

## **COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 28 June 2022 at 6.00 pm in Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford, TF3 4NT**

**Present:** Councillors V J Holt, T L B Janke, J Loveridge, B J Thompson and C R Turley (Chair)

**In Attendance:** A Brookes (Service Delivery Manager: Highways, Engineering & Project Delivery), K Fisher (Lead Lawyer: Children & Adults), D Sargeant (Director: Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services), and, (S Yarnall (Democracy Officer (Scrutiny))

#### **COMSC47 Apologies for Absence**

Cllr E Carter

#### **COMSC48 Declarations of Interest**

None.

#### **COMSC49 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2022 be confirmed and signed by the chair.

#### **COMSC50 Terms of Reference 2022/2023**

The Lead Lawyer: Children & Adult, presented the Terms of Reference for the municipal year 2022/2023 to the Committee. Members heard that this was part of the constitution that was approved at Full Council on 3 March 2022.

**RESOLVED** - that the amended Terms of Reference set out at Appendix A be approved.

#### **COMSC51 Work Programme 2022/2023**

The Lead Lawyer: Children & Adult, presented the Communities Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2022/23.

The Committee heard that the work programme had been presented at Scrutiny Management Board and Scrutiny Assembly. It was discussed that the items have been suggested from Councillors, Cabinet and Senior Management Team. The Lead Lawyer: Children & Adults mentioned that discussions over the work programme will be continued during keeping in touch meetings with the Chair. Members were informed that the document

presented was a working document and any alterations would be communicated to Members.

**RESOLVED - the work programme for the 2022/2023 municipal year was to be approved.**

### **COMSC52 Highways Update**

The Director: Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services, and the Service Delivery Manager: Highways, Engineer & Project Delivery provided a brief overview of the Highways update presentation and the information presented to members in the update report. It was explained that the information in the presentation was an overview of the work done up to the time of the meeting.

The Service Delivery Manager: Highways, Engineering & Project Delivery explained that the team were responsible for, namely, highway maintenance and strategic planning and network maintenance. The team's policy management for highways set out the vision for both the team and for the local Authority. The vision was to keep Telford Moving through the delivery of safe and accessible highways for residents as well as promoting new jobs, technology and promoting Telford as an innovative town.

Members heard that the grant funding for Highways Maintenance from Government income streams had been reduced in recent years. However, the partnership with Balfour Beatty since 2018 has had continued significant benefits. The benefits included, getting things right on the first time, social value, and innovation. The Service Delivery Manager: Highways, Engineering & Project Delivery explained that there had been improvement to communication and engagement with the public.

Members heard that highways maintenance and improvements are funded through Council capital investment and grant allocations from the Department for Transport. Since 2019 there had been £27 million from Council Capital Investment, £21 million in Government grants and a further investment of over £50 million was expected by the end of 2023/24. Since 2020/2021, Government grants have been reduced by 21%. Members were informed that Cabinet Member Cllr Carter, and then Cabinet Member Cllr Wright, wrote to the Transport Secretary and the Government for more funding. In April of this year a response received outlined a three year settlement but at a lower level of grant funding.

The Service Delivery Manager: Highways, Engineering & Project Delivery explained to the Committee that social value was a key element of the highways partnership with Balfour Beatty and that this commitment will continue for the duration of the team's partnership. Some examples were given such as the creation of the Town Park Veterans Trail, donation of 15 laptops to Home Start as well as improved access to facilities like Donnington Boxing Club.

The Service Delivery Manager: Highways, Engineering & Project Delivery explained to Members that since 2019 there have been over 800 improvement schemes delivered and 12,000 potholes repaired. It was quoted that 96% of maintenance works were completed on time, including maintenance on drainage and other essential highways maintenance. The team along with Balfour Beatty take a risk based approach to the maintenance of highways. Assessing the need for the work and the impact on residents to prioritise what required more urgent maintenance work. The Committee were informed that from public satisfaction surveys, the highways maintenance teams have received good feedback and scored highly. The Service Delivery Manager: Highways, Engineering & Project Delivery summarised that the team gritted the streets 50 times due to a milder winter, there were 6,000 reactive jobs and 115 emergencies that were attended. These jobs included both in and out of hour repairs and maintenance with a team being available 24/7 for emergencies.

Members heard that innovation and new technology was a key element for the team's Highways Asset Management Policy and Strategy. The team has developed new ways of working and brought innovative approaches that were regularly being explored. The teams are now using electric or low emission plants and equipment for their work and are using a new approach to gully cleansing with the use of sustainable materials. A new communications strategy was highlighting the sustainable work of the team.

The team were the first in the UK to use an electric 3.5 tonne flatbed vehicle for their work, as well as using hydrogen powered alternative vehicles for sustainability. The Committee were informed that this was to be rolled out long term. There was a need to look at the benefits for sustainable fuel and use existing data to support this. It was heard that this data would explore how efficient these fuels were as well as their sustainability. This of course, was to work towards the Council's carbon neutrality goal.

The Service Delivery Manager: Highways, Engineering & Project Delivery discussed a pre-scheme communication strategy with signage and social media posts to alert members of the public of upcoming maintenance. It was explained that six weeks prior to any highways maintenance, Councillors, Town and Parish councils are notified of the upcoming work. They also received a follow-up with a more detailed email of what the work was and what it entailed.

It was also explained that on the Telford & Wrekin website, information can be found on upcoming road works. Additionally, members of the public can follow the Telford Highways Twitter account for live updates. Members heard that the team are always looking for new and innovative approaches to improve their communication and engagement with the public. An example was the AA42 scheme. It was explained that the scheme was a massive investment for the highways team and that they worked with Balfour Beatty to deliver a targeted communication. It was noted that they engaged with over 44,000 people to answer questions and explain any reasons for delays.

Finally, Members heard about the National Highways and Transport Survey. The National survey was sent to a random sample of residents within the Borough. In the 2021 survey, there were 11 local authorities involved with a sample of 3,000 residents from the Borough alone. The Committee heard that the survey seeks feedback on a number of subject areas including, but not limited to, accessibility; cycling and walking; highway congestion; highway maintenance; and, road safety. The Service Delivery Manager: Highways, Engineering & Project Delivery said that Telford and Wrekin Council's overall ranking was first in the West Midlands and second nationally. Members heard that the 2022 National Highways and Transport Survey were expected in October.

After the presentation, members discussed and expressed their pleasure in the work conducted by the Highways Maintenance team especially the timely fashion they have reacted to jobs, despite limited funding. Members unanimously supported the recommendations from the report:

**Resolved -**

- 1. That Communities Scrutiny Committee note the progress that has been made in the delivery and maintenance of our highway network.**
- 2. The Communities Scrutiny Committee note the budget pressures for highway maintenance resulting from a reduction in Government grants.**
- 3. The Communities Scrutiny Committee endorse the improvements being brought forward in engaging with residents and businesses while offering areas for further consideration.**
- 4. The Communities Scrutiny Committee endorse the steps being taken to improve sustainability within the highways service and offer areas for further review.**

**COMSC53 Chair's Update**

Members will be kept up to date with developments for the scrutiny committee by the Democratic Services officer.

That the next meeting of the committee is on the 14th September 2022.

The meeting ended at 6.24 pm

**Chairman:** .....

**Date:** Wednesday, 14 September 2022