

**CORPORATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGULATORY SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

26 March 2019

Present:-

Councillors A Dewhirst (Chair), P Colthorpe (Vice-Chair), Y Atkinson, R Bloxham, J Hook, P Crabb, A Eastman, R Edgell, I Hall, M Shaw, C Slade, H Ackland and R Radford

Apologies:

Councillors K Ball, J Brook and J Berry

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25

Councillors A Connett, P Prowse, S Hughes, R Croad, B Parsons and R Gilbert

* **114** Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the two meetings held on 29 January 2019 be signed as correct records.

* **115** Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There was no matter raised as a matter of urgency.

* **116** Public Participation

There were no oral representations from Members of the Public.

Councillor Colthorpe in the Chair

117 Call-in of Cabinet Member Decision - Fees and Charges: Highways

(Councillors Connett and Prowse attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(2) and spoke to this item and Councillors Hughes attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(1) and spoke to this item at the invitation of the Committee.)

In accordance with the Scrutiny Procedure Rules, the requisite number of Members of the Council (Councillors Connett, Dewhirst, G Hook, Brazil and Way had invoked the call-in procedure in relation to the decision of the Cabinet Member for Highways Management relating to Fees and Charges: Highways. This was on the grounds of concern about the steep rises proposed, the justification for them and how the raised funds would be used.

Councillor Connett spoke on behalf of the Members who had called-in the decision to highlight that parking charges were set to rise by between 10% and 50% and if there was a policy that dictated this; the reason for the disparity between District and County charges; that shorter stay parking charges had not been reviewed for a period of 10 years; and how the additional income would be used.

Councillor Prowse reported that some towns allowed 30 minutes of free parking and how Exeter and other towns across Devon could benefit from this in order to boost footfall on the streets.

The Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste and the Cabinet Member set out the reasons for the increase, namely:

- the policy for increasing parking charges was laid down in the Local Transport Plan with increases capped at no more than 50%;
- that although parking charges had been reviewed in 2016/17, this did not include short stay parking charges which had not been reviewed since launch;
- to minimise traffic congestion and to ease air quality;
- the revenue from parking charges was invested in e.g. public transport support across the County, the HATOC waiting restrictions programme and the Safer Camera Partnership, and was reported to the Cabinet each year; and
- the disparity between on and off-street parking was deliberate in order to encourage parking in longer stay car parks, thereby reducing recirculation of traffic.

Members raised concern at the increase of parking charges in various locations, including Exeter, Sowton Park and Ride, Ilfracombe B, Country Parks, Combe Martin and Newton Abbot which were responded to at the meeting. However, the Cabinet Member offered to review the position at Ilfracombe B and Courtney Street/Park in Newton Abbot as raised by the Local Members.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Colthorpe, **SECONDED** by Councillor Atkinson and

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Cabinet Member decision to approve the detailed schedule of fees and charges for Highways and On-Street Parking tariffs be confirmed, subject to the Cabinet Member giving further consideration to the specific areas of concern raised by Local Members at the meeting; and
- (b) that the Committee give further consideration to establishing a Scrutiny Task Group to look at parking fee policy in time for any future parking fee changes.

Councillor Dewhirst in the Chair

118

Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) - update

The Committee received the Report of the Head of Economy, Enterprise and Skills (EES/19/1) 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. A Stakeholder update briefing dated 15 March 2019 had also been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting.

The Airband contract covering North Devon, Torridge, West Devon and parts of Mid Devon aimed to complete by June 2020. However, the situation with the Gigaclear contracts remained uncertain and the company remained on notice of default. Pending a satisfactory outcome, CDS was withholding public subsidy and Gigaclear were continuing to build the network in the CDS area at risk from its own investment. It was hoped a resolution to the Gigaclear situation would be known by Summer 2019.

HM Treasury had responded positively to representations by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCM) seeking a £18 million funding extension following the roll-out delays incurred by Gigaclear.

To date, the superfast broadband programme had provided access to more than 300,000 homes and business. The take-up rate for new services currently stood at 54% and was generating significant resources for reinvestment, due to the Government's Gainshare agreement with BT.

CDS were joining the Government's Better Broadband Voucher Scheme which was being launched in April, where any home or business with less than 2 Mbps and not part of planned deployment from another scheme within the next 12 months could request a voucher. Members were urged to ensure their local communities were aware of the Scheme and the Head of Service would send the appropriate weblink to Members for circulation.

In discussion with Members and Officers, points included:

- that future reports should be written in 'plain English';
- Members were very frustrated at the continuing delays, but acknowledged that conducting another tender exercise would cause further delays and not necessarily improve delivery; and
- that it would be useful to have a map identifying the 'black holes' across the County, particularly Exeter, where coverage was inconsistent.

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

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Head of Scrutiny be requested to write to the Cabinet expressing the Committee's disappointment and concern at the continuing delays of Gigaclear;
- (b) that the Task Group Report be referred back to the Cabinet for reinforcement of the recommendations made therein;
- (c) that an update on the superfast broadband programme be circulated in June to all Members of the Council; and
- (d) that an update be provided to the Committee in June, regardless of whether any progress had been made.

* **119** **Highways Winter Service Task Group**

The Committee received the Report of the Highways Winter Service Task Group and noted the recommendations contained therein. Thanks were expressed to everyone involved in the production of such a comprehensive Report

Members welcomed the Report and noted that an update on the progress of the recommendations would be brought back to the Committee in six months' time.

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

RESOLVED that the Task Group Report be commended to the Cabinet.

* **120** **Highways Performance Dashboard**

(Councillor Scott attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(2) and spoke to this item at the invitation of the Committee)

The Committee noted the Report of the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste (HIW/19/29) on the Highways Performance Dashboard, which had been created following a recommendation of the Planned and Reactive Maintenance: Potholes and Drainage Task Group, giving an overview of the performance of Devon Highways and providing the following information:

- current status of carriageway defects (potholes);
- performance of the cyclical drainage cleaning programme; and

- overview of the delivery of programmed maintenance.

The Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste reported that Members would be sent a weblink to the performance dashboard when it went 'live', which would hopefully be by the summer.

RESOLVED that a performance report including gully cleaning and drainage works be presented to the Committee in June.

* **121** **Highways Maintenance for Communities - findings of the East/Mid Devon trials**

The Committee received the Report of the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste (HIW/19/30) which provided an update on the performance of the Public Interface Portal (PIP) triage trial that had been carried out in the East Devon and Mid Devon areas in advance of formal adoption of the new process.

The Report covered, Issues associated with the PIP; Impacts of the PIP process; Aims and Details of the trial; Results of the trial; Other improvements and Future direction/aims.

* **122** **Income Generation**

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

The Committee received the Joint Report of the Head of Digital Transformation and Business Support, and the Head of Economy, Enterprise and Skills (EES/19/2) which provided an update on the progress made by the three service areas highlighted as examples of best practice by the Task Group in September 2016, namely Asset Management, Scomis and Trading Standards. This had been requested by Members at the Scrutiny meeting on 25 September 2018.

Devon Norse was a joint venture company with the Council holding a 20% equity share which provided facilities management, catering and cleaning services. A review was currently being undertaken to consider future delivery options.

NPS SW Ltd was also a joint venture company with the Council holding a 20% equity in the company with its profit share reducing the overall costs of the property management services provided to the Council.

The Council continued to generate income and review opportunities for increasing income where appropriate and within the parameters of the Treasury Management Report. The Council's Estates Strategy had delivered significant capital receipts and revenue budget reductions. Scomis and Trading Standards had both increased their respective levels of income generation and undertaken innovative new initiatives.

Discussion points with Members and Officers included:

- the setting up of Masterclasses focussing on Scomis and the Devon, Somerset and Torbay Trading Standards Service, to include Members' visits to each service area.
- the Devon Norse joint venture contract expiring in 2021 and the wish of Scrutiny to be involved in the review of future delivery options;
- a Member Workshop on 11 April 2019 to look at what options were available for the Council's future provision of property consultancy services, where the current contract with NPS SW expired in March 2022 (the Head of Scrutiny agreed to re-circulate details to Members);
- the Head of Digital Transformation and Business Support undertook to provide Members with clarity on paragraph 3.2.4 of the Report relating to NPS SW Ltd; and
- the success of Scomis.

* **123** **Flood Risk Management - update**

The Committee received the Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment (PTE/19/16) which set out the ongoing progress made by the Council's Flood and Coastal Risk Management Team acting as the Lead Local Flood Authority in accordance with the Devon Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.

The Report provided an update on the resolutions made at the Scrutiny Committee in November 2017, including the resources and performance of all Risk Management Authorities in their delivery of the Devon Local Flood Risk Management Strategy; a jointly prepared overview of key flood risk issues/priorities across Devon; and the adequacy of arrangements in place for Sustainable Drainage Systems in new development.

The Report stated that all major developments had to provide a suitable surface water management system that would mimic pre-development greenfield run-off rates and that a robust maintenance regime was in place. Members voiced concern at this and felt it was preferable that water companies should take on responsibility for sustainable urban drainage systems.

* **124** **Scrutiny Work Programme**

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Scrutiny Work Programme be moved to an earlier slot on future Agenda; and
- (b) that Masterclasses on Scomis and Trading Standards be added to the Work Programme.

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

The Meeting started at 2.25 pm and finished at 5.10 pm