting of the Housing Development Task and Finish Group would be held on Tuesday, 22nd November 2022 and officers would also be in attendance. Going forward, Shingler Homes had kindly agreed to attend a meeting and a walking tour of some of the developments in Shrewsbury would also be arranged.

An update was provided on the Clean and Healthy Rivers topic and members were informed that it had become clear that the scope of this needed to be far wider than originally thought, as the local authority has a much larger role to play in river water quality than anticipated.

It was noted that the Local Transport Plan 4 was due to be considered at the committee's next meeting. However, due to the complexity and size of this document, members suggested that it would be beneficial to have a briefing on it beforehand and that this could also be extended to all Councillors. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that as the Communities Overview Committee had agreed to scrutinise community based transport work, he would discuss the best way forward with officers.

With regards to the LED lighting programme that was due to be considered at the committee's next meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Officer commented that 75% of the issues on Fix My Street were concerning lighting columns. It was suggested that he speak to officers to establish if this was due to the supply issue on old style lights

and if it wasn't, this topic could be broadened into looking at the matter of street lighting in general.

It was commented that having a report presented by a Cabinet Members, as had been the case earlier in the meeting, felt 'odd' as normally, reports were presented by officers and there was a risk of 'politicising' the issues being considered. It was noted that the Council's Constitution states that Cabinet members would normally attend scrutiny committee meetings.

Reference was made to previous practice whereby scrutiny committee Chairs had opportunity to see and discuss draft reports prior to them being considered at the meeting. It was suggested that members wait until the outcome of the recent LGA scrutiny review is published and if this is not included as a recommendation, they then raise it with the Assistant Director – Legal and Governance.

35 Date/Time of Next Meeting of the Committee

It was noted that the next meeting of the Place Overview Committee was scheduled to be held on Thursday, 26th January 2023 commencing at 2.00 p.m.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: