

Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Wednesday, 6th January, 2016.

Present:- Councillors Plenty (Chair), Morris (Vice Chair), Dar, Davis, N Holledge, Malik, Mansoor (from 6.45pm) and Wright

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillor Strutton

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Sohal

PART 1

35. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest relating to the business of the meeting.

36. Minutes of the last meeting held on 28th October 2015

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting on 28th October 2015 be approved as an accurate record.

37. Member Questions

The responses to questions received from members prior to the meeting were circulated. The following comments were made:

1. The answer on vehicle activated signs was awaited. Members requested that the final response be included in the minutes of the meeting, as the matter was vital for road safety and of interest to both the Panel and the public.
2. Members had raised the matter of painting yellow lines given the level of work undertaken on the matter in recent years. A spreadsheet detailing the work Slough Borough Council (SBC) would be completing was to be circulated to the Panel after the meeting.
3. Officers had raised a divergence between the RAC's estimates on the financial implications of SBC's parking regime, and SBC's own calculations. The matter would be covered in a report to Cabinet in January 2016, and members requested a paper for information regarding this discrepancy.
4. The answer related to building regulations; however the question concerned the Fire Authority's desire to stress early prevention of fires, rather than the use of the emergency service to put out burning buildings. The Chair would consider an approach to SBC on the matter of fitting sprinklers or similar preventative equipment in public buildings.

Resolved: that the Panel receive a paper for information on the differences between RAC and SBC estimates on the financial implications of parking at its meeting on 29th March 2016.

38. Street Lighting Maintenance and Upgrade

(At this point, Cllr Mansoor entered the meeting).

Under the present system, the public would contact the call centre with reports of faulty street lights. These would then be passed to the current contractor (SSE) through the Oracle system. SSE would then investigate the report and inform SBC as to whether the lantern required replacement or other work was needed. The relevant work order would then be raised, along with an estimate of the time it would take to complete.

At present, a new system using light-emitting diodes (LED) was being put in place. This transition had been causing problems with the supply chain as old stock was not being re-ordered. SSE had arrangements with distributors rather than producers of the former type of lantern, which had further complicated the situation.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- LED lighting was being installed in individual lanterns at present, rather than waiting for a whole street to require the new system. However, LED lighting under the new contract would need to meet the specifications given by SBC; as a result, a mass order for these had not been placed given the relatively small number of LED lights needed in the interim period. This meant that the short term arrangement was ad hoc and did not use the central management system (CMS) which would be used in the longer term.
- The problem with SSE's supply was acknowledged. However, SBC could only chase SSE rather than their distributor which complicated discussions.
- Solar lighting technology at present may be powerful enough for parks but could not be used for highways. Street lighting bollards used solar power in some cases but there were also limitations in this matter. The new contract did not mention street lighting bollards specifically to allow flexibility should technological progress widen SBC's options.
- The joint funding from Department for Transport (DfT) covered 3 local authorities (Wokingham Borough Council, Reading Borough Council and SBC). It covered 70% of the overall cost of £27 million for the new system; whilst the monetary amount differed from authority to authority, the 70% proportion was consistent across all three councils.
- SBC's payments to SSE were governed by a schedule of rates which specified the costs for items. Lantern installation had a fixed price. The new contract did not include scouting sites as CMS allowed for remote checking, however SBC had an in-house arrangement of monthly checks which covered all streets.
- Members questioned the effectiveness of current arrangements, where residents would be informed that a light had been fixed but witnesses did not agree with this assessment. At present, SBC relied on a facilities management system and could not resource checks on specific cases; however, members questioned whether such checks

Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel - 06.01.16

could be accommodated within office hours during the winter, when darkness occurred before 5pm. However, the upgrade project should provide better information under CMS, with a further system needed to ensure that SBC only paid the contractor for work completed.

- The issue of street lights that were on during daylight hours was assessed through scouting and public complaints. On average, the cost of repairing such lights was approximately £150 although this would vary depending as to whether traffic management was required to complete the repair. Decisions on day burning lights were made on the basis that replacement of the lantern would be the default decision.
- Land ownership issues had been encountered in some cases of repair work and had complicated matters. However, the need for resolution was acknowledged. Communications between housing and highways on repair work could also cause delays.
- The new contract included governance on repairs to ensure that duplicate payments were not being made for the same work. In addition, the new LED lights came with 12 year guarantees which should make management of this easier; the guarantee still applied in the case of lights affected by road traffic incidents.
- Given the fact that LED lights had numerous constituent lighting elements, a level of functioning diodes would be set for safety. Once this level had been breached, CMS would send an alert and the matter would be investigated.
- The previous contract had been subject to annual reviews, with an option to extend. For the handover to the new contract (to start in April 2016) a final extension had been granted. The new contract would be for 2 years and would be completed with Volker Highways; it would also include a 3 month lead in period to assist with systems integration. In particular, Volker's work with West Berkshire Council had impressed SBC.
- The Panel questioned the average repair time of 4.84 days in the report, given the 12 week wait for lighting in some cases. In terms of the future, whilst these issues were recognised the new contract contained penalty clauses. However, the repair regime element of the new arrangements had not yet been finalised.
- SBC had opted for a bespoke, rather than a generic, LED option as SBC had not been convinced that the generic option provided quality and durability. Despite their specialised nature, SBC had been assured by the manufacturer (Phillips) that there would be sufficient numbers of spare LED lights to cover any replacements required. Several companies had been approached in discussions to ensure the best option was selected.
- The governance structure of the new arrangements had been defined by the agreement with DfT.
- Members wished for their views on contractual arrangements to be noted. They felt strongly that, in many cases, members were not being approached in the process of deciding the priorities of new contracts, and thus their views (as representatives of local residents) were not included in SBC's decision making. Given the fact that the street lighting contract was due to be signed the week after this meeting, the

Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel - 06.01.16

Panel realised that their impact on this contract would be limited. However, as a wider point of principle they wished it to be recorded that the views of members needed to be incorporated into discussions on outsourced service provision at a point where they could have a genuine impact on outcomes.

- Once the Chair had received information regarding governance and scouting arrangements, a decision would be made as to whether (and when) the Panel should receive an update on street lighting.

Resolved:

1. That a list of lights burning during daylight hours would be sent to members every 2 months.
2. That the governance arrangements outlined in the new contract be shared with the Panel.
3. That the Panel refer to Cabinet their view that new contracts should be discussed with scrutiny members sufficiently early for the views of members to have an impact on outcomes.
4. That the Panel receive an annual update on insurance claims.

39. Forward Work Programme

Resolved: that the Panel requested that Thames Valley Police cover the following matters at the Crime and Disorder Reduction Panel meeting:

- The recent report on intra-family violence.
- Cyber crime.
- Engagement with the Slough Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

40. Attendance Record

Resolved: that the attendance record be noted.

41. Date of Next Meeting - 23rd February 2016

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.12 pm)

Note: In relation to minute 37, the following response has been given on vehicle activated signs:

Responsibility for VA signs has been recently transferred after the original members of staff left the council last year. SBC is awaiting the implementation of the ITS Framework Contract before placing orders for new signs. None of the older signs have been repaired as I understand they are beyond economical repair.

Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel - 06.01.16

There are 15 roads currently on the list from complaints raised in 2015 from the information we hold; it cannot be confirmed if there are any outstanding from previous years.

There have been delays to the procurement of the signals as a result of the recent tender so officers are now arranging a short request for quote from 3 suppliers. SBC intends to order the signs in the next few weeks and have them in by the end of the financial year.