

PUBLIC

MINUTES of a meeting of the **IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - PLACES** held on Wednesday, 21 September 2022 in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Matlock.

PRESENT

Councillor S Bull (in the Chair)

Councillors J Siddle, M Foster (substitute Member), N Gourlay, D Murphy, J Nelson, P Niblock and A Clarke (substitute Member).

Apologies for absence were submitted for Councillor D Greenhalgh and R Redfern.

19/22 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (IF ANY)

Councillor D Murphy declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item no.6 as a Member of Ashbourne Community Transport Board of Trustees.

20/22 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 JULY 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.

21/22 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (30 MINUTE MAXIMUM IN TOTAL)

There were no public questions.

22/22 COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE REVIEW

Rupert Casey and Richard Bonner from the Place Department attended the meeting to provide Members with an overview of the purpose and content of a proposed new Service Business Plan that had been prepared for the Council's Countryside Service.

The Council had conducted a fundamental review of the Countryside Service during 2019-20. The outcome of which, was a recommendation to create a Public Service Mutual to whom the Council would transfer the responsibilities and functions of the Service to.

These requirements were re-examined by the Council in 2020-21, given the importance that Derbyshire's residents and visitors have placed on the Countryside Sites since Covid-19 and the adoption of the Council's Climate Change Strategy 2021 – 2025. These new drivers for

change led to the Council identifying that the Countryside Service had a revitalised role in directly delivering its strategic objectives and that the uncertainty caused by Covid-19 presented a significant risk to the commercial deliverability of the Public Service Mutual model.

The proposed new Countryside Service Business Plan would establish the strategic and operational direction for the Council's Countryside Service for the three-year period 2022-23 to 2024-25. The Plan reflects the high status that the Council has placed on addressing climate change, nature recovery, and using natural capital to stimulate inclusive social and economic growth for Derbyshire. Members were provided with headline information from the proposed new Countryside Service Business Plan, as follows:

- The purpose of the Plan, which was to establish the strategic and operational direction for the Countryside Service.
- An overview of the Countryside Service's portfolio of sites, resources, and responsibilities.
- An appraisal of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats relating to the Countryside Service.
- The drivers for change that the Countryside Service needed to effectively respond to.
- The policies that the Countryside Service will prioritise and how these would be delivered.

Derbyshire had 130 sites and each one would be evaluated and allocated a score according to its particular attributes, ability and alignment to the Council's strategy. Members requested sight of these scores, particularly as it could affect sites within their division. It was suggested that a task and finish group could be established to consider each site and allow discussions to be had between Members and officers.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked Mr Casey and Mr Bonner for their update on the proposed new Service Business Plan and requested that further details of the evaluation of the sites be provided.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

- a) Notes the headline information presented on the proposed new Countryside Service Business Plan; and
- b) Requests that feedback is provided on the Service Business Plan to inform the completion of the document for its subsequent approval.

Chris Hegarty from the Public Transport Unit attended the meeting to provide Members with an update on the Bus Service Improvement Plan and associated Enhanced Partnership.

In July 2021 Mr Hegarty had attended a meeting of the Committee to inform Members of the National Bus Strategy and to provide an update on the development of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) that was being produced in response to the strategy. The BSIP was submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) at the end of October 2021.

There was initially very little feedback from the DfT on the contents of the Council's submitted BSIP, however, in February 2022, Derbyshire was mentioned in the Government's "Levelling Up" White Paper as an area which would receive funding to improve bus services. It had become clear that the DfT was scaling back the funding being made available nationally for BSIPs. This was due to the DfT having to allocate some of the proposed funding in the Bus Strategy to continue to provide emergency financial support to bus companies over a longer period of time than originally envisaged.

In April 2022, DfT made an announcement setting out the funding that would be available nationally to LTAs for BSIPs for the next three financial years, up until March 2025 (this was a shortening of the original timescales from five years). Of the 70 LTAs who had submitted BSIPs, only 31 had received indicative allocations with neighbouring authorities' areas, such as Cheshire, Leicestershire, Staffordshire and South Yorkshire, receiving nothing. Derbyshire had been given an initial allocation of £47m which was the second largest amount awarded to a non-urban LTA.

In August 2022, the DfT had provided a detailed breakdown of the measures it would fund which were presented for Members' information and confirmed the funding settlement as £47,003,438. It was anticipated that the first annual tranche of this money would be released to the Council in the near future.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes:

- a) The work undertaken on the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership Plan and Enhanced Partnership Scheme; and
- b) The funding which had been allocated to the Council as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan.

Neill Bennett, Assistant Director for Highways Commissioning attended the meeting to provide the Committee with an update on the Derbyshire Highways Programme including an overview of what the programme was setting out to achieve, the background leading up to the change programme, programme delivery, benefits and improvements, and an overview of the commissioning and delivery functions.

Regular updates had been provided to Members at the meetings of the working group. Members who had attended these sessions had found them invaluable, not only to discuss issues within their ward and enable them to provide feedback to residents, but to understand the processes that were involved. All members were encouraged to attend these working groups.

Benefits and improvements that had been delivered to date were highlighted. The Committee was informed of the planned benefits that were to be delivered in 2022-23 which included, a reduction in the backlog of traffic regulation orders and to prioritise the resolution of long term flooding and drainage issues.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked Mr Bennett for update.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the update information provided.

25/22 WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23

The Committee's work programme was presented and Members were invited to suggest possible agenda items for the remainder of the municipal year 2022-23.

It was noted that the item on the Minerals Local Plan scheduled for the November meeting had been delayed and would now be presented to the Committee next year.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the 2022-23 work programme and will consider any proposed revisions.