

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 9 February 2023

PRESENT – Councillors Tait (Chair), Mrs Culley, Donoghue, McCollom and Willis

APOLOGIES – Councillors Allen, Cossins, Haszeldine, Mrs D Jones and Wallis

ABSENT – Councillor Bell

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Renton and Keir

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Anthony Hewitt (Assistant Director Highways and Capital Projects), Seth Pearson (Partnership Director), Andrew Casey (Head of Highway Network Management), Gill Hutchinson (Transport Planning Manager), Neil Bowerbank (Head of Strategy, Performance and Communications) and Hannah Miller (Democratic Officer)

CLS37 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

CLS38 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY HELD ON :-

(1) 15 DECEMBER 2022

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 15 December, 2022.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 15 December, 2022 be approved as a correct record.

CLS39 12 JANUARY 2023

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 12 January, 2023.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 12 January, 2023 be approved as a correct record.

CLS40 NORTHGATE INITIATIVE

The Member with Portfolio for Stronger Communities provided a verbal update on the Northgate Initiative, and in doing so advised Members that a planning meeting was held to discuss the future of the initiative, the objectives were reviewed and refreshed and a work programme developed.

Following a question, the Stronger Communities Portfolio Holder informed Members that the issues being addressed were long term and therefore short term timescales could not be assigned. Any exit strategy that the steering group determined would be a long way in the

future, however learning would be disseminated for implementation in other Wards.

Members entered into a discussion regarding resources for the initiative; Members were advised that no specific funding had been received for the Northgate Initiative, however funding had been allocated from other initiatives such as Safer Streets; and reference was made to the community hub which was due to open imminently.

Members felt that further updates were required in relation to benchmarking and progress against the objectives.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

CLS41 PUBLIC SECTOR EXECUTIVES GROUP

The Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) informing Members about the work of the Public Sector Executives Group (PSEG).

It was reported that the PSEG was formed as one of the arrangements to replace the Darlington Partnership, following agreement by Council on 15 July; that the group included senior officers from key public sector bodies; and the key aims and membership of the group was outlined.

Details were provided of recent activity of the group, including sharing information with agencies in relation to cost of living and supporting the development of the Levelling Up Darlington Plan. Particular reference was made to the role of the PSEG in the Household Support programme.

Discussion ensued regarding meeting attendance; the difference between the PSEG and the Darlington Partnership was outlined; and following a question Members were informed that an update could be provided to Scrutiny on the newly established voluntary sector engagement group.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

CLS42 LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

The Assistant Director – Transport and Capital Projects submitted a report (previously circulated) providing Members with an annual update on highways and transport from a regional and local perspective, outlining delivery, performance and public satisfaction in 2022/23 and outlining the 2023/24 programme, including the release of funding; and providing an update on the Darlington Transport Plan.

The submitted report stated that there had been good progress on the development and delivery of the transport capital programme; the Tees Valley had secured significant funding from government, including the £310m City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme; and that the Council had adopted a new Transport Strategy for the Borough, Town Centre Transport Plan and Parking Strategy, with work underway on implementing the associated action plans.

It was reported that the Department for Transport (DfT) was focussed on progressing the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) and the Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIP); Darlington had started the delivery of one of two priority schemes in the LCWIP with the creation of phase one of a cycling route on Woodland Road; and Members were informed that an Enhanced Bus Partnership had been created to deliver improvements to bus services.

Reference was made to the progress on the schemes delivered in 2022/23, the Transport Capital Programme 2023/24 and proposed programme of schemes, and the Performance Indicators.

Discussion ensued regarding cycle path usage; maintenance of structures; and following ongoing concern regarding bus services, Members were informed of the Tees Valley Combined Authority improvement plan to address bus punctuality. Members were also provided with a progress update on the School Streets Initiative.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

CLS43 DBC MOBILE APP - UPDATE

The Head of Strategy, Performance and Communications submitted a report (previously circulated) providing Members with an update regarding the development of the DBC mobile app.

The submitted report stated that the DBC app, which was launched in November 2021, remained in a constant state of development; and information about the functionality and planned developments for the app was available on the Council's website.

It was reported that the reporting functions available within the DBC app were determined by the functionality available within two main back office systems (Lagan and Symology); the reporting features for Lagan and Symology were outlined; that the Council's online services must remain compliant with the prevailing web accessibility standards; and as the two systems function in slight different ways there can, on occasion, be a conflict between design, usability, and accessibility.

Members were informed that an established programme of work was in place to enhance mobile working processes within the street cleansing section of the council and to introduce some new reporting functions, with a focus on the bin/dog bin reporting feature; and that prerequisite work was required to determine how people would report the location of the bins.

Discussion ensued regarding different mechanisms to enable residents to identify and report full bins via the app; and following issues raised in relation to feedback from the app, Members were advised of the long term aim for feedback to be generated for all problems reported.

RESOLVED – That the content of the report be noted.

CLS44 WORK PROGRAMME

The Assistant Director Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee's work programme and to consider any additional areas which Members would like to suggest be included in the previously approved work programme.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be noted.