

## **AGENDA ITEM NO. 4(a)**

Minutes of a meeting of the Operational Services Committee facilitated via the Zoom Video Conferencing System at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021.

### **PRESENT**

Cllr Julia Huffer (Chairman)  
Cllr Victoria Charlesworth  
Cllr Lis Every  
Cllr Mark Inskip  
Cllr Dan Schumann (as a Substitute)  
Cllr Paola Trimarco  
Cllr Jo Webber  
Cllr Christine Whelan

### **OFFICERS**

Lewis Bage – Communities & Partnerships Manager  
Jo Brooks – Director Operations  
James Khan – Head of Street Scene  
Liz Knox – Environmental Services Manager  
Shona McKenzie – Community Safety Officer  
Angela Parmenter – Housing & Community Advice Manager  
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer  
Craig Smith – Building Control Team Leader

### **OTHERS PRESENT**

Nigel Ankers – Finance Officer, East Cambs Street Scene (Item 7)  
John Hill – Managing Director, East Cambs Street Scene (Item 7)  
Paul Remington – Chairman, East Cambs Street Scene (Item 7)

Councillor Huffer revealed that Councillors David Ambrose Smith and Christine Ambrose Smith had not been able to attend today's meeting due to a sudden illness.

#### **69. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

#### **70. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Ambrose Smith and Christine Ambrose Smith. Councillor Dan Schumann attended as a Substitute.

Due to Councillor David Ambrose Smith's absence, Vice Chairman Julia Huffer chaired the meeting.

#### **71. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interests were made.

**72. MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

**73. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

**74. EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE BUSINESS PLAN 2021/22**

The Committee considered a report, V154 previously circulated, which detailed the Business Plan for 2021/22 for East Cambs Street Scene (ECSS). A revised Business Plan had been circulated after the agenda despatch and prior to the meeting.

The Managing Director advised the Committee that the purpose of the report was to present the Company's Business Plan looking forward to the next year. The Board wished to place on record its appreciation of the resilience of the team over the last year and commended the report.

The Director Operations advised the Committee that she was speaking to the committee in her capacity as Director of Operations for East Cambs Street Scene. Should she need to respond as Director for the Council she would advise the Committee accordingly.

The Business Plan obviously looked at the year ahead but also took the opportunity to briefly touch on the past year. Like most other services and businesses, ECSS has been affected by the pandemic. However, the Director personally thanked all of the workforce for maintaining a 'business as normal' approach. We were one of a few waste and recycling services who did not reduce services during the past 12 months and that was purely down to the commitment and diligence of our workforce. Their dedication and hard work was much appreciated and many of our residents wished to say thank you to them.

The Company managed to maintain its monthly performance target of 80% throughout the majority of the year apart from September. This was due to a combination of managing self-isolation, shielding and positive COVID cases amongst the crew, but the black bag roll out to residents had continued. This was a temporary blip and the Company was now continuing to exceed the 80% monthly target.

Managing staffing levels during the past year had, at times, been extremely challenging and saw us having to draft in higher numbers of agency staff to replace permanent members of staff, to ensure the service to our residents was maintained.

To help the Company manage this going forward, 4 of our officers had now received training on lateral flow testing. This had now been in place for a week and meant that our officers were tested twice a week, which helped plan for self-isolation cases alongside those that tested positive for COVID. The crews welcomed this and it was working well.

Finally, Members of this Committee were aware that The Council gave ECSS £91,000 from the money given to it by central Government to mitigate increased expenditure and costs caused by the pandemic. The £91k was purely to finance agency workers and overtime for existing staff, to ensure that services could be maintained. ECSS, as previously advised, was committed to repaying any of the £91k it did not use. As at end of February (month 11), ECSS had used £76,847. There may be some movement with this as March's (month 12) costs had not been included yet and some more of this fund may be drawn on, especially with the introduction of the lateral flow testing. However, with that caveat, currently ECSS would be repaying the council £14,153.

The Head of Street Scene then advised the Committee that the first portion of the Business Plan highlighted the success the Company had achieved. Last year the service had over-achieved its performance targets. Those targets had been reviewed and new Key Performance Indicators and targets had been agreed. Next year's goals had been set but already there were some uncertainties about the service, as the Government's new Waste Strategy was expected to change the services provided. The Key Performance Indicators were set annually and next years would include any necessary new Government targets.

The Company intended to expand on its experience during the pandemic and would focus on education and promotion as a priority. Although the Company had the highest recycling rates in Cambridgeshire, it would review its collection rounds. These were critical in stabilising demand, could possibly result in a carbon reduction and could reduce the amount spent on overtime. A holistic review should result in a more cost effective and profitable service that continued to meet customer expectations. The company would also continue to maximise commercial opportunities.

The Finance Officer, in considering the budget, had taken a cautious approach and anticipated the Company breaking even over the year. Income had increased, due to a 2% increase in the management fee from the District Council, and an additional estimated £75K to cover the increased costs associated with the Material Recycling Facility contract the Council held with Amey. Costs had increased by £65K, the main areas being the impacts of COVID and recycling. Other costs might be incurred should agency staff be required to cover for staff who had not used their holiday entitlements in the previous year and were carried over into the following year.

The Committee welcomed the review of the Key Performance Indicators and noted that the use of social media had become more important during the pandemic. A target for an increase of 5% of 'likes' and 'shares' had been agreed for the following year but that would only equate to 10 additions. The analytics of the website should be looked at, to try and gauge the engagement through

this platform. The Head of Street Scene explained that it was very difficult to increase the number of followers on the social media platform, so the targets looked at the number of 'posts' and 'shares' rather than the number of followers. So it was more about sharing information, as more would be gained if the information was shared by more people.

With regard to the vehicle fleet and the difficulties with Government consultation over the Waste Strategy, the consultation should take place during the spring. If there was no clarity from Government then the Council had to consider the action it could take, such as making representations to the Government. The Committee was informed that the Waste Strategy had been due before Easter, but had been delayed previously. Everyone wanted to hear the results so its effects could be considered. Every effort was being made to obtain those results.

In response to a query about the opportunities to become carbon-neutral, the Members were reminded that the Cambridgeshire local authorities were looking at electric and hydrogen powered vehicles, to ensure everything was covered. It was hoped that this would form part of the vehicle procurement framework to gain access to those types of vehicles. Lots of research was going on into carbon neutral alternatives and the Company was in the best position to take advantage.

On the development of employees, it was noted that performance management was used and that a lot of staff would reach the top of their pay scales by October. It was stated that the Company used the same PAYE scheme as the Council and therefore it was not eligible for specific Government COVID grants. It was revealed that there was currently nothing in place for pay incentives for those at the top of their scales but was something that would be looked into. To access relevant grants the Company would have to meet certain criteria, but as it was linked to the Council's pay scheme the Company's employees and Council employees were counted as one, making the Company ineligible due to the total number of staff.

Regarding education and communications for schools and the public, questions were asked about the Company's programmes, what engagement had taken place and about the timings of future communication schemes. The Committee were advised that the Company had attempted to engage with schools during the COVID pandemic, which had proved very difficult as schools had struggled. As additional pressure on schools had to be avoided, a different approach was being developed where information would be provided that could fit in with the schools' requirements. Information packs could be supplied so that the schools could dip into them as they needed to. Next year the aim was to maintain contact and provide some resources for them to use, including videos that they could use in the classroom.

The revision version of the Business Plan was duly proposed for approval, seconded, and agreed.

It was resolved:

That ECSS Business Plan 2021/22, in accordance with the revised version circulated, be approved.

## **75. SERVICE PRESENTATION – BUILDING CONTROL**

The Committee received a presentation by the Building Control Team Leader on the work of the Council's Building Control Service. The following information was given:

- The District Council set the standards for building design, including for Health and Safety, and Building Regulations followed this.
- The Building Control team consisted of seven staff, who dealt with statutory functions, such as checking plans, undertaking inspections, dealing with dangerous structures and demolitions.
- The team had managed to maintain its services despite being without a Team Leader for nine months.
- The team had received fantastic support from the Customer Services department and also liaised with other Council departments.
- A high level of workload had continued, although the number of applications had decreased slightly due to the pandemic. Usually the team dealt with an average of twelve jobs per day, but this had reduced by around 11% due to the pandemic, which was less than had been feared.
- Commercial activity had dropped off, affecting business, as had issues with obtaining materials and the furloughing of staff.
- Most of the jobs centred on domestic work and there had been an increase in house conversions.
- Inspection capacity had reduced, so work had been redeployed.
- Around 1500 projects had to get completed with an additional 400 already finished.
- Between 130-140 inspections had to be booked in and the market share of work secured was around 67-70%, which was very good and in the top 10% of all local authorities.
- However, competition was increasing so the team had to take steps to future-proof and possibly increase its market share by providing local expertise, technical responses and achieving a good rapport with architectural practices. This could realistically bring in an additional 10-15% extra work.
- The Government were reviewing changes to the Building Regulations, but it was not expected to affect the team too much, though its implications had to be understood and disseminated.
- Training and development was ongoing, with two staff members undertaking relevant qualification with two more to follow. This would build resilience within the department, as some staff members were approaching retirement.
- Fees were also being reviewed, to ensure that the charges made were fair and reflected the work being undertaken.

- Overall the team could be positive about its future and would continue to be held in high regard inside and outside the Council.

The Chairman commended the excellent work of the Building Control Officers, particularly throughout the COVID pandemic.

The Committee noted that the department worked well with the construction industry and the reason the team was so good was because its staff were sensible, knowledgeable, communicated well and were a credit to the Council. A question was raised about whether dangerous structures were an issue.

The Building Control Team Leader had been really impressed with the team. The department received Initial Notices, outlining work to be done and the organisations doing it. Although the department were not allowed to approach them initially, it could offer help once the work had started, although it was not always possible to compete. There were not a lot of dangerous structures in the district, due to the demographics of the area. However, the team would complete an inspection whenever notified and have discussions with surveyors as necessary, to ensure public safety.

## **76. DRAFT EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE YOUTH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

The Committee considered a report, V155 previously circulated, which set out the Draft East Cambridgeshire Youth Strategy and Action Plan.

The Communities and Partnership Manager advised the Committee that the Strategy had been drawn up to ensure that youths were engaged, respected and were aware of the services available to them. It identified where building on previous work was possible to improve lives. Extensive engagement with young people had taken place through consultations, using a phased approach so responses could be clarified. Phase 1 included surveys of young people through relevant organisations, including schools. The responses showed a number of common themes, and further consultation was undertaken to clarify the feedback and to identify any gaps. The specific issues were outlined on page 6 of the Strategy document. Engagement with stakeholders was conducted to map services addressing the issues raised via the consultation. The engagement completed was a good start but continuing this was a key element.

The Committee noted that COVID had severely affected young people, so the Council should do as much as it could to help. Providing spaces and activities would tackle boredom and, although there were a variety of things available, some services were depleted and sketchy. In Iceland, the country had started a national programme for after-school activities and this had produced a dramatic change in young people's attitude. Other countries were taking note of that, as after-school programmes had a huge impact, so they were trying to find ways to support their youth. In this district how could people be supported as, although lots of people wanted to help, there were not enough locations to house the programmes? The Communities and Partnership Manager highlighted the mapping exercise under Appendix 1 to the Strategy, which detailed the work already being carried out by a range of organisations addressing issues identified by young people via the consultation.

Once the Strategy and Action Plan were in place, voluntary agencies could find out more information and could engage with more people to facilitate services at a local level and integrate these with the community. There was already an East Cambridgeshire Youth Advisory Board in operation, which had participation from schools. The enthusiasm of the youth involved had highlighted their key areas. Further consultation could add value to identifying and addressing issues. The issues of violence towards young people also needed to be assessed and more research geographically needed to be undertaken to understand the impacts on youth.

The Strategy was going in the right direction and it would be interesting to see how youth groups and clubs could expand, though many individuals needed help in knowing where to go. Parish Councils could help with grant applications and could facilitate forums to share information and best practice. Larger parishes should also reach out to smaller neighbours.

The lack of engagement with education providers could have been due to bad timing. It would be useful to know how many youth clubs or groups were in the district. Mental Health was an issue, with long waiting lists, so were there any plans to get that moving? The Housing & Community Advice Manager acknowledged the gaps in service and the need to remove waiting lists. Some districts were good and the forums would be instrumental in sharing their good practices.

The County Council had primary responsibility for youth services but had declined to act. Therefore, it fell to the parishes, though some small parishes would struggle to do so. This meant there was inconsistencies across the district which needed to be levelled up.

Councillor Inskip then proposed a number of amendments to the officers' recommendations: progress on the Action Plan be brought back to the Committee every six months; Key Performance Indicators be provided to measure progress against the areas of focus in the Action Plan, in advance of the first six monthly review; and over the next twelve months the consultation be revisited to assess the changes and the COVID impact on young people in East Cambridgeshire. These would ensure that the impact of COVID on youth services could be measured, that consultation after the COVID period, for example on mental health, would be revisited. These were duly seconded by Cllr Whelan and when the amended recommendations were put to the vote was declared carried.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the Draft East Cambridgeshire Youth Strategy be approved;
- (ii) That the East Cambridgeshire Youth Action Plan be approved;
- (iii) That the progress made against the Action Plan be reported to this Committee every six months;

- (iv) That Key Performance Indicators be provided to measure progress against the areas of focus in the Action Plan, in advance of the first six monthly review;
- (v) That over the next twelve months the consultation be revisited to assess the changes and the COVID impact on young people in East Cambridgeshire.

77. **EYES AND EARS PARISH COUNCIL TRAINING**

The Committee considered a report, V156 previously circulated, which provided an update on the engagement between the East Cambs Community Safety Partnership and parish councils.

The Community Safety Officer advised the Committee that to tackle crime and make people feel safe the Council wanted to use its partners to help. This led to the 'Eyes and Ears' initiative, which provided training about domestic abuse, scams, hate crimes, abuse and exploitation. The training was delivered through an online training package and all parish councils had been contacted about it. The response had been positive, so more links to further training had been provided with possible face-to-face training which would be more interactive. Eight parishes had received training and there would be an ongoing programme rolled out to others. The Community Safety Partnership would continue to engage with parish councils and was looking to hold parish events and would hold a county parish forum. The next steps would involve developing engagement with the parish councils in an online evaluation exercise.

It was resolved:

That the updates on engagement between the East Cambs Community Safety Partnership and parish councils be noted.

78. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Committee received its forward agenda plan. The Community Safety Accreditation Scheme had still to be programmed in, as work was still ongoing with the Police and this was a big piece of work. For the June meeting, Granville Hawkes would be invited to provide information on the voluntary organisation in the district.

The meeting concluded at 6:13pm.