

HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
PANEL

MONDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Jesse Grey (Vice-Chairman), Hari Sharma (Chairman), Malcolm Beer, Marius Gilmore, Maureen Hunt and Julian Sharpe

Also in attendance:

Officers: Wendy Binmore, Simon Fletcher, Mark Lampard, Ben Smith and Tony Robinson

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Paul Lion, Councillor Phillip Bicknell in his capacity as Lead Member for Highways and Transport and also Councillor Malcolm Alexander in his capacity as Deputy Lead Member for Streetcare and Windsor.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Hunt – Declared a personal interest as she owns a property in Maidenhead.

Cllr Sharma – Declared a personal interest as he works for First Group.

MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Part I minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 28 June 2016 be approved.

STREETWORKS PERMIT SCHEME

Ben Smith, Head of Highways & Transport introduced the report and explained that the report was a follow up from the report that went to Cabinet in March 2016. The consultation had been carried out and completed; and the recommendations were to note progress and approve commencement for the scheme to go live in November 2016.

Councillor Hunt stated she was really pleased The highways Team had carried out such a comprehensive consultation. Cllr Sharma agreed and added the scheme would improve air quality, reduce pollution and help solve congestion issues on the Borough's roads. Utility companies would be held accountable and would help manage how utility companies operate. He was very supportive of the scheme and was happy to endorse the recommendations.

The Head of Highways & Transport confirmed it would be easier for utility companies to liaise and carry out works, such as laying cables, together to reduce costs and therefore, reduce congestion and inconvenience to residents. He added that part of the scheme was to identify main roads to help restrict when works could take place. Conditions could be imposed on permits for traffic sensitive roads. The Head of Highways & Transport stated it would be easier to monitor and manage works carried out by utility companies because the permits would come with conditions specific to the roads or area the works were being carried out. If works overran, fixed penalty notices would be issued or, utility companies would have to extend their permits which would also incur a cost. It was up to the Council to get the conditions right and to make the point that the Council would issue fixed penalty notices if the works overran.

The Head of Highways & Transport confirmed the team had tried to make the scheme as simple as possible. The inspectors would be equipped with iPads which would enable them to get up to the minute information on permits that were issued. As the permits flow through, the team could then look at resources to see if more or less were needed to operate the scheme. The scheme would be self-funding so the workforce could expand if required. The Head of Highways & Transport added that all the utility companies had been informed of the scheme through written correspondence and attending meetings with them; The Windsor Town Partnership, Maidenhead Town Partnership and both Chamber of Commerce had been notified of the scheme.

Councillor Gilmore welcomed the scheme as residents would see improvement and the roads would be better protected. The Head of Highways & Transport confirmed the scheme would be self-funding but the £120k capital expenditure to get the scheme implemented would not be recovered. The fines were relatively modest and companies would have to submit a pre-application and pay a fee for works that were likely to take longer than ten days and there was also a fee for varying the permit. The fines varied and could be anything from £5,000 for the first day the works overran and could go up to £10,000 thereafter. The cost of a permit for minor works on a small residential street was £45. Other areas had already implemented a similar scheme and it had not put utility companies off carrying their works.

The Head of Highways & Transport stated there would be three office based staff issuing permits. One of those officers was already in place and the other two required would come from existing resources. On site work would be carried out by current inspectors and other officers would be trained. Therefore, no new officers were required to be hired in the short time.

The Head of Highways & Transport stated that the permit fees were set at the maximum and could not be amended. However, the conditions and time limits of the permits could be amended and so could the fixed penalty notices.

Resolved Unanimously That: the Panel fully endorsed the recommendations to Cabinet:

That Cabinet:

- i. Notes the outcome of the consultation;**
- ii. Approves commencement of the roads and Streetworks Permit Scheme.**

BUDGET 2017-18 - INITIAL SAVINGS PROPOSAL

Mark Lampard, Finance Partner - Corporate Services & Operations introduced the report and stated that £5.3m of savings were required. The details of the directorates savings could be found in the appendices to the report.

The Finance Partner - Corporate Services & Operations confirmed the saving proposal for the directorate was £5.3m but, £5.6m was the overall reduction. The savings for the directorate were not the whole amount required for the Council. Simon Fletcher, Strategic Director of Operations stated table 3.1 in the report were savings that had been identified. Councillor Hunt stated that as savings were made, community involvement would need to rise and that was a bit of a problem as the results were being based on an unknown quantity. The Strategic Director of Operations confirmed the library service already had over 100 volunteers and not all ideas for savings within the report were likely to be taken up. He agreed it would be an uncertain time for staff and he had ongoing engagement and consultation with officers and staff.

The Strategic Director of Operations explained he was confident of finding 11% savings within Highways and Street Care as the procurement document asked the market to respond. Central government funding had been reduced and the next four years funding had been set out. The report was a response to that. The Strategic Director of Operations had worked with

heads of service to save a significant amount of money and also find revenue streams. He was looking to streamline services and see where there could be income generating opportunities. The 2017-18 budget was based on revenue streams and not just making savings.

The Strategic Director of Operations confirmed that the Council could change course if necessary so the Borough would not be stuck with options that did not work. He explained the Council needed to test the market so only the report only asked for in principle agreement for proposals; he was being very cautious.

Ben Smith, head of Highways & Transport confirmed there was quite a lot of spend on street works and large contracts in street cleaning. The Council would look to bundle them together differently in order to make savings during procurement. The Council were introducing a commissioning team who would liaise with Members and officers to commission services. In house staff could then be outsourced to companies so there would still be local knowledge and similar staffing numbers. The Strategic Director of Operations explained that if the procurement exercise showed the Council could not do it, the results would be set out for Cabinet. He felt he could protect services by working that was and Members would see the outcome of the procurement exercise. Councillor Beer had concerns about outsourcing Council staff as they could be moved around and the Borough's residents could lose their continuity, in particularly of community wardens. The Strategic Director of Operations responded saying the council already had services outsourced with good levels of satisfaction and this would be another example of that.

The Strategic Director of Operations emphasised that the savings to be found were only proposals with individual reports to go before Cabinet and other Panels on each of the ideas. Members would be able to make informed decisions. Outsourcing was not always a bad thing and would open opportunities for officers they may not have otherwise had.

Resolved Unanimously that: The Panel fully endorsed the recommendations to Cabinet:

That Cabinet:

- i. Agree the savings listed in Appendix A for submission to Council in the 2017-18 budgets subject to approval of any subsequent reports on individual schemes.**
- ii. Authorises Strategic Directors in agreement with Lead members to implement savings proposals.**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 7.50 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....