

PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Monday 13th November 2023

PRESENT – Councillor Brian Taylor (in the Chair) Councillors, Brookfield, Khan S, Khan Z, Fielding, Marrow and Russell.

ALSO PRESENT – Executive Member for Growth & Development, Qesir Mahmood, Officers – Carmel Foster-Devine, Heather Farmer, Paul Withington, Mark Berry, Saf Alam, Simon Ross and Phil Llewellyn.

RESOLUTIONS

9. Nomination of Chair for the Meeting

Following recent political changes at the Council, the former Chair and Vice Chair were no longer on the Committee, so Phil Llewellyn requested nominations for a Chair for this meeting. Councillor Brian Taylor was nominated by Zamir Khan, and seconded by Katrina Fielding. No other nominations were received, so Councillor Taylor took the Chair.

RESOLVED – That Councillor Brian Taylor serve as Chair for this meeting.

10. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

11. Minutes of the meeting held on 14th August 2023

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14th August 2023 were submitted for approval.

Simon Ross agreed to send responses from Tony Watson to questions raised at the last meeting, to the Committee.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 14th August 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

12. Declarations of interest

No Declarations of interest were made by Members of the Committee.

13. Highways Infrastructure

The Committee received a report and presentation, which had been circulated to Members of the Committee ahead of the meeting, on the Borough's Highway Infrastructure, with Officers and the Executive Member, highlighting:

- The Road Network

- Surveys and Current Condition
- Funding and Maintenance Works
- Solutions
- Trends
- The Future
- Pot Hole Issues – including Criteria, Inspections, Defects Raised
- Traffic Signals
- Developer Funding for Highway Improvements

Members of the Committee made a number of comments relating to the presentation and report, which are summarised below:

- Issues with Traffic Lights, buses not using filter lane near Cravens Brow/Branch Road because of issues with the lights, and the need for officers to proactively tell Ward Members of issues relating to traffic signals, so they could advise residents. Officers advised that the issue at Cravens Brow/Branch Road was being looked at with Yunex, and that Members were advised of issues with traffic signals that would last a week or more. References were made to supply chain issues and the delay since Covid for spare parts, and some of the equipment in the Borough was old and more likely to need replacement parts, which were scarce or no longer available. Cllr Mahmood advised that this was a key part of Yunex's role, and that officers would ask the company about their procurement strategy and stock levels.

ACTION: Officers to contact Yunex re their procurement strategy given the issues that were raised around stock levels the and rising costs.

- A further issue raised relating to Traffic Lights was the view that the lights seemed to remain on red at night, which had implications for fuel consumption and pollution. Officers were not aware of this, but would check with Yunex on the timings at night.

ACTION: Officers to contact Yunex re the issue of lights remaining on red at night, which had implications for fuel consumption and pollution.

- Use of the generic Highways Councillor e-mail address rather than having named contacts. Officers explained that there were a number of vacancies at present in the team, and also a high number of MP queries, so the generic e-mail was being used and regularly checked. It was hoped that three current vacancies would be recruited to during December.
- It was noted that there was a significant funding shortfall for road repairs, which was a national issue with a £14 Billion shortfall.
- Members raised concerns about the quality of repairs carried out at Billinge End Road and outside Witton Park, and also questioned the decision making around pot-hole repairs. Officers referenced the funding issues referred to, and the need to prioritise, but understood the views being expressed. The criteria for pot-hole repairs was also

explained along with technical specifications relating to road surfaces and skid reduction.

- Members also raised issues in relation to road marking and line painting, with officers explaining priority categories and the Borough-wide approach, and the Executive Member referenced the extra funding put in by the Council in the last two years, as there was no budget, but this would not last and that a strategy was required for future funding.
- Street signs – it was confirmed that newer signs were more reflective and less reliant on dedicated lighting.
- In response to a comment from Councillor Mark Russell relating to Section 106 funding for signals needed for housing developments, the Chair advised that these matters were addressed during the planning application process.

The Executive Member and supporting officers were thanked for their attendance and input, and then left the meeting.

RESOLVED – That the information provided by the Executive Member and Officers be noted.

14 **Date of the Next Meeting**

The next meeting would be held on Monday 4th March 2024, and it was noted that the Committee had not selected a topic for the meeting, and the Chair suggested that, as referred to in the presentation by Martin Eden at the July meeting on future areas of focus, that scrutiny of plans to purchase electric & alternative fuel vehicles and develop fleet strategy for alternative fuels would be appropriate, which was agreed by the Committee.

Signed:

Date: