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Minutes of the meeting of the Strategic Placemaking Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 1 July 2021 at 19.00 pm

Present: Councillor Baume (Chair)
Councillors K Bradburn, Crooks, P Geary, Gilbert, Hall, Hussain, B Nolan and Taylor.

Officers: S Proffitt (Director Environment and Property), N Chatfield-Smith (Flood Resilience and SuDs Officer), R Kilgallon (Flood and Water Management Officer), A Patel (Flood Risk Manager), D Proctor (Waste Services Client Manager), R Trowse (Commissioning Programme Manager) and A Melia (Overview & Scrutiny Officer).

Also Present: Councillors Bowyer and Townsend (Cabinet Member for Public Realm).

SP03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

Councillor P Geary disclosed a personal interest in Item 5 as the owner of land in Tathall End that was affected by the flooding in 2020 and noted his position as ward councillor for Lavendon at the time of the serious flooding in 2012.

SP04 MINUTES

That the Minutes of the meetings of the Strategic Placemaking Scrutiny Committee held on 3 March 2021 and 19 May 2021 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record, subject to the correction of typographical errors.

SP05 S19 FLOODING REPORTS

Witnesses: Councillor L Townsend (Cabinet Member for Public Realm), S Proffitt (Director Environment and Property), A Patel (Flood Risk Manager), N Chatfield-Smith (Flood Resilience and SuDs Officer) and R Kilgallon (Flood and Water Management Officer).

Councillor Townsend (Cabinet Member for Public Realm) introduced the item and noted that the full S19 Flooding Reports are due for the end of July and will include the results of consultations with affected parishes and residents. The report considered by the Committee at this meeting contained the preliminary findings of the investigation and the key recommendations for action.

The Committee subsequently received a presentation from the Flood Risk Manager on the December 2020 flooding incidents, the actions taken, and the S19 Flooding reports.

Some of the key points included:

- The flooding in December 2020 was the most significant flooding event in Milton Keynes since Easter 1998, with river levels a metre higher than recorded during the previous incident. Over 1000 properties were affected in the wider catchment area.
- Higher than average rainfall was observed throughout the final three months of 2020, which resulted in saturated ground conditions.
- Flooding began in rural areas on 23 December following three days of consecutive rainfall, which removed any storage capacity within the soil and flood plains. Flooding of main river courses began on the 24 December.
- Residents raised concerns over a lack of pre-flood warning, a lack of personnel to support those affected and the impact of new developments.
- Some of the impacts of the flooding included 93 internally flooded properties, road closures throughout the city, and infrastructure damage to Canal & River Trust assets.
- The most crucial finding of the analysis in Stony Stratford was that the capacity of flood flow routes was restricted by surrounding landscaping.
- The interacting between drainage systems in Newport Pagnell failed to prevent flooding, which resulted in flood and surface water surcharging drains. Further investigation is required to ascertain the source of water and defend against such occurrences in future.
- As outlined in the report and its annexes, there were a variety of other location specific factors which contributed to flooding in both urban and rural areas.
- A dedicated procurement process was undertaken to allow the post-flood investigation to be supported by independent consultants.
- The role of Flood Resilience and SuDs Officer was recruited for in previous months. The appointed officer will facilitate community engagement sessions for residents, which will feed into the final

S19 reports, as well as holding conference events for Parish Councils where all key flood authorities will be present.

- Following discussion with Anglian Water and the Environment Agency, the balancing lake protocol has been revised to activate balancing lakes manually rather than automatically, to help drain flood water from affected communities.
- The Environment Agency have removed trees and debris from the River Ouzel in Woughton Park and have also replaced gauges at Stony Stratford and Newport Pagnell.
- It was noted that community flood plans have been developed to set up local flood resilience groups and trigger systems designed to enable quick responses to localised incidents.
- In areas of flood overflow routes, historic culverts were installed up to 70 years ago, making it partially redundant infrastructure. Attention was drawn to the project pipeline, which highlighted that work will take place over the next 3-5 years for both preventative and responsive flood mitigation.
- It was emphasised that the reports were preliminary, and it was noted that Committee input at this meeting would be utilised to help compile the final reports.

Members of the Committee commented as follows:

- Concerns were expressed that flood alleviation bund 4 in Tathall End was cited in the report as being in good working order, but this was not the case. It was suggested that an Officer previously employed by the Council had acknowledged this, but no work had been completed.
- It was noted that the reports provide a useful outline of planned work, but some members of the Committee stated that they would reserve judgement until the actions are carried out.
- The Committee highlighted the importance of placing riparian assets in strategic locations due to the variable nature of flooding. Stoke Goldington was cited as an example, with the flood raised in forty minutes but subsiding in under two hours.
- It was suggested that Parish Councils affected by flooding would welcome the opportunity to speak at a meeting when the full S19 reports are available.

In answer to questions, the Committee noted:

- a) Discussions have taken place with neighbouring authorities with regards to obtaining a Flood Recovery Grant from central

government. The initial application was rejected, but the full reasoning is unclear. A response from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) suggested that the impact of the flooding was not severe enough to warrant the grant being approved.

- b) It was advised that, in the event of flooding to an attached garage, this will be considered as internal flooding. However, this may not be the case in the event of a detached garage, although some recognition is given to the importance of such buildings. Some properties affected in this way by previous incidents of flooding were not adequately reported.
- c) It was noted that as part of the Flood Plans currently being developed, a formal agreement with the highways department was being considered to provide support for communities in the event of road flooding and closure.
- d) The Flood Risk Manager confirmed that the full reports will be brought back to the Committee once available.
- e) Funding applications have been prioritised based on risk, with requests for maintenance work along the River Ouse made in October. Moving forward, it has been decided that the Council will seek to maximise partnership funding with organisations such as Anglian Water.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Strategic Placemaking Scrutiny Committee welcomed the five recommendations listed in the report and requested to emphasise recommendation 4 – to engage with residents and create community flood plans in high-risk areas.
2. That the Flood Risk Manager be requested to provide the full section 19 report to the Strategic Placemaking Scrutiny Committee when available.
3. That the Cabinet Member for Public Realm be recommended to fund the provision of relevant assets in strategic locations throughout the Milton Keynes Council area as soon as possible.
4. That, in conjunction with neighbouring authorities, applications be made to MHCLG to release funding through the Flood Recovery Grant to help buttress flood defences in areas considered to be at high risk.

Witnesses: Councillor L Townsend (Cabinet Member for Public Realm), S Proffitt (Director Environment and Property), D Proctor (Waste Services Client Manager) and R Trowse (Commissioning Programme Manager).

Councillor Townsend introduced the report and advised that it was brought to the Committee ahead of the Delegated Decision due to the impact on all wards and residents across Milton Keynes.

It was further noted that:

- The Cabinet Member expressed concern that the service received by some residents is of variable quality and confirmed an initial preference for an insourced model. However, after analysis the proposed report contained a recommendation to outsource for a new external contract.
- It was advised that a shorter contract will be pursued to avoid the potential issues of longer-term contracts previously agreed by Milton Keynes Council and give added flexibility to future Cabinet Members.
- Investment in training and development will be provided in order to upskill the existing workforce and avoid the impact of the national shortage of drivers.

The Committee subsequently received a presentation from the Commissioning Programme Manager.

The salient points included:

- There are a number of different types of service delivery, with Direct Services Organisation, Competitively Tendered Contract and Local Authority Trading Company highlighted in the presentation.
- The strengths and weaknesses of each type of service delivery are outlined in Annex A of the report.
- It was noted that the business case for a fully electrified fleet of vehicles was being prepared along with a planned collections service covering the whole borough.
- The thirty-year-old Materials Recycling Facility was highlighted as an example of infrastructure in need of refurbishment in order to be able to respond to this new collection service.
- A nine-year programme of devolved Parishes taking over landscaping arrangement was identified as a key service change.

- It was also noted that the preparation of tender documentation will begin in either July or August 2021, with a number of key steps outlined in the presentation prior to the service commencement in April 2023.

In response to the questions, the Committee noted:

- a) It was suggested that insourcing the contract was untenable due to the effects of austerity and Covid-19. The Cabinet Member expressed a preference for insourcing where possible but advised that the infrastructure was not available to deliver this. A 5-year break clause was included within the contract to allow the possibility of exploring this option in future but was not an indication of intent.
- b) It was advised that the intention is for the Council to either purchase or lease a fleet of fully electrified vehicles. The Director of Environment and Property agreed to provide a fuller business case including any further decisions in September 2021.
- c) Concern was expressed that purchasing a new fleet means that current vehicles will not be taken to the end of their working life of around ten years.
- d) In response, it was advised that purchasing a fleet allows the Council to amortise the money and adopt a more dynamic approach towards the commissioning cycle, rather than being beholden to long contracts.
- e) It was further advised that the aim is for a phased adoption of electric vehicles, which will lead to a fully electrified fleet by 2030, in line with Milton Keynes Council's sustainability strategy.
- f) The Committee emphasised the importance of social value and the public perception of the Council and its partners. Soft market testing of companies expressed interest will allow these values to be assessed at the pre-qualification stage.
- g) The administration is able to build into the contract elements which are considered to be of high importance and The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 legislates for public authorities to consider wider social, economic and environmental benefits when procuring for public services.
- h) It was noted that a decision on the landscaping report is due for August 2021.
- i) A contract roadmap is being developed, which will incorporate feedback from the Committee prior to the Delegated Decision. It was also advised that the Committee will be involved throughout the

development of the specification, and key milestones will be noted through a communications and engagement plan.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Strategic Placemaking Scrutiny Committee, in supporting the general direction of travel, requested the Director of Environment and Property to provide regular updates on the progress of the Commissioning 2023 strategy.
2. That the Committee requested the relevant officers and the Cabinet Member for Public Realm to consider emphasising the importance of social value and thickening the client side of the weighting of criteria during the procurement process.

SP07 DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

The Chair drew attention to the Draft Work Programme for 2021/22 and requested members of the Committee to direct any comments to the Committee's Planning Group.

RESOLVED –

1. That the draft 2021/22 Work Programme be received and noted.
2. That if members of the Committee have any suggestions for items for scrutiny which are within the Committee's remit during 2021/22, they be fed into the Committee's Planning Group.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 21.01 PM