

Improvement and Review Commission Minutes

Date: 11 January 2017

Time: 7.00 - 8.50 pm

PRESENT: Councillor R Gaffney (in the Chair)

Councillors H Bull, Mrs L M Clarke OBE, A D Collingwood, C Etholen, M Harris, M E Knight, R Newman, Ms C J Oliver, R Raja and J A Savage, M Hanif and H L McCarthy

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs S Adoh, K Ahmed, Miss S Brown, G C Hall, A E Hill and D Knights

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

26. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement & Review Commission held on 9 November 2016, be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

27. UPDATE FROM CABINET MEMBER FOR ICT ON TASK AND FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

Chairman of the Improvement & Review Commission expressed his disappointment that neither the Cabinet Member or Deputy Cabinet Member for ICT, HR & Customer Services had been able to make the meeting and give this update on progress in respect of the recommendations of the Commission's ICT (Information Communication Technology) Task and Finish Group as considered by Cabinet 19 September 2017.

However Head of ICT, HR & Customer Services; John McMillan was welcomed to the meeting, he after all was the chief officer responsible for the IT Service and his expert and comprehensive input would be most valuable to the Commission in consideration of the Report.

Mr McMillan outlined the key points of the report:

- Three major phases to the action plan were outlined, those of:

1. an immediate change to incident responses with a new regime and personnel in place;
 2. addressing key issues, i.e. fixing applications and systems that were failing regularly; and
 3. projects for the future where applications could be improved / replaced / upgraded.
- The gaps present on the appendix which outlined progress against recommendations were explained; in that these were where Cabinet had not agreed with the recommendation concerned.
 - A sustained improvement by Capita in respect of day to day management had occurred.
 - Page 8 of the report outlined the projects to be completed by the end of the 2017/18 financial year:
 - Laptop device refresh by July 2017
 - Replacement of VDI servers and software by May 2017
 - Replace Uniform server and application upgrade by December 2016
 - Update telephony and introduce Skye for Business by July 2017
 - Implement Office 365, and
 - Upgrade internet capacity by February 2017.
 - Progress had occurred against the vast majority of the recommendations.
 - The use of the ICT PAG (Portfolio Advisory Group) and IRC members as a 'sounding board' for officers along with the trialling of various applications and equipment with them had proved invaluable.
 - In respect of Windows 10 the planned laptop replacements were 10 compatible, yet a number of key applications at WDC were not. The Council's 'thin client' used Windows 7 which was to be supported centrally until 2020. Work to ensure continued use of all applications was complex but achievable.

Members received clarification on a number of points and made observations as follows:

- The need to ensure photos sent (predominantly here in respect of planning) were viewable by members, was noted.
- WDC were not contemplating the delivery of documents to members online by the comparatively insecure Drop Box method as utilised by BCC (Buckinghamshire County Council).
- It was acknowledged that Members accessed IT in a variety of ways, some utilising WDC equipment some using their own, any training on a one to one

basis required, was available. Members were just to contact John's officers. Mark Lansbury (Business Systems Manager) had been most helpful in this role.

- The prompt availability of finance in budgets for ICT projects and improvements was emphasised.

Given the technical complexity of the Action Plan appended, which it was acknowledged was necessary as the document was the foundation for the ongoing dialogue with Capita the IT providers; Members asked for a lay man's summary by means of Information Sheet to be issued, summarising the Report and this update.

It was agreed that the Cabinet Member and / or Deputy be invited to the next Improvement & Review Commission Meeting to further update on progress against these recommendations in person.

RESOLVED: That the Improvement & Review Commission note the updates and actions being taken in relation to the recommendations made by the ICT Task & Finish Group following consideration by Cabinet.

28. RURAL ISSUES TASK AND FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

Chairman of the Rural Issues Task & Finish Group; Cllr Carl Etholen presented the report of the Group for the Commission's consideration.

Cllr Etholen outlined the history of the Group having been set up by the Commission in January 2016 and centring its work around a sole Term of Reference; 'to suggest / identify measures that can be taken to improve / develop rural affordable housing and the rural economy including broadband provision'. Five meetings had taken place at which submissions had been received from:

- Nick Phillips (Chief Executive of Community Impact Bucks and member of the Buckinghamshire Rural Affairs Group (BRAG)).
- Heather Dean (Head of Skills and Business Support – Buckinghamshire Business First).
- The WDC Planning, Housing and Tourism officers.

Councillor Etholen thanked all these representatives / officers for their input adding a special mention for Ms Jemma Durkan (Senior Democratic Services Officer) for her work in collating all the data and drawing up the report and recommendations.

The recommendations (and reasons for recommendations) as outlined below had been arrived at, at the Group's final 9 November 2016 meeting.

- a) That superfast broadband is a key infrastructure requirement to be provided as a similar service to utilities for new homes in rural areas in the district, and the current Connected Counties project providing superfast broadband continue to be monitored and provided to the more difficult rural areas in the district.

Reason for this Recommendation

The Task and Finish Group were concerned at the lack of superfast broadband being provided to new rural homes and that developers should be obligated to provide this to any new homes being built. Also developers should provide the facility to a point within dwellings so that superfast broadband can be accessed as soon as a property is occupied.

As many people now work and run businesses from home in rural areas superfast broadband is a key element of maintaining and developing a successful business and developing the rural economy.

The third phase of the Connected Counties project would provide superfast broadband to the final 5% of homes not yet connected. It was noted that this would be the most difficult to reach areas and this part of the project should be monitored to ensure that delivery outcomes are met and all homes in rural areas have access to superfast broadband.

- b) That Affordable Rural Housing built in the District be kept as such if sold in the future on the open market.

Reason for this Recommendation

There was concern that if an affordable rural property was sold on the open market this would then become unaffordable to residents in the local area. As affordable rural housing was not in large supply it was important for legislation to be in place to protect the status of these properties for local residents to access in the future.

- c) That rural parish councils be supported by Wycombe District Council in providing a Local Housing Needs Survey if any parish council in the District choose to investigate a need for affordable rural housing.

Reason for this Recommendation

This would provide support for local parish councils if they wish to provide affordable rural housing for their residents and if developers show an interest in an area in their parish for development. A Local Housing Needs Survey would show evidence of affordable rural housing requirement in their parish.

- d) That organisations such as The Caravan Club be contacted to promote tourist campsites in the District and local farmers be encouraged to diversify their businesses to offer land for caravan and campsites or to provide holiday accommodation.

Reason for this Recommendation

There were very few campsites in the District that were supported by organisations such as The Caravan Club. These organisations provide support and marketing for camping and caravanning sites and would encourage tourists to visit rural areas in the District. To enhance the rural economy farmers could diversify their businesses to include tourist accommodation which could provide additional income to sustain their businesses for the future.

- e) That tourist information be made available at community libraries in rural areas in the District and be suitable promoted.

Reason for this Recommendation

As there were only three Tourist Information Centres in the District this would provide additional provision for providing local tourist information for minimal cost. This could be promoted by the District Council and enable tourists and local residents to access information in rural areas.

- f) To enable links with neighbouring local authorities and specialist organisations, such as the Chilterns Society, to promote walks and trails in and around adjoining districts.

Reason for this Recommendation

There were many walks and trails in and around the Wycombe District that crossed over into other district and county councils areas. This would help promote activities to tourists in other areas and encourage them to participate in events that they may not usually be aware of and this in turn would enhance tourism at a local level.

Members received clarification on a number of issues and made observations as follows:

- The need for affordable properties in rural communities was paramount and likewise the requirement that such properties remain such should they be sold on. As an aside the Commission agreed that this initiative should be pursued across the whole District for urban areas as well as the rural communities being considered here.
- The lack of caravanning / camping sites in the District was noted, apparently we had only 4 in an area renowned for its natural beauty and much visited by tourists, the recommendation to increase this number and in doing so boost the rural economy was commended.

- In respect of the Broadband recommendation officers were to note the £440m apparently to be shortly available from Central Government in respect of Broadband roll-out, being made up of £150m in cost savings in completed schemes and the rest in the form of returned subsidies from BT. Under a 2010 deal, the government paid BT to roll out superfast broadband in hard-to-reach areas where providers had said it was not cost-effective to install broadband infrastructure. As part of the agreement, if more than 20% of premises in those areas bought superfast broadband, BT had to repay some of the subsidy. On average, the take-up has been 30.6%, leading to a forecast repayment of £292m.
- Though not covered by the Task and Finish Group the Commission suggested and it was agreed that a post script be added to the Report before onward referral to the Cabinet Meeting of 6 February 2017 in respect of the successful Risborough Area Community Bus. The Commission asked that Cabinet consider support of such commendable schemes which could successfully break down rural vulnerability across the entire District, much could be learnt from this successful template.

Councillor Etholen agreed to accompany Commission Chairman Councillor Gaffney to the Cabinet Meeting of Monday 6 February to present the Report as agreed.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations of the Rural Issues Task and Finish Group as featured above lettered **a to f**, along with appropriate post scripts relating to i) the roll out of the recommendation in respect of affordable housing (b) across both Urban and Rural parts of the District (i.e. the entire District) and ii) that Cabinet consider support of Rural Community Bus schemes across the District on the lines of that successfully operated by the Risborough Area Community Bus organisation, be added to the Report.

29. HANDY CROSS JUNCTION TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT EFFICACY WORK PROGRAMME SUGGESTION FORM

Councillor Mark Harris who had completed the Work Programme Suggestion Form before the Commission in respect of Handy Cross Traffic Management was invited to present the basis of his argument for the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to investigate the proposed matter.

Councillor Harris reported that since his election as District Councillor in May 2015 for the Greater Marlow Ward he had strived to address the problems various local constituents had drawn to his attention in respect of the Handy Cross A404, M40 junction (junction 4). With a short effective but in-depth scrutiny of the issues

afforded by a Task and Finish Group he felt solutions to these continuing bugbears regards the junction could easily be resolved.

The suggestion form contained 4 main strands to the proposed work:

1. The problems with the lanes approaching the A404 southbound, from the roundabout;
2. The inordinate wait for users of the C100 from Marlow / Marlow Bottom to enter the junction, because of the traffic light phasing;
3. The faded yellow boxes around the roundabout which need re-painting and are not enforced and do not meet the objectives of road users appropriately; and
4. The further stress on the junction with the numerous recent re-developments at Handy Cross; Next, Waitrose, the coachway, and the new sports centre along with those planned; Costco, a hotel, increased light industry at Booker Air Park and development of the waste facility at Booker.

Members discussed the proposal making the following points:

- The High Wycombe Southern Quadrant Transport Strategy discussed and formulated by BCC a number of years ago (and scrutinised by WDC) in theory covered the work and issues being proposed. It was suggested that given BCC were (alongside Highways England) the responsible body, a joint scrutiny group with non-cabinet local members at BCC be contemplated.
- The work Highways England were proposing in respect of the A4155 junction at Westhorpe, at Bisham Roundabout and at Junction 8/9 of the M4 / A404 were relevant to the issues the proposed Task and Finish Group would be considering.
- It was suggested that Councillor Harris chair the Group as he expressed a wish to ensure that the specific issues outlined were resolved aware that casting the remit of the Group too far could end up in an overall lack of progress, the Commission commended this approach.

RESOLVED: That (i) a Task and Finish Group be established under the Chairmanship of Councillor M Harris in respect of Handy Cross Junction Traffic Management as outlined in the Work Programme Suggestion Form, and;
(ii) Buckinghamshire County Council are approached to carry out this Scrutiny as a Joint Venture with appropriate members from the BCC Transport, Environment & Community Select Committee.

30. COMMISSION'S WORK PROGRAMME & CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The status of the current task and finish groups was considered and discussed.

The need for the **Local Plan Task and Finish Group** to re-convene in Mid-February 2017 was discussed. This being to review the emerging final proposals for the Local Plan, to take into account responses to the earlier consultations and latest technical work that had been undertaken. The Plan was then due to be presented to Cabinet on 13 March and on to Full Council for approval, prior to publishing it in April for statutory consultation before it is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination.

The continuing work of the **Budget Task and Finish Group** in respect of its Phase 2 work 'scrutiny of emerging budget' was outlined, with the final recommendations going direct to the Council Tax setting Cabinet Meeting of 6 February 2017.

The Chairman indicated that he had requested an item on the next Commission Agenda (1 March 2017) in respect of Houses in Multiple Occupation, at which the Cabinet Member for Housing would be able to give an update on the Cabinet response to the recommendations of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Task and Finish Group (referred to Cabinet 9 February 2015) in light of recent Central Government legislation / guidance.

Members were encouraged to complete the Work Programme Suggestion Form appended to the agenda (Appendix C) in respect of items they wished to suggest for consideration by the Commission or a Task and Finish Group.

No topics were identified on the attached Cabinet Forward Plan for review by the Commission at future meetings.

RESOLVED: That the update on the Work Programme and current task and finish groups be noted.

31. INFORMATION SHEETS

There were no enquiries or comments regards the Information Sheet issued since the last meeting.

32. COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

There we no Councillor Calls for Action.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

- Peter Druce - Democratic Services
- John McMillan - Head of HR, ICT & Customer Services
- Catherine Whitehead - Head of Democratic, Legal & Policy.