



Place Overview
Committee

23 March 2023

2.00 pm

Item

3

Public

**MINUTES OF THE PLACE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23 MARCH
2023
2PM – 3.15 PM**

Responsible Officer:

Email: Amanda.holyoak@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257721

Present

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

46 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Joyce Barrow. Councillor Steve Davenport substituted for her.

47 Disclosable Interests

None were declared

48 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

49 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

50 Member Question Time

Councillor Rob Wilson had submitted a question in relation to attendance at Active Travel England regional engagement sessions. The full question and response provided is available from the web page for the meeting.

51 LED Lighting Programme

Andy Wilde Head of Highways introduced the report summarising the key points within it and acknowledged that from a Salix finance delivery programme perspective the programme had not been delivered as quickly or as effectively as the council would have liked.

He explained that at the time the council received the money it was not well equipped to deliver the programme and was also dealing with a significant amount of failure demand with core services under huge pressure. Resources had been stressed which made delivery of the programme very difficult. On receipt of the funds there had been no available revenue funding to build up the team to deliver the programme of work. This had meant heavy reliance on consultants, who had not been well placed to support the council with this piece of work.

Amendments to the initial business case gave the council much better control, had tightened up governance procedures and recent progress in reshaping the streetlighting service was ensuring that the programme moved forward.

During discussion, members made comments and asked questions including: What were the skills or capacity missing and would learning from this experience help inform future projects; was the key issue the lack of in-house capacity; was there a current shortage of parts; was 28 day repair target currently achievable and if not when would it be; when would phase 2 of the project be announced; would lamps be fitted with sensors that automatically reported lamp failure; how often were columns inspected and how often should they be replaced; and what were the plans for the heritage columns in the county?

Responding to questions and comments the Head of Highways explained that there had been a number of issues when the funding had been received, including the need for an asset register to capture energy drawn from a lantern when it was replaced so that this could be fed into the carbon calculator. Without a team and the appropriate software this had not been possible. The street lighting team had been made up of just one officer whereas other authorities had more staff with the range of skills required. There had also been issues at that time with the supply chain due to the number of authorities acquiring funding.

He confirmed that there had been a shortage of parts during the pandemic but that this was no longer an issue, with a four week lead in time for the lanterns being used. He confirmed that it had been a struggle to hit the 28 day repair during the winter as resources across highways were focused on winter maintenance. This would improve moving on from the winter period and consideration was being given to the split of resources allocated to programmed works and reactive works going forward. A communications plan would be issued explaining the extent of phase 2 installations shortly. It had not been possible to include the fitting of a remote sensor to inform of lantern failure as costs had not stacked up - if this had been included in the business case then would not have been received. He also explained that structural testing of columns was part of the programme but he would have to look into the detail around the heritage columns in the county outside of the meeting.

He went on to answer questions about changes to the Kier contract and explained that there was a much clearer understanding of where they could add value and where self-initiated direct work would be more effective.

Members thanked the Head of Highways for the clear and honest explanation and agreed to note the report and to recommend that a briefing session on a wider set of issues be provided to all members from which issues for scrutiny could be identified.

52 Update on Review of Winter Service Plan

The Head of Highways provided an update on how the highways service had put into place the committee's recommendations following its review of Shropshire Council's highways winter service policy. He also reported on further initiatives in relation to the winter maintenance service and on emerging issues.

The committee welcomed the report and particularly the improvements related to drainage assets maintenance, with significantly less failure and 800 enquiries dropping down to 300 in a short space of time. They were also pleased to hear of the new grit bin inventory and restocking of all grit bins over the summer which had meant being more resilient at the start of the winter. Other initiatives welcomed included the mini gritter trial and weather forecast information and push along hand spreaders being provided for schools.

Community participation had improved demonstrated by close working with Shrewsbury Town Council during a period of snow in the town centre. The bulk of the gritting service was delivered through Kier but the council had learnt a lot from its own initiatives and trials and was now both more resilient and responsive, with a more positive and proactive social media presence thanks to a dedicated communications officer in the service.

Members asked about the plan to review the defined network and heard that this work had been scoped but not yet started because it had been necessary to wait to understand the location of depots. There was still discussion around the role that snow warden schemes might take and it was acknowledged what would work in one parish could be very different to what would work in another.

It was confirmed that there was a risk assessment used to evaluate requests for grit bins, and there was a stock of them available at no cost to parish councils where risk criteria were met.

It was confirmed that details of snow plough contractors in more rural electoral divisions could be supplied.

Members discussed nervousness of businesses and homeowners to clear paths outside their own property when covered in snow and ice and it was thought that clear communication with regard to this would be helpful. Discussion also covered the successful use of mini gritters in pedestrianised areas.

The Head of Highways reported on refinements to the next phase of Fix My Street which was welcomed.

Members noted the report and welcomed the encouraging progress and the intention for closer working with town and parish councils.

53 Place Overview Committee Work Programme

The Scrutiny Manager explained the plans for work programming sessions for the new committees following the annual council meeting.

<TRAILER_SECTION>

Signed (Chairman)

Date: