

**CORPORATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGULATORY SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

27 November 2018

Present:-

Councillors A Dewhirst (Chair), P Colthorpe, H Ackland, Y Atkinson, K Ball, J Berry, R Bloxham, J Hook, J Brook, P Crabb, A Eastman, I Hall, M Shaw and C Slade

Apologies:-

Councillors R Edgell and R Radford

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25

Councillors R Croad, A Davis, R Gilbert and A Saywell

* **89** **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2018 be signed as a correct record.

* **90** **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There was no matter raised as a matter of urgency.

* **91** **Public Participation**

There were no oral representations from Members of the Public.

* **92** **Shaldon Bridge**

The Committee received a presentation from the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste on the Shaldon Bridge repairs. The bridge was Grade II listed and constructed in 1929/30.

The bridge currently had a temporary three-tonne weight restriction and a long diversion in place following the identification of timber piles within one of the deep-water piers where concrete piles had been expected. Emergency service vehicles however were exempt from the restriction. Depending on weather conditions, it was hoped to complete the necessary works very shortly.

The Chief Officer further reported that three other piers, although not a current concern, had been identified as needing repair and these works would be put forward for inclusion in the programme for next year.

The Chair congratulated the Chief Engineer for Bridges and Structures and his team for their work on the repair.

* **93** **Service Deliveries: In-Year Briefings**

(Councillors Croad, Davis and Gilbert attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(1) and spoke to this item at the invitation of the Committee.)

(a) Corporate Services

The Committee received a verbal update from the Chief Executive on the in-year position of budget and service delivery within Digital Transformation and Business Support; Legal, Communications and Human Resources (including Democratic Services, Coroners and Registration); and Treasurer's Services.

Members noted that overall support service areas were performing well and were each confident of meeting their target budgets. Of significance, however, was the delay in the launch of the new HR management system and the consequent need to identify alternative savings for 2019/20.

(b) Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste

The Committee received the Report of the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste (HIW/18/87), which provided an in-year briefing on budget and service delivery. The service was forecasting a break-even budget position at Month 6

In discussion with Members, the following points were made:-

- the progression of Ash dieback within the County where the number of cases identified so far this year had risen to over 400;
- receipt of Government funding of £18.754 million for potholes and bridges – this was capital funding which, with Member engagement, would be allocated shortly;
- preventative maintenance as an alternative way of dealing with potholes was being considered;
- any problems with gully clearing should be reported to the local neighbourhood highway officer;
- the Dragon patcher machine had now arrived in Devon which was helping to deal with potholes by targeted intervention;
- the Dragon patcher was currently leased by Skanska on behalf of the Council and consideration would be given to the purchase of one from the capital funding received;
- the introduction of a Roadworks Permitting scheme next year where Utilities would be issued with a permit to work, resulting in reduced network disruption; and
- the use of Waste and Recycling Advisors to focus on talking to households to assist and improve waste recycling habits in the County.

The Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste undertook to circulate a link to the Civil Parking Enforcement Report.

(c) Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity

The Committee received the Report of the Chief Officer for Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity which provided an in-year briefing on budget and service delivery within Communities, Public Health, Planning, Transportation and Environment and Economy, Enterprise and Skills. All services were forecast to meet the target budget.

There remained an ongoing shortage of sites to meet the needs of the Gypsy and traveller population that often resulted in unlawful encampments and tensions within the wider community, however, the Council were working with District Councils to assess encampments, solutions and action as required.

The Council, in partnership other organisations, was leading work to consider emerging threats around extremism and risks to people as a result of gang and knife crime; County Lines and modern slavery. Funding of approximately £½ million had been received to undertake work in education and training and to further understand these emerging threats and the increased risks to vulnerable young people.

To stimulate business growth, external funding had been secured to deliver a Growth Support Programme aimed at small and micro businesses and a dedicated programme to support the social enterprise sector. The Council were also supporting the establishment of the Great South West partnership with Cornwall, Dorset and Wiltshire focussing on rural economic development.

Learn to Live was an example of an initiative focussed on driver and cyclist use of the road network aimed at improving road safety and there continued to be a programme of accident data analysis and investigation to better inform future design criteria.

* **94** **Treasury Management Stewardship Mid-Year report**

The Committee received the Report of the County Treasurer (CT/18/99) on the Treasury Management Mid-Year Stewardship 2018/19, which updated on key matters arising from the Council's Treasury and Debt Management activities during the first seven months of the 2018/19 financial year, to enable Members to satisfy themselves that agreed policy had been implemented.

The Report outlined the Borrowing Strategy and its aims for 2018/19 to 2020/21, the implementation of the Borrowing Strategy in 2018/19, Analysis of long term debt, Investment Strategy in 2018/19, implementation of the Investment Strategy 2018/19, the current position with the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) (a charge to make provision for the repayment of the authority's external debt and internal borrowing), the Council's compliance with the Prudential Indicators as laid out in the CIPFA Code of Practice, and prospects for 2019/20.

In summary, the Report stated that no long term or short-term borrowing had been undertaken to date in 2018/19 and the expectation was that no new borrowing would be required during the remainder of the 2018/19 financial year; and that investment income had already exceeded the budget target of £1 million in 2018/19.

RESOLVED that the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report be endorsed and commended to the Cabinet.

* **95** **Risk Management Mid-Year Update 2018/19**

The Committee noted the Report of the County Treasurer (CT/18/96) which summarised the risk management position and highlighted the current risks and actions in progress by management. Members were urged to look at the risks in the light of the Committee's work programme.

There would be a report coming to the Scrutiny Committee in the new year considering the service delivery model to mitigate the high risk of vacancies in the Engineering Design Group team where recruitment was difficult.

Particular points to note included:

- Members felt it would be useful if future risk registers plotted the history of each risk and identified the mitigations put in place where necessary to reduce them.
- that an update report on Brexit be brought to a near meeting.

RESOLVED that the current risk position as shown in the Report be noted and that the highest scoring risks be considered when creating future work programmes.

* **96** **Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) - Update on Gigaclear Contracts**

The Committee received the Report of the Head of Economy, Enterprise and Skills (EES/18/7) which provided an update on the five contracts that were awarded by CDS to Gigaclear in December 2016 to deliver ultrafast broadband across Devon and Somerset.

The Report also set out the main reasons that contributed to the Gigaclear delayed roll-out and current situation of the contracts. Infracapital were the new owners of Gigaclear and had made a firm commitment to continue its investment of £127.8 million in the CDS region.

A new build methodology had been proposed, based on 'a spine and spurs' approach, that would reduce disruption to roads and deliver superfast broadband access to between 40% and 50% of the CDS contracted premises by June 2020 with the remaining coverage completed by June 2022.

In discussion with Members and Officers, the following was highlighted, namely:-

- disappointment at Gigaclear's performance and the announcement by them of the delayed roll-out;
- CDS had achieved more than 298,000 superfast broadband connections across the area and take-up was currently 53%;
- that a regular update should be provided to Members to enable feedback to their communities; and
- concern that the new build methodology proposed would not include the very rural areas and black spots still existing within Devon.

RESOLVED that Members be provided with a further update at the March 2019 meeting.

* **97** **Devon Cycling and Walking Strategy 2018**

(Councillor Hughes attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(1) and spoke to this item at the invitation of the Committee.)

The Committee noted the Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment (PTE/18/49) which provided an update on the strategy for walking and cycling in the county, highlighted significant schemes that had recently been delivered and identified the priorities for delivery over the coming years. Within the strategy's core aims there was scope for a range of different types of infrastructure including two-way segregated cycle paths, shared use paths, quiet streets and on-road cycle lanes, in certain environments.

External match funding such as developer contributions would continue to be secured and the current focus of Government around economic growth suggested there would continue to be funding opportunities for the urban cycle networks. To continue success, the Council needed to consider which schemes were likely to gain support from the Local Enterprise Partnership and Department for Transport.

Officers and Members' discussions highlighted:-

- that the LEP funding allocation from the Local Growth Fund had been used;
- for reasons of safety, clear guidance would be needed for users on segregated walk/cycle ways;
- concern that funding constraints would mean that routes would be delivered at a lower design standard and both Members and Officers agreed that caution was needed; and
- the recent publication of the Government's response to the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

* **98** **Street Lighting Policy**

The Committee considered the Member Report on the proposed Street Lighting Policy which made several proposals on the Outline Policy Statements and detailed the input that Scrutiny had made.

Members discussed the proposal 'Attaching non-highway equipment to lighting columns', where advertising banners could, subject to the location being appropriate, be allowed as a useful revenue stream.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Street Lighting Policy Member Report be endorsed and commended to Cabinet and be considered in conjunction with the Street Lighting Service, Policy and Contract Report, prepared for the Cabinet meeting on 9 January 2019; and
- (b) that the Scrutiny Committee support the exploration of the use of advertising banners as a revenue stream.

* **99** **Scrutiny Work Programme**

RESOLVED that County Lines be included in the work programme for future consideration.

***DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 2.15 pm and finished at 5.45 pm