



Place Overview Committee
24 March 2022
2.00 pm

Item
3
Public

**MINUTES OF THE PLACE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 24 MARCH
2022
2.00 - 4.05 PM**

Responsible Officer: Sarah Townsend
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Present

Councillor Joyce Barrow (Chairman)
Councillors Steve Davenport, Julian Dean, Geoff Elner, Roger Evans, Dan Morris,
Pamela Moseley, David Vasmer and Claire Wild (Substitute) (substitute for Paul Gill)

42 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Paul Gill and Paul Wynn.
Councillor Claire Wild was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor Paul Gill.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Roger Evans to his first meeting as a member of
the committee, having replaced Councillor Andy Boddington. Councillor Boddington
was thanked for his valued input into the work of the committee.

43 Disclosable Interests

None were declared.

44 Minutes of the Previous Meetings

A comment was made that a full copy of the public and member questions and
responses provided at the 17th September 2021 meeting did not appear on the
committee's web page for the meeting. The committee clerk stated that she would
look into the matter.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Place Overview Committee meetings held on 17th September
2021 and 11th November 2021 be approved as a correct record.

45 Public Question Time

There were none.

46 **Member Question Time**

A member question was received as follows:

- Councillor Julia Buckley – regarding food waste collection services in Bridgnorth and why they were one of only two places in the whole county that does not receive a collection service for food waste. Councillor Buckley also asked a supplementary question regarding the number of years that Bridgnorth had been missing out. The Waste Contracts Manager responded that this had been the case since 2016 and the original contracts were outlined to the committee.

A full copy of the question and response provided is attached to the web page for the meeting and also attached to the signed minutes.

47 **Update on Review of Winter Service Plan**

The committee received the report of the Head of Highways which provided members with an update on how the highways service had put into place the committee's recommendations following its review of Shropshire Council's highways winter service policy.

The Head of Highways informed the committee that prior to Christmas, formal notification had been received from the Department for Transport requesting that a resilience plan be provided, linked to the second wave of Covid-19. This had resulted in a change to the council's operational plans to ensure that the resilience was in place. Members were also informed that a different operational model for winter maintenance had been embraced this year, which meant that joint decision making was taking place between the council and the contractor, Kier. This has resulted in a fundamental impact on reactive maintenance services.

An audit had been undertaken across the county regarding grit bins, to establish their location and ensure that a detailed asset record was in place. This would result in grit bins being able to be replenished quicker and more effectively, in a more cost effective way.

In terms of community participation, it was noted that the council was keen to embrace new ways of the community supporting winter maintenance activities and would look at how this could be delivered in Shropshire e.g. by providing materials, equipment and training to interested community groups.

Having presented the report to the committee, the following points were made:

- It was intended to look at how the council could engage and work more closely with Town and Parish Councils in delivering the winter maintenance plan, with many people keen to support and help within local communities. The Head of Highways explained that the council was keen to link up with them, to enable communities to take a greater level of responsibility.

- It was envisaged that, going forwards, local farmers as well as other local contractors would help support the service in a greater way, as they were uniquely placed to do so, both with the local knowledge that they have and geographically.
- In terms of groundwater and gullies, a significant amount of work had been undertaken over the last 18 months to improve drainage and the new drainage team was complimented for their standard of work.
- Concern was expressed regarding cycleways not being gritted.
- It was commented that the report was more of a committee report, rather than a scrutiny report, as details such as data, accomplishments and targets were not included.
- It was noted that there were KPI's in terms of winter maintenance.
- In terms of parish relationships, the Executive Director of Place commented that they worked quite closely with SALC and attended SALC executive committee meetings and also supported a forum of town council clerks.
- The Executive Director of Place and the Head of Highways agreed to look into the agricultural vehicles group as it did not currently have a lead officer and had not met since March / April 2021.
- Having noted that 'Fix My Street' was due to be fully implemented in April 2022, the Head of Highways agreed to find out the latest position regarding this.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer suggested that rather than this agenda item coming back to the next meeting of the committee, it be scheduled into the committee's work programme for summer 2022. He asked that members emailed him regarding any additional information, data, KPIs and performance indicators that they wanted. Initial comments from members were that they wanted the statistics and data behind the comments made on pages 8 and 9 of the report, collision data, pedestrian collision data and accident and incident data.

RESOLVED:

1. The committee noted that the recommendations made by the committee had been put into place, and resources had been effectively prioritised to ensure delivery.
2. The committee considered how it may further support the service in strengthening the role of town and parish council, as well as community and voluntary groups, in providing a good winter support service.

48 **Planning Committee Structures**

The committee received the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Officer which provided the findings of research commissioned by the Place Overview Committee to support its review of the decision by Shropshire Council in 2019 to reduce the number of its planning committees from three to two.

It was noted that this agenda item would also be discussed at the next meeting of the Place Overview Committee, scheduled for 28th April 2022, prior to it being considered at a future Cabinet meeting. Members were encouraged to comment upon any additional information that they wanted to see in the next report to the committee.

Having presented the report to the committee, the following points were made:

- Several members reflected upon their own personal experiences with comments varying between the current arrangements of the two planning committees working well, with both committees having a good balance of urban and rural areas, and feelings that the central planning committee should return. Whether or not the committees should be politically balanced was also discussed. The Assistant Director of Economy and Place commented that, regardless of the number of planning committees, the important thing was getting it right for Shropshire and consistency was extremely important. When a committee meets, its decisions should not be political – they must be made against national and local plan policy.
- The decision regarding the number of planning committees for Shropshire was ultimately made by Full Council.
- It would be useful to see the comments that Town and Parish Councils had made in responding to the survey.
- The opinions of wider stakeholders should also be sought e.g. applicants and agents.
- Further information on the process of how delegated decisions were made at agenda setting meetings was requested, along with the number of applications considered and how many of these applications then went on to be considered at Planning Committee meetings. Members commented that it was extremely important to know the reasons why planning applications were not taken to committee meetings for determination. The Assistant Director of Economy and Place reassured members that decisions taken under delegated authority were not made ‘behind closed doors’ and that there were strict audit procedures in place.
- Members were reminded that, as stated in the Council’s Constitution, they could ‘call in’ an application within 21 days of electronic notification of the application. It would then be considered at the relevant Planning Committee meeting, provided that the reason for doing so was based on material planning reasons.
- Requests received from Town and Parish Councils concerning further training would be acted upon and training was offered to elected members on a yearly basis around May time.
- Guidance would be sent out to all members regarding the agenda setting meeting process and the process of calling in applications within 21 days.
- Officers have caseloads of approximately 30 applications, which is the national average number of caseloads per officer.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Regeneration and Planning explained that the planning system was effective and working in terms of workload and capacity. He had not been approached by members regarding issues specifically relating to the planning committees and asked that, if there were any, he be alerted to them. He also commented that members had the tendency to mix up local knowledge and material planning considerations.

RESOLVED:

That the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Officer be noted and that the agenda item be considered again at the next meeting of the Place Overview Committee with information to be provided as follows:

- Additional research into delegation processes in other local authorities.
- Further information on national guidance around delegation.
- Further information around the agenda setting process.
- The number of staff employed and cases considered on a yearly basis within the planning department.
- Previous reports on the review of planning committee structures.
- The number of appeals that the council have lost after planning officers have rejected them.
- The number of applications upheld at appeal, with this information broken down by the two committees.

49 Road Closures - Temporary Traffic Restriction Order Charges

The committee received the report of the Network Coordination and Compliance Manager which was a proposal to consider introducing a reasonable / defensible fee for events that take place on the highway which involve either a temporary road closure or some other form of Temporary Traffic Regulation order such as a temporary rescind of parking or parking restrictions.

Having presented the report to the committee, the following points were made:

- It was estimated that approximately £50,000 - £60,000 worth of income could be generated for the council on a yearly basis if the proposal was to be applied.
- Officers were seeking further consultation, views from the committee and feedback to Cabinet in terms of the level of charge and who should pay.
- A wide range of events are held across Shropshire, some of which are run for the community and 'not for profit', others of which are run purely for profit.
- Shropshire was becoming of great interest to film and tv production companies as a venue and some of these companies had expressed surprise that there was no charge applied for their use.
- It was noted that a decision had been made at the last full Council meeting to wave fees relating to community events for the Queen's Jubilee.
- A comment was made regarding whether a charge would simply cover the costs, or whether any profit would be made from it. A benchmarking exercise had been undertaken which indicated that there was a wide variety within local authorities regarding their charging policy and the factors involved.
- It was agreed that events such as Remembrance parades should not be charged for. However, charges should be applied to commercial organisations, but not to 'not for profit' organisations.

RESOLVED:

1. Having considered the proposal, the committee recommended that a fee structure be implemented and that this be applied to commercial organisations, but not to 'not for profit' organisations.
2. That prior to a report going to Cabinet in June/July 2022, the committee receive a report outlining the various proposed charges for those organisations that will be charged.

50 Place Overview Committee Work Programme

The committee received the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

A list of those Task and Finish Groups that had not reached their conclusion was requested along with further information on the progress of the Roadworks Diversions Working Group.

It was requested that a progress update be provided on both 20s Plenty and 20mph speed restrictions outside schools.

In relation to clean healthy rivers (paragraph 3.4 of the report), the Chairman commented that she would have a discussion with the Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed committee work programme attached as appendix 1 to the report be agreed.

51 Date/Time of Next Meeting of the Committee

Members noted that the next meeting of the Place Overview Committee was scheduled to be held on Thursday, 28th April 2022 at 2.00 p.m.

<TRAILER_SECTION>

Signed (Chairman)

Date: