

**CORPORATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGULATORY SERVICES SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

26 September 2019

Present:-

Councillors A Dewhurst (Chair), P Colthorpe, Y Atkinson, K Ball, J Berry, J Brook, P Crabb, A Eastman, R Edgell, I Hall, J Hook, R Radford, M Shaw, C Slade and C Whitton

Apologies:-

Councillors R Bloxham

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25

Councillors R Croad and S Hughes

\* 140

**Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2019 be signed as a correct record.

\* 141

**Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There was no matter raised as a matter of urgency.

\* 142

**Announcements**

The Chair announced that a group photograph of Members of the Committee would take place at 2pm just before the November meeting.

\* 143

**Public Participation**

There were no oral representations from members of the public.

\* 144

**Scrutiny Work Programme**

The Head of Scrutiny agreed to circulate and publish an updated Scrutiny Work Programme, following discussions at the morning's Masterclass session.

\* 145

**Connecting Devon & Somerset (CDS) Broadband Update**

The Committee considered the Report of the Head of Economy, Enterprise and Skills (EES/19/5) which provided an update on the roll out of broadband across Devon and Somerset.

Member noted that the Airband contract delivering broadband across north western Devon was on target and 7,369 premises were now connected. As to the Gigaclear contracts however, despite painstaking work by CDS and Gigaclear, it had not been possible to agree a plan that CDS and BDUK could support with confidence. As a result, a decision to terminate the Gigaclear contracts was taken and a termination notice for all five contracts was issued on 12 September 2019. It was intended that CDS would launch a fresh procurement this autumn involving an estimated 12-month tender process to identify new provider(s).

Members' questions and discussion points with Officers included:

- the unknown cost (as yet) to the Council of making the decision to terminate the Gigaclear contracts and lessons learned;
- the need for engagement with local communities on the voucher scheme to maximise funds and improved communication with parish councils;
- working closely with BDUK during the tender process for promotion of the voucher scheme;
- the assurance given by Government Minister to do everything possible to support residents of Devon and Somerset, with firm commitment from MPs to lobby hard to ensure money was still available for the area;
- the possibility of utilising the clawback monies from the initial contract with BT (£24 million);
- CDS were hopeful of announcing delivery of full fibre to a further 2,000 rural premises across Devon and Somerset shortly; and
- investigating a potential solution of re-utilising Openreach's existing architecture to effect a more efficient delivery for suppliers.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Dewhirst, **SECONDED** by Councillor Brook and

**RESOLVED**

- (a) that the Cabinet be asked to work with local parishes and landowners to group together to enable the best use of the voucher scheme;
- (b) that the Scrutiny Commissioning Liaison Members work with the Head of Economy, Enterprise and Skills and Councillor Gilbert to contribute to the commissioning process for new broadband providers, and provide the Committee with updates as appropriate; and
- (c) that the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Joint Scrutiny Committee be asked to review the emerging Digital Strategy across the LEP area.

\* 146

**Libraries Unlimited Update**

(Councillor Croad attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(1) and Mr A Kittow, Chief Executive of Libraries Unlimited attended and spoke to this item at the invitation of the Committee.)

The Committee received the Report of the Chief Officer for Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity (SC/19/2), which provided an update on Library services as requested at the previous September Committee meeting covering key updates on Service development, Summer Reading Challenge, Library buildings and ICT.

The Chair welcomed Mr Kittow, the new Chief Executive of Libraries Unlimited.

The Report set out the current Key Performance Indicators (KPI) which showed overall that visits had fallen by 6% over the year compared to 2017/18. An updated set of performance metrics was currently being worked on to better understand the way libraries were being used today, through a new Performance Dataset using enhanced information from the new Libraries Management System together with the reported KPI data.

Discussion points with Members and Officers included:

- Members' disappointment at the lack of usage figures for children;
- that Library staff going into schools had encouraged children to take part in the Summer Reading Challenge;

- use of public access PCs were down possibly due to own equipment use or slow wi-fi speeds, but ICT transitional arrangements were currently being rolled out;
- concern at reduction in libraries funding, especially the smaller libraries and the community challenge for why people are not using Libraries more;
- opportunities for Libraries to work with the Council's Environment and Archaeology teams, creating topics for pop-ups;
- existing and future opportunities for income generation including revenue from meeting rooms, renting library space, children's parties/other events and book signings; and
- the Chief Officer for Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity referred Members to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport CIPFA report, which he undertook to circulate.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Dewhirst, **SECONDED** by Councillor Ball and

**RESOLVED** that Scrutiny Commissioning Liaison Members work with Libraries to review the Library Strategy, with particular focus on increased community engagement.

\* **147**      **Highways Performance Dashboard**

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

The Committee received the Report of the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste (HIW/19/73) on the Highways Performance Dashboard, which provided an overview of current seasonal work types that were being undertaken, namely an overview of winter preparations; cyclical works; surface treatments; and carriageway safety defects.

Members' discussion points with Officers included:

- the issue of weeds not being eradicated at root, which was being investigated;
- the Council were currently working with Skanska on their level of service; and
- the delay in the remarking of roads following resurfacing works being undertaken.

\* **148**      **Planned and Reactive Maintenance: Progress on Task Group Recommendations**

The Committee received the Report of the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste (HIW/19/72) which provided an update on progress made on the recommendations made in the Planned and Reactive Maintenance: Potholes and Drainage Task Group report taken to the Committee in March 2019.

Discussion points with Members and Officers included:

- the clearance of hedge cuttings from the roadways and the obstruction of road signage following hedge cutting; and
- concern at the depth of hedge ploughing causing the formation of gutters, and follow up by Highways Officers.

The Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste undertook to:

- include in future Highways Performance Dashboard reports, a summary of progress on the asset management work being piloted in Okehampton; and

- although still under development, to circulate a weblink to Members of the software designed to provide the public with details of works on the network.

\* **149** **Problem Gambling Update**

The Committee received the Report of the Chief Officer for Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity which provided an update to the recommendations made following the spotlight review on Problem Gambling in September 2018, together with an overview of gambling for Devon.

It was noted that gambling was often described as a common recreational activity, however, sometimes gambling could escalate to a problematic level characterised by impaired control and adverse and social consequences. Problem gambling was a public health concern associated with impaired physical and mental health, unemployment, financial difficulties and family violence.

In April 2019 the Gambling Commission published a 3-year National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harms. A new website had been launched to support the new Strategy where information could be accessed and progress tracked: [www.reducinggamblingharms.org](http://www.reducinggamblingharms.org).

It was noted that the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment now included a detailed section of the data available, bringing together information including prevalence, age, demographics, gambling restrictions, types of gambling, risks, impacts of gambling, links to other services, suicide, treatment and support services, national local responses.

The Head of Scrutiny reported on a conversation with Mr Rob Burkitt, the Lead for Shared Regulation for the Gambling Commission, who had offered to work with Devon Public Health and Scrutiny colleagues to further opportunities at local level to deal with problem gambling.

Members' discussion points with Officers included:

- that problem gambling could not be solved locally, and action should be taken nationally by the Government to tackle the escalating problem;
- the fact that between October 2016 and September 2017, the UK gambling industry produced a yield of £13.9 billion, which was a 0.7% increase from the previous year;
- the convenience of online gambling and the negative impacts this was having on people's lives;
- that online gambling and the use of fixed-odds betting terminals (FOBTs) should be banned; and
- the exploitation of the vulnerable by the advertising of online gambling.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Dewhirst, **SECONDED** by Councillor Brook and

**RESOLVED**

- (a) to write to central government condemning gambling and gambling associated harm, and for the letter to be approved at the next meeting in November;
- (b) to work with the Gambling Commission to identify further local opportunities to support people who are victims of problem gambling; and
- (c) to share the work of scrutiny with other local authorities in the Gambling Commission's national e-bulletin.

\* **150** **Climate Change Standing Overview Group**

The Committee noted the Report from the Climate Change Standing Overview Group (SOG) held on 5 September 2019.

The next meeting of the SOG would be held on 4 October 2019.

\* 151 **Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service 'Safer Together' Consultation**

(Councillors Colthorpe, Eastman and Radford each declared a personal interest in this item by virtue of being members of the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority and left the meeting.)

The Committee received the Report of Councillor Shaw relating to the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service 'Safer Together' Consultation.

The Committee expressed its disappointment at the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service declining to attend the public scrutiny meeting on the 26 September 2019 to discuss the 'Safer Together' Consultation. The Committee appreciated that this meeting was outside the timeframe of the Fire Service's consultation and valued the opportunity for Members of the Committee to be involved in the consultation at an additional session which took place on the 4 September 2019.

Recognising this disappointment, coupled with the significant public interest in this issue, the Committee wished to repeat their invitation for representatives of the Fire and Rescue Service to attend a Scrutiny Committee meeting, to discuss the next steps and implementation of decisions arising from the consultation results.

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

The Meeting started at 2.15 pm and finished at 5.46 pm