

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 30 July 2020 commencing at 9.00 am and finishing at 10.25 am

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE – in the Chair
 Councillor Jenny Hannaby (Deputy Chairman)
 Councillor Liz Leffman
 Councillor Jeannette Matelot
 Councillor Charles Mathew
 Councillor Glynis Phillips
 Councillor Judy Roberts
 Councillor Michael Waine
 Councillor Kieron Mallon (In place of Councillor Nick Carter)

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Yvonne Constance (for Agenda Item 4)

Officers:

Whole of meeting Jason Russell, Corporate Director Communities; Susan Halliwell, Director for Planning and Place; Lauren Rushen, Policy Officer; Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, Committee Officer.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports are attached to the signed Minutes.

30/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS (Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Nick Carter (Councillor Kieron Mallon substituting).

31/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - GUIDANCE NOTE ON BACK PAGE OF THE AGENDA (Agenda No. 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

32/20 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS (Agenda No. 3)

The Chairman had agreed to the following request to speak on Agenda Item 4, Active Travel: Patrick Coulter.

33/20 ACTIVE TRAVEL (Agenda No. 4)

Patrick Coulter, speaking on behalf of Headington Liveable Streets, Headington Action and Headington Neighbourhood Forum, asked Members to support their bid for Tranche 2 funding to create three low traffic neighbourhoods in Headington.

Low traffic neighbourhoods are now both Government and County Council policy. He suggested that Headington should be a priority area given the high volume of traffic generated around all of the hospital and educational institutions.

The Headington Neighbourhood Plan was endorsed through referendum by 85% of those taking part. And is supported by all the area's City and County councillors. He believed that it is imperative that the County Council provides sufficient officer resources to support their policy for the implementation of low traffic neighbourhoods.

Jason Russell introduced the presentation. He noted that the Active Travel Fund was just one part of the picture which he wanted to set in the wider context. The amount of money in the fund was relatively small but would be a catalyst. Communication has been a key issue with expectations being raised and then not matched by the funding offered. However, the learning from Tranche 1 will put the Council in a better position for Tranche 2.

Councillor Kieron Mallon asked why Bicester was mentioned in relation to the A361 which does not go near the town. He said that this error gave him little confidence in the document. It was clear that the whole process was rushed.

Councillor Yvonne Constance responded that they have been given little time to put together the bids but it was that or not bid at all.

Sue Halliwell gave the presentation for the Tranche 2 bid. The deadline for the bid was only one week away. Officers have had contact with the Department for Transport but not as much as they would have liked. Bidding will be competitive. The proposals for Cherwell and West will be prioritised by the BCR (Benefit Cost Ratio) which results in the order Witney, Bicester, Banbury.

Members raised a number of issues:

- the lack of Member-engagement in the process.
- the membership of local working groups that were considering proposals.
- the shortage of officers to go out on location to examine proposals.
- the temporary or longer-term closures of parking bays and their effects on, and consultation with, local business.
- the lack of public transport alternatives in many areas leaving people dependent on cars.
- the increased provision for cycling in some areas when there was little use of the existing facilities.

- the lack of proposals in the South and Vale areas.
- the lack of schemes in rural areas despite the large number of proposals received.
- the unpopularity of modal filters.
- routine work being put aside in order to deal with the Active Travel funds.

Councillor Constance and the officers responded as follows:

- The local working groups included district, city and county officers as well as representatives from bus companies etc.
- Social distancing guidelines still recommend 2 metres separation where possible but all temporary arrangements will be under constant review.
- Businesses will be consulted about any removal of parking spaces.
- The Government is trying to drive change with these funds, not just meeting existing demand.
- It is accepted that there are few schemes in rural areas but the proposals will be evaluated by means of the BCR so that is what the Council needs to apply. Other funding will be available for rural schemes.
- CIL or S106 monies may be used for specific schemes where appropriate. The objective is to maximise the use of all money available.
- Modal filters take different forms. There has to be public engagement where they are proposed.
- Deliverability of schemes is an important factor and this worked against the South and Vale areas.
- Officers had to be taken from routine work in order to meet the urgent deadlines for these bids. Some work will be delayed but nothing has been unfunded.

It was agreed that officers would circulate the responses after the meeting to the following queries on local schemes-

From Councillor Glynis Phillips:

- Is the Headington Low Traffic Neighbourhood scheme being actively considered as a proposal?
- The crossing at Collingwood Road in Risinghurst would meet all of the criteria of the scheme, with the possible exception of timescales, can officers confirm if this scheme is being actively considered?

From Councillor Mathew:

- Lower Windrush has suffered from a lack of buses for over two years. Is the proposal for the installation of a cycleway along the Thames Path to connect Northmoor with Eynsham being considered?
- In Eynsham it has been announced that roads will be closed to the town centre which will have a massive impact on local shops. This is claimed to be part of the active travel scheme. Is this the case and if so, why has the local Member not been informed?

From Councillor Judy Roberts:

- Is an Eynsham-Botley cycle path being actively considered?
- In relation to the Safer Schools programme, will officers be responding directly to local schools, via the councillor who put the schemes forward or both?

From Councillor Jenny Hannaby:

- What is the status of the schemes she proposed with Councillor Jane Hanna - in particular the 338 pathway from Wantage to Hanney?

Councillor Constance asked that officers send details of the Science Vale cycleway scheme to all councillors in response to concern about the lack of proposals in South and Vale in the current Active Travel fund bids.

The Chairman suggested that the Chairs of Locality Groups could be a channel for engagement between Members of officers. Jason Russell agreed to arrange such meetings at appropriate times.

The Chairman also stated the importance of councillors having the information on their division such as the schools that have applied for the School Streets initiative.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting. She said that the whole process showed the need for more decision-making to be devolved locally.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing 2020