

Minutes of the meeting of the ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE HIGHWAYS SUB-GROUP held on TUESDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2015 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Bint, Cannon and Petchey

Officers: R Kingsley (Head of Highways) and S Heap (Committee Service and Scrutiny Manager)

Also Present: Councillor McDonald

ETHSG01 ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED –

That Councillor Bint be elected Chair of the Sub-Group for the remainder of the Council year 2014/15.

ETHSG02 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED –

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting by virtue of Paragraph 3 (Information Relating to the Financial or Business Affairs of the Authority) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, in order that the Group may consider the following report:

Highways Contract Monitoring Information

ETHSG03 HIGHWAYS CONTRACT MONITORING INFORMATION

The Group considered performance information in relation to the Term Service Contract for Highways, Street Lighting and Network Infrastructure, received an overview of the Contract and the different performance indicators and noted that an action plan was in place to address any apparent underperformance.

The Sub-Group particularly noted the apparent underperformance in relation to street lighting, but was advised that it was largely an issue of record keeping and the submission of evidence rather than a failure to undertake the required works.

With regard to the definition of what constituted a 'pothole' it was advised that the criterion was set out in the Code of Practice on Highway Defects and that it was around this definition that payments to the Contractor were based. Therefore the Contractor would not be paid for repairs to defects which did not meet definition. The Council's liability with regard to meeting claims for damage to vehicles as a result of highway defects was also explained. The Sub-Group recognised that there was a reputational risk to the Council if the Council was seen to be arguing over matters of millimetres.

In answer to a question it was noted that the Client Monitoring Team was supported by a dedicated accountant.

Members of the Group also referred to the apparent high number of missing directional road signs and noted that as well as incurring accidental damage, many were stolen for their scrap value and while they were replaced as soon as possible, they often went missing again. The Group also noted that here was no direct performance indicator which related to the replacement of highway signs.

The Group questioned the levels of information available to the public to provide reassurance that highway works were being undertaken and suggested that high public visibility was important.

Also in answer to a question it was reported that the priority given to various roads under the winter gritting programme was being reviewed.

RESOLVED:-

1. That the Sub-Group's concerns at the apparent underperformance of the street lighting element of the contract be noted.
2. That at its next meeting the Sub-Group officer colleagues be requested to provide details of:
 - (a) insurance claims resulting from alleged highway defects (KPI58);
 - (b) performance on replacing missing highway signs; and
 - (c) possible measures which could provide public visibility that highway works were being completed.
3. That members of the Sub-Group be supplied with details of performance against the Key Performance Indicators on a monthly basis.
4. That members of the Sub-Group be invited to comment on the relevance of the existing Key Performance Indicators and suggest any changes.

ETHSG04 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

That the new Scrutiny Management Committee be requested to consider reappointing the Sub-Group for 2015/16, and should the Sub-Group be reappointed a meeting be convened as soon as possible in the new Council year.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 7.30 PM