

PUBLIC

MINUTES of a meeting of the **IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PLACES** held on 29 July 2020.

P R E S E N T

Councillor S Bull (in the Chair)

Councillors K S Athwal, D Charles, J Innes, T Kemp, P Makin and G Musson (substitute Member)

Also in attendance were A Globe, S Tranter, N Waqas and A Westray-Chapman (Economy, Transport and Environment Department).

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors E Atkins, H Elliott and L Grooby.

1/20 **MINUTES** **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 November 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

2/20 **MATTERS ARISING** Members were informed that due to Covid-19, the Festival of Derbyshire had been put back to the end of the year/beginning of next year and some events would be virtual. Updates would be provided.

Members also requested updates on the production of the Thriving Communities Guide Book and when the committee could expect a presentation regarding the work undertaken during the Toddbrook Dam incident.

As there was an on-going review of the voluntary and community sector funding, Members acknowledged the work that this sector had undertaken during the pandemic.

3/20 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS** There were no public questions.

4/20 **DIGITAL DERBYSHIRE PROGRAMME UPDATE** Andrew Globe and Naim Waqas attended the meeting to update the Committee on the Digital Derbyshire fibre broadband programme with particular focus on how the programme was meeting the needs of rural communities and the increase in home working due to the COVID19 virus.

Access to good quality broadband services was essential for rural communities and this had been highlighted by the recent COVID-19 related demand for internet access as people were confined to their homes and the huge increase in homeworking.

Delivering fibre broadband to rural communities was particularly challenging due to the high costs associated with the installation of fibre optic cabling and the logistical difficulties presented by rural environments and topography. These included but were not restricted to, narrow roads, dry stone walls, lack of footpaths, lack of re-useable cable ducting, rocky ground conditions, long transmission distances and low population densities.

Digital Derbyshire worked very closely with the Openreach planning and estimating teams to try to reduce these costs to enable as many rural communities as possible to be upgraded to fibre within the Value for Money framework. Despite these challenges the Digital Derbyshire Programme had been very successful in delivering fibre broadband to rural communities that would otherwise have not received a service, a list for examples of the communities that had been delivered to was circulated. To date Digital Derbyshire had brought fibre broadband to around 23,000 homes and businesses in rural communities across Derbyshire.

The Digital Derbyshire programme was in the final year of Contract 2 and was currently engaging with Openreach and BDUK to seek an extension to the programme to utilise gainshare re-investment to extend the delivery of fibre broadband to more Derbyshire communities. Digital Derbyshire was keen to work with DCMS and play an active part in any upcoming initiatives to ensure that Derbyshire received an appropriate share of the recently announced £5b Gigabit programme and that rural communities in Derbyshire were suitably represented in the process.

Members of the Committee were afforded the opportunity to ask questions which were duly answered or noted.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked Andrew and Naim for their most informative presentation.

5/20 MEASURES IN TOWN CENTRES AND FOOTWAY MAINTENANCE Simon Tranter, Head of Traffic & Safety, and Allison Westray-Chapman, Head of Economic Development, attended the meeting to inform Members of the work that was being undertaken to assist in the re-opening of local town centres.

Grant Shapps, Secretary of State for Transport had announced £2bn package to boost cycling and walking and the first phase of this funding was £250m emergency active travel fund. Derbyshire had successfully bid for funding of £443,000. Mr Tranter highlighted where this money would be spent, including local tourist hotspots such as Ladybower Reservoir.

Detailed plans were being put in place in 42 town centres which had the largest footfall across Derbyshire. The work included looking at social distancing measures, introducing barriers where necessary, wider pavements

and cycle lanes, increased signage and ensuring that public transport, bus stations and bus shelters could all operate effectively. Cycling and walking routes to hospitals would be enhanced to allow key workers to travel safely.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked officers for their presentation.