

**CORPORATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGULATORY SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

24 March 2022

Present:-

Councillors A Dewhirst (Chair), C Slade (Vice-Chair), M Asvachin, Y Atkinson (virtual), J Brook, R Chesterton, M Hartnell, J Hodgson and R Radford

Apologies:-

Councillors J Berry and P Crabb

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25

Councillor S Hughes

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Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the two meetings held on 27 January 2022 be signed as correct records.

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Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There was no matter raised as a matter of urgency.

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Public Participation

There were no oral representations from members of the public.

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Scrutiny Work Programme

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

(a) The Head of Scrutiny updated the Committee as follows:

- The Loneliness spotlight review had agreed its terms of reference at its first meeting, and a date would now be set for later in the year;
- The Moving Traffic Offences spotlight review would take place in June and further information on this would follow;
- As was scrutiny good practice, before the June meeting, Members would be invited to a masterclass to refresh the work programme for the forthcoming year.

(b) East Devon HATOC Minute 24*/14 February 2022: A3052 Speed Limits and Facilities for Active Travel – Greendale to Cat & Fiddle

The Committee noted that the East Devon Highways and Traffic Orders Committee had, on 14 February 2022, considered the Report of the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste (HIW/22/4) related to the A3052: Speed Limits and Facilities for Active Travel - Greendale to Cat & Fiddle. The Committee had RESOLVED the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee be asked, in their overview role, to review the local speed limit policy.

The Cabinet Member highlighted that the Scrutiny Committee had resolved, at their meeting on 12 June 2018, to set up a task group to review the local speed limit policy, which had led to the development of the 'Traffic Speed Task Group' report that was published in June 2019.

Work was continuing to develop speed policy based on the Task Group work and the Cabinet Member therefore suggested that this work was completed before any further review was undertaken.

The Committee was happy to note the position.

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COVID-19 update

The Council's Chief Executive updated the Committee on the current position within Devon relating to Covid-19 as follows:

- Following the relaxation of restrictions and the stepping down of the testing regime there was a high level of incidence in the population, and the South West currently had the highest prevalence rate.
- The dominant variant was the Omicron BA.2 sub-variant, which was highly transmissible, although people seemed not to be getting extremely ill.
- The number of patients in hospital was currently 30% higher than at any other time during the pandemic, with Devon, Plymouth and Torbay hospitals currently having 416 patients with Covid.
- As of yesterday, there were 46 significant outbreaks in Devon care homes.
- Pressure on Health services was now acute, which was impacting on dealing with other emergencies.
- Schools were also impacted due to staff and pupil absences.
- Public Health professionals were monitoring the situation very closely.
- Focus was now on vaccination efforts going forward and to prepare for going into the autumn.

Members' questions and discussion included:

- Council services had not been impacted significantly as a result of Covid absences, partly due to remote working practices remaining in place.
- Mental wellbeing within young people was being monitored; and one issue in particular was the high level of school absence where children and young people were finding it difficult to reintegrate.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for the update.

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Race Equality Audit - Role of Scrutiny Members

The Committee considered the Report of the Chief Executive (CX/22/01) on the role of Scrutiny in implementing the recommendations of the January 2022 Race Equality Audit report.

The Audit's objectives were to provide an honest assessment of how it felt for Black and Asian colleagues to work for Devon County Council, to challenge assumptions and advise on actions to ensure the County Council became a place where Black, Asian and other ethnically diverse staff felt safe, included and welcomed. The full report was available, together with an accompanying summary infographic, at <https://www.devon.gov.uk/equality/performance-andmonitoring/raceaudit21>.

The Report's recommendations were set out under six themes:

- Denial of Racism
- 'Small Numbers' Rhetoric
- "No Data" Excuse
- White Fragility in Leadership
- Lack of Sufficient and Consistent Leadership for Diversity and Inclusion
- Unwelcoming culture for Black and Asian People.

Members' discussion points with the Chief Executive and Corporate Equality Officer included:

- in language, the preferred term to use was 'Black, Asian and ethnically diverse', rather than BAME;
- assurance that recruitment would be based on merit and not on diversity, and that steps were needed to encourage Black, Asian and ethnically diverse to apply for jobs;
- the proposed annual report to this Committee would be available on both the Council's internal and external websites; and
- that mentoring programmes and further learning and development for all staff be extended to include all Members.

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

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Let's Explore Race mentoring programme be made available to all Management and Members of the Council;
- (b) that further learning and development be undertaken by all staff and Members of the Council; and
- (c) that a further report updating on progress come to the Committee in six months' time.

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Civil Parking Enforcement and Health & Care Worker Permit Scheme

(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/22/15) which updated on key areas of work for the service, covering Customer Service, Conflict Management, Recruitment and the Health & Care Worker Permit Scheme.

Of particular note was the unacceptable verbal abuse and aggression from the public towards frontline local authority staff

Members' questions and Officer discussion covered:

- of the 2665 total service requests received in 2021, the majority were in traffic regulation order areas and therefore actionable;
- recruitment remained challenging within the Council's parking enforcement team;
- for special events, e.g. Remembrance Sunday, a temporary traffic regulation order had to be applied for, which could include enforcement support if requested.
- the 23 beats referred to under the KPI3 indicator covered the main market and coastal towns and other communities were picked up through reactive needs.
- the latest annual report (which was currently in edit) included information on which communities were attended and number of parking charge notices issued; stats were also kept updated on the Council's external parking pages.

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

RESOLVED

- (a) that recruitment continue to ensure that a high quality service can continue to be provided allowing enforcement to be deployed where it is most needed;

- (b) that the abuse of staff is totally unacceptable;
- (c) that the Service will continue to invest in technology both in terms of staff protection and provision of paid parking, with an emphasis on reducing the need for physical payment and promotion of pay by phone/app options; and
- (d) that the latest annual report come back to the next Committee meeting.

* 43

Speed Policy and Management Progress Report

(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/22/17) which summarised the progress for a number of the actions, recommendations and proposals arising from the Scrutiny Committee Speed Task Group reports in June 2019 and November 2020.

A Speed Management Working Group had been established in 2020 comprising Members and Officers from appropriate teams to manage the implementation of the recommendations and had met on a monthly basis.

The report updated on key areas of work for the past 12 months, including:

- Developing the Newton Abbot 20mph Trial
- Continued development of the SCARF process
- Innovation

Members' questions and Officer comments covered:

- The deadline for expressions of interest for 20mph speed limit schemes was 31 March, with the aim of completing them within the 2022/23 financial year; and 44 expressions had been received so far, with a limited budget of £100,000 available.
- The process for speed checking was taking longer than expected due to staff shortages within the service
- The SCARF process had been slow especially during the pandemic because of staffing issues; and to give greater transparency, an online tracker was to be set up so the public could monitor reported concerns.

The Committee were happy to note the Report.

* **44** **Standing Overview Group - Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Strategy**

The Committee received the report from the meeting of the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee Standing Overview Group held on 3 March 2022, which highlighted key points discussed and agreed actions on the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Strategy.

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

RESOLVED that the report be accepted as an accurate record of the meeting held and that the recommendations contained therein be endorsed and commended to Cabinet, namely:

- (a) repair and maintenance of our road networks be underpinned by a positive and proactive approach and efforts to be made to implement this mindset into the working practices of DCC staff and contractors;
- (b) the Community Road Warden Scheme and the Snow Warden Scheme be continued and expanded;
- (c) annual work programmes be produced to cover integrated schemes and additional detail is included where these include drainage repair;
- (d) graffiti be explicitly recognised in the Plan as a notable problem and innovative solutions to graffiti removal be investigated; and
- (e) further exploration of local council involvement in highway maintenance is undertaken, to include closer relationships between local councils and the County Council.

* **45** **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/22/16) on the Highways Performance Dashboard, which provided an overview of the performance of Devon Highways in the following areas:

- Reactive works including potholes and drainage cleaning
- Winter service
- Preparations for the contract extension.

In discussion, Members' questions and comments included:

- A request that further content be included in the report and Officers agreed to look at a revised format for future reporting to the Committee.
- Useful information for local Members was available on the Members' Sharepoint site, which had recently been updated with refreshed links. The Head of Scrutiny would circulate Members a link to the site.

The Committee noted the report.

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

The Meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 12.48 pm