

## **PLACE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 5 JULY 2022**

**Present:** Cllrs Shane Bartlett (Chairman), Piers Brown, Barry Goringe, Mark Roberts and David Tooke

**Apologies:** Cllrs Andy Canning, Jon Andrews, David Shortell and Bill Trite

**Also present:** Cllr Laura Beddow, Cllr Cherry Brooks, Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Les Fry, Cllr Simon Gibson, Cllr Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Cllr Jane Somper and Cllr Kate Wheller

**Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):**

John Sellgren (Executive Director, Place), Jonathan Mair (Director of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer), Jack Wiltshire (Head of Highways) and Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

#### **CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS**

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting. He noted that due to a technical issue, a livestream of the meeting would not be available.

In addition, the Chairman noted that there would be an adjournment of the committee between 10.45am and 11.10am to allow committee attendees to attend an NHS, Social Care and Frontline Workers' Day Ceremony at County Hall, to show gratitude to all NHS, Social Care staff and Frontline Workers' and remembrance of those who had lost their lives during the Coronavirus Pandemic.

#### **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING**

The Chairman noted that the Vice-chairman had sent his apologies for the meeting and therefore the committee would need to elect a Vice-chairman for the meeting.

It was proposed by M Roberts seconded by B Goringe

#### **Agreed**

That D Tooke be elected Vice-chairman for the meeting.

#### **13. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**14. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**15. Chairman's Update**

The Chairman gave an update on the Land Charges Service, as set out below, which had been provided by the Head of Legal Services:

We received an update about Land Charges Service response times at our May meeting.

I have received a further and progress update, as follows:

- During May the response times reduced to an average of 16 working days, down from 17 working days in April, and despite the impact of Bank Holidays and half term holiday staff absence.
- The response time published on the Dorset Council website is due to be reduced to from 20 to 18 average working days and will continue to be updated.
- The number of search requests received since March have increased from search numbers earlier in the year. In May numbers of search requests increased again. In February they were 721, in March 1029, in April 857 and in May 1018. These search numbers remain higher than pre-pandemic and May is at the same level as May 2020, and May 2021 when the stamp duty holiday was in place.
- With continued effort of the team and target setting the rate of improvement experienced to date is expected and planned to continue in the coming months.

**16. Public Participation**

There were no questions or statements from members of the public or local organisations.

**17. Questions from Members**

There were no questions from councillors.

**18. Maintenance of principal and non-principal roads and the approach to funding**

Following their review of information in the Council's performance dashboard, the committee had asked for a report on issues around the maintenance of principal and non-principal roads and the approach to funding in this area.

The committee considered the issues arising from the report and discussion was held in the following areas:

- Funding issues including lobbying that was taking place with Government to explain the issues linked to being a rural area and to try and improve the funding position for Dorset
- Benchmarking undertaken and sharing of best practice
- Issues around the identification and maintenance of gullies was discussed and links to flooding. It was noted that the Highways Asset Maintenance strategy provided a proportionate response to those issues
- A proactive highways maintenance team established could potentially take on areas such as road sign cleaning, where capacity was available
- Discussions were being held with town and parish councils to identify where they could support work in this area, subject to risk assessment
- The Highways Asset Maintenance strategy took traffic data into account and an inspection regime of roads was also undertaken.

At 10.44am, the Chairman announced that the committee would adjourn to allow those present to attend the NHS, Social Care and Frontline Workers' Day Ceremony.

The committee reconvened at 11.19am.

Discussion continued with points raised as follows:

- The potential impact of a five-year funding deal was considered
- Issues around maintenance and liability for potholes
- Computer modelling that could be done to predict future degradation of roads and potential intervention
- Issues around skid resistance
- Reference to the impact of inflation in this area – the risk was mitigated through contingency in the budget
- The council owned most fleet and plant equipment used although may hire in equipment for specific projects – there was a programme of regular inspection and replacement of equipment
- Materials such as hardcore could be recycled into other projects so would not be disposed of into landfill
- Issues around performance monitoring were considered.

The Chairman provided a summary of the key points arising from the discussion as follows:

- The need to monitor gully clearance and that this should include liaison between the community highways officers and parish councils to ensure the location of gullies were identified
- The committee noted the funding position in this area over a number of years and highlighted the need to continue the lobbying of Government for additional funding – the committee supported the work being undertaken and discussions taking place with local MPs in this area

- Concerns expressed over bus service provision linked to the rural nature of the area and accessibility issues and the need to find a solution
- Concern expressed over the future maintenance of cycle ways and the formula used to determine
- The need to ensure the Council had the right types of vehicles for works required
- Further investigation suggested as to whether items such as the cleaning of signs could be undertaken by the Highways proactive response team, where there was capacity.

Further information was requested as follows:

- Further information to be sought relating to paragraph 4.30 'Street Lighting' in Appendix 2 to the report, and in respect of missing information on performance indicators.

The Chairman thanked officers for the report and asked that thanks be passed on to all officers working in this area.

## 19. **Performance Scrutiny**

The committee considered issues arising from the Performance Dashboard that had been set up for the monitoring of performance for areas covered by the remit of the committee. A link to the performance dashboard is provided below for information:

[Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee Performance Dashboard](#)

The following points were noted:

- Issues around staff sickness and turnover were discussed and further information would be sought
- The committee would receive a further update on the position with the Land Charges service at their next meeting
- An item on 'Delivery of new homes across Dorset' would be considered at the September meeting of the committee
- The indicator relating to Subject Access Requests was reported on a monthly basis and therefore no data was available this month
- The position with reporting on PL22 (planning applications overturned at appeal) would be confirmed following the meeting.

## 20. **Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan**

Councillors reviewed the committee's forward plan and noted items to be considered at forthcoming meetings. The Senior Democratic Services Officer noted two items that had been added to the forward plan since it had been published with the agenda:

- Delivery of new homes across Dorset – 13 September 2022

- Review of Summer demand operations 2022 – 26 January 2023 (in addition, issues around the budget in this area could be reviewed by the committee during the budget setting process)

Other points were raised as follows:

- An update was to be provided to the People and Health Scrutiny Committee at an appropriate time, in respect of Coombe House. There may be a wider piece of work for both scrutiny committees to undertake at a later date
- The Chairman asked that a report on the wider business case relating to the Coombe House site be brought to committee. The Executive Director of Place would discuss this with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Assets and Property.

## 21. **Cabinet Forward Plan and Decisions**

The committee noted the Cabinet Forward Plan and decisions taken at recent meetings, which the committee could use to identify potential areas for post decision review.

The Chairman noted that the committee may wish to look at areas around the Council Plan and financial monitoring.

## 22. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

## 23. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

**Duration of meeting:** 10.00 am - 12.27 pm

**Chairman**

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