

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

THURSDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2018
GIPPING ROOM, GRAFTON HOUSE
6.00 PM

Present: Councillors C Allen, G Chisholm, S Gage, M Goonan, S Handley, A Leeder, C Shaw, C Smart, E Harsant (Chair), S Ion, R Pope, O Holmes and S Connelly (Substitute)

37. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Parry.

38. Unconfirmed Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 October 2018

38.1 The Chief Executive confirmed that as requested at Minute No. 33 – OS/18/13 *Task & Finish Group – Road Repairs*, he had written to Suffolk County Council Highways Department to express the concerns of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee but had not yet received a reply.

Resolved:

that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2018, be signed as a true record.

39. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

40. To Confirm or Vary the Order of Business

Resolved:

to vary the Order of Business. To receive Item 8 – Work Programme 2018/19 at Item 7 on the agenda, otherwise the Order of Business be as printed on the Agenda.

41. OS/18/17 Annual Portfolio Holder Update - Development

- 41.1 Councillor C Jones, the Portfolio Holder for Development and Museums presented an annual update and explained that the Joint Museums Service with Colchester Museum had been in place since 2007. Mr James Steward was the Museums Manager in charge of the Arts School, Christchurch Mansion and Ipswich Museum and Mr Frank Hargreaves was the Exhibition Manager.
- 41.2 The 'Kiss and Tell' Rodin and Suffolk Sculptures exhibition opened at Christchurch Mansion on 24 November 2018 and Councillors were encouraged to view it.
- 41.3 Following a presentation to all Councillors, the Head of Culture and Environment had submitted a 'Stage 1' bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £4.8m, with a commitment of £3.3m from IBC and the outcome was anticipated to be soon.
- 41.4 A £203k grant had been received from the National Portfolio Organisation for staff, activities and to target groups for exhibitions. £½m had been received as a National Lottery 'Skills for the Future' grant for 2 trainees to aid the management of collections, displays and exhibitions.
- 41.5 Visitor figures to the Ipswich Museum & Gallery (LI 238) were 14% above target and visitors to Christchurch Mansion (LI 239) were 13% above target and it was anticipated that these figures were sustainable.
- 41.6 In 2017/18 of the 51 schools in the IBC boundary, 35 had visited which was 69% of the total of 51 (LI 240 & LI 241). 75% of these visitors were from primary schools and it was acknowledged that at this point in the year, the totals would be below expectation due to the school holidays being part of the time under consideration. Although the number of schools visiting had increased since 2010, it was acknowledged that the school curriculum affected school visits so a full review of what courses were being studied had been completed. Staff were identifying curriculum linked sessions for development (especially KS2) which would attract more schools and in the past Area Committee funding had been allocated which enabled some schools to access transport to the Museum.
- 41.7 Marketing was key and the centralised communications system and design of brochures had improved. The 'Rodin exhibition' had been advertised at some train stations and British Museum visitors had also been signposted to the Museum. Forty volunteers help at the Museum as guides or conservation helpers and an Ipswich Museums Committee has been formed. A Group of local printers had exhibited work by local artists and the 100 years of the Women's Vote had also been commemorated with a display of artworks.

- 41.8 In response to a question by Councillor Pope it was confirmed that LI 240 – Ipswich Museum & Gallery, the school visitor figures of 1,084 had been actual attendances. Discussion took place about the apprenticeship levy contributing to skilled jobs and the Chief Executive confirmed that IBC focussed on ensuring that the apprentice levy was spent in the service areas with the greatest pressure.
- 41.9 The Planning Performance Data consisted of the three service areas, Building Control, Major Capital Schemes and Planning & Development and The Planning Advisory Service had awarded IBC a ‘What Good Looks Like’ award for producing, reviewing and updating the Local Plan. As IBC did not have a 5 year land supply for housing, work would continue with other local authorities in the area as part of the Ipswich Strategic Planning Area Board.
- 41.10 As one of the top 5% of authorities nationally, the vast majority of applications (93%) were dealt with by Officers and 99% were dealt with, within the time target. In respect of the Ipswich Garden Suburb, IBC were successful in receiving £9.8m from the Housing Infrastructure Fund to deliver three key pieces of infrastructure for the project to build 3500 homes over the next few years.
- 41.11 The Building Control Team continued to work with Suffolk Fire & Rescue to inspect all the tall buildings in the region and the major building projects such as the Birketts building and the Crown Car Park (which had recently won an award) had been completed. The restaurant in the old ‘Iceland’ shop had now opened and work was ongoing at The Maltings (which had been bought by IBC and then sold) and the Easy Hotel in Northgate Street would be completed next year. Enforcement, such as the use of Section 215 of the Town & County Planning Act 1990 provided the local planning authority with the power, in certain circumstances, to take steps requiring land to be cleaned up when its condition adversely affected the amenity of the area.
- 41.12 In relation to conservation and design there was often difficulty when dealing with buildings at risk which were privately owned. A good example of such a conservation was ‘The Old Bell’ on the corner of Wherstead Road and Stoke Street which was a listed building.
- 41.13 The Public Realm Strategy was to be submitted to Executive in the coming week and if any buildings were recognised as local treasures in their wards, Councillors were encouraged to make them known for entry on the Local List.
- 41.14 Overall the Local Plan Team were recognised as a good team and Councillor Gage confirmed that at the recent Suffolk County Council Education Infrastructure Plan meeting which she had attended, the Officers had been complimentary of IBC’s Local Plan Officers for their work in identifying and including new school provision within the Ipswich Garden Suburb Masterplan to meet future school places needs in and around the fringes of the development.
- 41.15 In respect of Proposal Form No 26: *‘What was being done by Ipswich Borough Council to increase trees and native hedgerows within the Borough’* which had

been submitted by Councillor Pope on 30 August 2018, the Chief Executive had suggested that a scoping meeting occurred and this had now taken place. An action plan had been drawn up and it was agreed that a sub-group of the Development Working Group would work through a tree strategy for Ipswich with input from the Park Services, Arboriculturalists and Planning representatives. Discussion followed about legislation, funding and the removal of trees and the Chief Executive agreed to speak to Suffolk County Council about these factors. It was envisaged that a more developed plan would be submitted to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee by the end of February 2019. The Chair thanked Councillor Jones for her attendance.

42. OS/18/18 Performance Data 2018/19

- 42.1 The Chair presented this report which detailed the Quarter 2 Performance Data 2017/18 and Councillor Pope asked for further explanation (in the Finance Service area) of LI 266 '*% of contracts on the corporate contract register that had exceeded their contract term*'. The Chief Executive explained that Councillor M Cook had agreed to attend the meeting to be held on 3 January 2019 to present the Portfolio Holder Update for Finance and he would be available to answer this question then.
- 42.2 Councillor Leeder asked that previous information for the past 3 years be included within the Performance Indicators which were showing as 'red' to allow for trends of either one-off or recurrent issues which might require further investigation. The Chief Executive agreed that this information could be available as each Portfolio Holder attended to give their update.

43. OS/18/19 Work Programme 2018/19 - no proposal forms received

- 43.1 The Chair reported that the Task & Finish Group for GP Hubs, in respect of Proposal Form Ref No: 27 would be held on 6 December 2018 and a verbal update would be given at the 3 January 2019 meeting. It was then envisaged that a debate on GP Hubs would be held at the meeting on 31 January 2019 when representatives of the Health Service would be invited to attend.
- 43.2 It was confirmed that Highways England would be invited to attend the meeting on the 3 January 2019.

Resolved:

that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme, attached at Appendix 1 to report Ref No OS/18/19, be agreed.

The meeting was adjourned at 6.50pm to allow representatives from First Eastern Buses Ltd to attend. The meeting re-commenced at 7.00pm.

44. Ipswich Park & Ride Update

- 44.1 Paul Martin, Commercial Director and David Jordan, Marketing Manager for First Eastern Buses gave an update on the Ipswich Park and Ride Service.

Aidan Dunn, Interim Corporate Director for Growth Highways and Infrastructure and Councillor Paul West, Cabinet Member for Ipswich of Suffolk County Council were both in attendance. Councillor P Smart, Portfolio Holder for Environment & Transport and Michael Newsham, Integrated Transport Officer at IBC were also both in attendance.

- 44.2 Mr Martin said that following First Eastern's previous attendance at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee they were now in a position to compare the passenger figures which showed an increase although traffic congestion continued to be the main impact on services. First Eastern Ltd were keen to work with IBC and Suffolk County Council to promote the use of the Park & Ride Service as often the journey from the London Road site to the town centre could be as little as 10 minutes, while this time could quite easily be the time spent queuing to get into a town centre car park.
- 44.3 Mr Jordan said that local businesses had been approached who could offer up to a 75% discount for staff using the Park & Ride Service. A successful bid had been submitted to Highways England to improve the infrastructure on parts of the Park & Ride network including the signs on the arterial roads advertising the sites.
- 44.4 Councillor Holmes asked whether statistics for individual shoppers or commuters were recorded or just cars entering the Park & Ride sites? Mr Martin said that the sites were traditionally used for shoppers but there was capacity for student use and also employee use for a working day and dialogue with a range of different companies was taking place.
- 44.5 Councillor Harsant asked whether commuters to London used the Park & Ride service and Mr Martin said that the first bus of the day was at 7.00am but analysis had shown that few passengers alighted the bus at Ipswich Railway Station and by the evening, the service had reduced in frequency so commuters were not considered to be a target market.
- 44.6 Councillor Leeder requested that IBC were notified when a timetable change was made in line with the Suffolk County Council 70 day's requirement notice? Suffolk County Councillor said that this seemed reasonable and could be considered.
- 44.7 Mr Dunn said that Suffolk County Council (SCC) were pleased with the Park & Ride Service and that the resource incurred no subsidy from the taxpayer. SCC staff were encouraged to use it when the SCC car park was full and the service was being promoted to other major employers in the town. Councillor West said that work continued with First Eastern to assist and improve the service further.
- 44.8 Councillor P Smart said that Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils were also encouraged to use the service since their employees had moved to Endeavour House and this would benefit the passenger figures. In relation to commuters, even if the Park & Ride started earlier they could park at the station with no added journey time as congestion only increased at peak travel times.

A car park study was to be built into the Local Plan and would be a principal planning document and he urged all to comment on the proposed zones within the Local Plan when it was available for consultation. Pop-up car parks were not encouraged by IBC but when sites were not being developed it was opportune to use these for revenue.

- 44.9 Councillor Smart said that IBC would be investing in a Variable Messaging System (VMS) for car parks, SCC had been approached for a contribution and although this would exclude pop-up car parks, it was hoped that this would be available by the end of the financial year for the main car parks in Ipswich. Mr Martin asked whether the VMS would be available on routes into the town or just within the town as if the number of places available at the Park & Ride were to be listed then travellers would have the option of whether to continue into town or not? Councillor Smart said that the option of adding more car parks to the VMS was an option but more signs would be required the further out from town they were placed and signage outside of the IBC area would require SCC permission.
- 44.10 In response to a question about First Eastern's travel plans during the four live music concerts planned for August 2019, Mr Martin said that there would be no issue with extending the hours of the Park & Ride facility and that although no contact had been made with the organisers as yet, it was hoped that discussions would take place.
- 44.11 Discussion took place about commercial financial information being disclosed and First Eastern said that passenger numbers were in line with expectations in order to make the service sustainable. Mr Martin reiterated that congestion was the biggest single issue that faced all bus services. Mr Dunn said that previously there had been different ways of counting passenger numbers, from cars entering the Park & Ride areas to the number of stops used but First Eastern now had clear data about the number of passengers using the First Eastern service. No subsidies were being given to the service and on hearing that the service was commercially viable, these were the success criteria to consider. Suffolk County Councillor West said that the increase in passenger usage could be linked to the other authorities locating to Endeavour House or a better economy but it was reassuring that no subsidies made the service viable but more could always be done to improve the service re: pinch points on the routes.
- 44.12 Councillor Smart said that he recognised that the situation re: passenger numbers was more accurate now than when tickets had been bought which could have included up to 5 passengers per ticket and incentives through the Green Travel Plan gave a more taxable benefit. Councillor Goonan questioned whether tangible evidence existed to back up the increase in passenger numbers statement and Mr Jordan said that commercially sensitive information such as this could not be released but there had been no drop in passenger numbers as had been anticipated at the start and the increased frequency of buses had seen an increase in numbers.

- 44.13 Councillor C Smart asked whether First Eastern buses operated the Variable Message System elsewhere in the country as if information was given on the outskirts of the town, this information could be out of date by the time the car park had been reached? Mr Jordan said that VMS signage for Park & Ride services operated in Portsmouth where it was expensive to park but it did not operate at times for commuters.
- 44.14 Councillor Allen asked how the Park & Ride Service was promoted to employees at Ipswich Hospital and Mr Martin said that discussions were still being held with Ipswich Hospital to roll out a discounted deal to both staff and visitors.
- 44.15 Discussions took place about reopening the Bury Road Park & Ride site and Mr Martin said that if the two other sites reached capacity then this would be a logical view.
- 44.16 In response to a question about subsidies and the money from the Suffolk County Council car park being used to support the service, Mr Dunn confirmed that since the offer had been started, SCC employees paid into a Green Travel Fund via their salaries and this was used to subsidise train and bus services, not taxpayers money. The Chair thanked Mr Martin, Mr Jordan, Mr Dunn and SCC Councillor West for their attendance. Also she thanked Councillor P Smart and Michael Newsham for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm

Chair