

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 21 June 2023

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Jeff Clarke (Chair)
Councillor Jonathan Chilvers (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Jenny Fradgley
Councillor Dave Humphreys
Councillor Peter Gilbert
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher
Councillor Daren Pemberton
Councillor Mejar Singh
Councillor Andrew Wright

Portfolio Holders

Councillor Andy Crump, Portfolio Holder for Fire & Rescue and Community Safety
Councillor Jan Matecki, Portfolio Holder for Transport & Planning
Councillor Heather Timms, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate & Culture

Officers

David Ayton-Hill, Assistant Director - Communities
Kim Fraser-Bell, Strategy and Commissioning Manager, Economy and Skills
Tristan Hall, Section Manager (Delivery Lead), Project and Programme Management
Isabelle Moorhouse, Democratic Services Officer
Mark Ryder, Strategic Director for Communities
Scott Tompkins, Assistant Director for Environment Services

Others Present

Councillor Richard Baxter-Payne
Councillor Tim Sinclair

1. General

(1) Apologies

Councillor Sarah Feeney
Councillor Martin Watson (Portfolio Holder for Economy)

The Chair thanked Councillor Marian Humphreys for being a substitute for Councillor Mejar Singh when he was off ill.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

(3) Chair's Announcements

The Chair noted that at June's Chair and Spokes meeting that the committee would hold an extra meeting to discuss the highway issues raised.

(4) Minutes of Previous Meeting

12th April 2023

Councillor Andy Wright stated that the following corrections were needed:

- There were no houses on Birch Coppice but there were warehouses
- It is Penmire Brook not Peddimore Brook
- 'Not' should be added to the sentence so it read that officers from the EA said that the trees should not be being 'ripped out' by contractors

Councillor Dave Humphreys added that when the Brook was backed up so the river could not flow then this would lead to flooding and Birch Coppice itself did not flood.

Subject to the stated corrections, the minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record.

16th May 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record.

2. Public Speaking

None.

3. Questions to Portfolio Holder

In response to Councillor Humphreys. Mark Ryder (Strategic Director – Communities) stated that the Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) had already started in Polesworth.

In response to Councillor Jonathan Chilvers, Scott Tompkins (Assistant Directors – Environmental Services) said that information and application forms for the Communities Highway Action Grant will be provided to parish councils, wards, town councils and elected members as well as a website set up. This follows on from the feedback obtained from the first few pilot projects.

Following a question from Councillor Jenny Fradgley, David Ayton-Hill (Assistant Directors – Communities) stated that they were reviewing the EV spaces on Chestnut Walk in Stratford and they will bring in TROs so only EVs could use them in the autumn.

(1) Economic Development Update

Kim Fraser-Bell (Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Economy & Skills) summarised the following points:

- The new Holly Walk business centre in Leamington had opened to provide an office space for businesses, especially in the digital industry
- The Fair Chance Employers Programme works with 40 businesses to recruit

inclusively. Industry tours had started to allow these recruited workers to make them aware of the different employment opportunities

- As part of the tours, five hospitality industries were visited, and 9/33 participants were now interested in a job in the hospitality industry with two now in permanent roles
- The UK Property Infrastructure Fund had launched at the UK Infrastructure Forum. £31 million was available across seven projects. One of WCCs schemes was progressing well through the scheme and should be ready to show soon
- Warwick District Council, Warwick University and the gaming industries in Warwickshire were worked with for an event called Virtual Futures for students to show the career in the gaming industry as it was one of the fastest growing industries
- This event was a sell out so another one was being planned for January 2024

In response to Councillor Humphreys, Kim Fraser-Bell stated that they could not tell if businesses were hiring new workers or workers who had now upskilled and were coming back. However, there was a general struggle with filling roles across different industries because people were not skilled enough but businesses were recovering post-Covid.

(2) EDS Dashboard

Tristan Hall (Section Manager (Delivery Lead) Project & Programme Management) summarised the following points:

- The contacts for the different officers dealing with each scheme was available at the end of the report

Tristan Hall discussed the schemes shown on the dashboard allocated a red status rating including:

- (NW) Avon Mill and Hunter's Lane – Primarily this is shown as red due to the tight timescales considerable work required to submit and gain approval for the DfT business cases to enable construction to start by March 2025.
- (NW) A47 Hinkley Road corridor - closely linked with the Longshoot cycle scheme, cycling element is progressing well and targeting construction in Summer 2024 – the junction improvements element needs to be allocated a full funding package to move forward and hence the scheme as a whole is shown as red on the dashboard.
- (SW) St John's Road in Warwick – Stakeholder engagement ongoing, feedback related loss of parking and traffic flow in the area when the project is complete. We are targeting to commence the scheme as early as possible in 2024, but securing road space is challenging – hence the scheme shown as red on the dashboard
- (NW) The Bermuda Connectivity scheme was progressing, and key stakeholders were being kept updated; works on the Tenlons road/Heath End Road junction should be finished by the end of July. The bridge should be completed by autumn 2023 which does not align with the original programme.
- (NW) Greeman Crossroads started construction in June 2023 and is a casualty reduction scheme
- (NW) Construction at Temple Hill in Wolvey had started too

In response to the Chair, Tristan Hall agreed to set up a meeting with the Chair on site regarding the Hinckley Road scheme.

In response to Councillor Chilvers, Scott Tompkins confirmed that the entrance to the new school in Kenilworth on Glasshouse Lane would have finished before it opens in September.

There were discussions over what type of crossing should be outside it. There were S278 works occurring on Glasshouse Lane over the next two years, therefore a session was planned with Kenilworth members to brief them on what will happen. A meeting was planned with the Europa Way board later that week so the updates on this will be provided after.

Following a question from Councillor Humphreys, Tristan Hall clarified that the figure for the Greenman Scheme should show the funding available for the scheme and not the cost of it but this will be checked.

In response to the Chair, Scott Tompkins confirmed that the Bermuda Connectivity scheme would not impact the resurfacing works that will happen for Griff Island.

4. Virtual Permit Update

David Ayton-Hill summarised the following points:

- Cabinet approved WCC moving from a paper permit system to a virtual one in October 2020 which is easier to update, retain information, pay and make changes on
- The original IT plan for this did not work properly after being tested, therefore they changed contractors to NSL who use a better system and works
- The new permit system should start in July 2023

In response to Councillor Pete Gilbert, David Ayton-Hill confirmed that for anyone who cannot or do not want to use the new permit system online can use the phone NSL instead.

He agreed to check whether some areas did get free permits and whether they were on the new system correctly.

5. OSC Customer Feedback 22/23

Scott Tompkins summarised the following points:

- All comments came through the 'contact us' system and they were categorised into complaints, compliments, questions, or comments
- There were 4335 contact cases last year across all directorates with 2000 of them being
- complaints
- Communities got 528 complaints last year which was down from the previous years
- 20% (most) complaints were around CPE followed by waste management which was around 10%
- 42% of the complaints environmental services received were around things like the state of
- a footway, roads or how grass was cut
- Service requests e.g. to fill a pothole were not deemed as complaints but they were if they were chased up
- The new customer service system will be rolled out in August 2023. It will include all the contact had with each resident and will improve the consistency and quality of responses to them

Councillor Gilbert noted that residents and parish/town councils feel that larger authorities are like businesses so they may not interact with them like they want to. They feel that their complaints would not be heard so the doors should be opened so all councils (larger and smaller) can hear what residents think.

Scott Tompkins concurred with this and said that the new system should make it a lot easier for residents to interact with the Council. The new system also makes it easier to report potholes with their phones.

In response to the Chair, Scott Tompkins said that the new system will include contacts made online and over the phone.

Following a supplementary from the Chair, Scott Tompkins stated that the customer management relations system would be implemented first which tracks responses which would mean that the resident will get a response quicker.

In response to Councillor Mejar Singh, Scott Tompkins said that WCC's current website has a 'report it' system where road issues could be reported; the resident would set up an account and say how they want to be corresponded with. The new system would include a reference number so incidents could be tracked easily.

6. Communities OSC Performance Report Year End 202223

David Ayton-Hill informed the committee that this report covered all the KPIs (key performance indicators), the delivery plan, finances and risks.

In response to the Chair, David Ayton-Hill noted that while there was an underspend with waste there was a large overspend with home to school transport which there had been for years. There was a slight reduction in savings when meeting road safety audits and WCC was planning to start putting itself on the market with these. Delivery delays were mainly caused by the road engineering schemes as they were struggling to get contractors on site on time. New contractors were brought in so this should speed this up in the future.

Scott Tompkins added that income generation was not met in two of his areas: forestry and highway enforcement. Forestry was a team down, so they had to turn work away, but a new team was brought in now. Enforcement from highways had a financial shortfall because its target was too ambitious.

There was a traditional budget forecast where money had to be spent otherwise it would be lost. More realistic budget forecasts were implemented now following a group being set up to monitor budget forecasts.

In response to Councillor Gilbert, Scott Tompkins stated that nationally there was a skill shortage with engineers and town & country planners. WCC are working closely with the district and boroughs regarding response times with highway issues in planning applications because of the number of vacancies. There was a struggle to hire suitable candidates despite the different methods/efforts used. Apprenticeships were now being done to 'grow their own' engineers. Councillor Gilbert noted that due to more people working from home, some workers could feel more isolated and miss the comradery of being in a team in an office.

Mark Ryder stated that flexible working was a desired aspect in jobs now but more people were coming into the offices at WCC as they have had to close off the car parks during the week to members of the public as staff could not park. Hybrid and meeting spaces were made and used by staff members too.

Following a point from the Chair, Mark Ryder stated that officers were always available unless they were on leave.

In response to the Chair, David Ayton-Hill said that with Transforming Nuneaton, there were delays with the redesign. NBBC getting land ownership pushed things back too due to permissions. The cycle schemes should start imminently when it starts members will be notified. There was an issue with costs on all the highway schemes due to inflation; therefore, they were redesigning the gyratory scheme to benefit Nuneaton more and reduce costs. Timescales were pushed to be brought forward when possible.

7. Communities OSC Work Programme

The work programme was noted as printed.

8. Urgent Items

In response to Councillor Humphreys, Mark Ryder agreed to chase up when the yellow lines will be installed in Polesworth.

The meeting rose at 15:04

.....
Chair