

## Appendix 2 Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee

The Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee, its remit as detailed in paragraph 4 of the covering report, met on 14 October 2022, 18 November 2022, and 13 February 2023. The following is an overview of the items reviewed by the committee.

### ITEM: Public Realm Future Operating Model

At the meeting on 14 October 2022, the committee considered the background and context of the council's public realm services, and views were sought relating to any future model to improve delivery of those services.

- The committee noted and commented upon the council's current model for delivery of public realm services.
- The committee supported the establishment of a cross party member working group to review the current model and support with selection of a future operating model for delivery of public realm services aligned with the council's long term objectives.
- The committee noted and commented upon the council's requirements for a future operating model, and raised issues about:
  - how the options are being drawn up in relation to the new contract
  - the establishment of a cross party member working group to review the current model
  - whether or not the future operating model should consider locality stewards being brought in-house
  - the extent to which the council should be front-facing in communications with the public
  - how the future operating model may allow greater commercial opportunities for income generation, such as making signage
  - how the options might consider the possible flexibilities within different models
  - the timing for the development of detailed proposals
  - the particular role that the council may have within the future operating model for contract management
  - the timing of the decision on the future operating model
  - work to look at other local authority operating models and
  - scope to include the views of local councils about the future operating model.

The committee requested that a further report be made to the committee before final proposals are considered by the Cabinet.

At the meeting on 13 February 2023, the committee considered a report on the outcome of a midpoint review of the public realm services, and was invited to comment on the proposals to select and develop a future operating model.

### The following recommendations were submitted to the Executive:

- Herefordshire Council (HC) / Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) strengthen the publicity campaign to raise awareness of where/how residents of Herefordshire can report pot-holes.
- Clarification is given on how contracts are awarded and arrangements do not tie the council in to using just one supplier for major infrastructure projects.

- Considerations are built in to the new model for the in-house element of the council's operations to generate commercial income streams.

In addition to the recommendations above, the committee requested that the following actions be undertaken:

- HC/BBLP more clearly communicate the opportunities for volunteers to support the work of HC/BBLP on, for example, litter picking, maintenance and improved access to local footpaths.
- Paragraphs 18 to 19 of the scrutiny report be clarified to explain that budgetary pressures on contract delivery are 'future' pressures.
- Assurances are given to the committee that internal expertise will be factored in to the new model that enables HC to assess the quality of major infrastructure and locality works to quality assure the work of our contractors.
- Evidence is given to the committee that if the 'two year' no fault termination clause – if enacted – would enable HC to move in to new and adequate contractual arrangements within that two year period.
- Assurances are given that corporate memory is built in to transition arrangements (from interim to permanent arrangements).
- That a note be made highlighting the progress toward the establishing the details of the new operating model post-election.

**Status: At the meeting on 2 March 2023, Cabinet approved the executive response to the scrutiny recommendations ([link to the summary of recommendations and the executive responses](#)).**

#### **ITEM: General Scrutiny Committee recommendations and the executive responses – update on the planning service**

- At the meeting on 18 November 2022, the committee received the executive responses to the recommendations made by the former General Scrutiny Committee on 21 March 2022.
- The main topics of the discussion included: the planning backlog; service improvements; communications and relationships; planning conditions; the materials being developed to enhance the consistency of decision making; the timetable for the improvement plan; the pre-application advice offer; the enforcement process; training for councillors; elements of the constitution relating to redirections and speaking time at meetings; dialogue between the public health team and the planning service; Supplementary Planning Documents; powers to deal with untidy / derelict sites; and resources to deliver the improvement plan.
- The executive responses to the General Scrutiny Committee recommendations were noted.
- The committee suggested that the issues raised during the discussion be used to inform the planning improvement plan process, particularly in terms of the points raised about communications and relationships.

#### **ITEM: Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership**

At the meeting on 13 February 2023, the committee received a report on the effectiveness of the Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP) in improving community safety in Herefordshire, and was invited to make comment and offer any recommendations to the CSP regarding the direction of travel in 2023/24.

The committee recommended that the CSP:

- Explore the current role of pastoral care within educational settings in enabling young people/their peers to recognise, record and report/refer abuse in all of its forms.
- Utilise wider synchronization of social media and research commonly used channels used by differing cohorts of society to promote key messaging, sources of help and support.
- Approach 'Talk Community' with a view to sharing data and to strengthen their network for communicating sources of support and help.
- Respond to the committee request to broaden and strengthen its reach within the community, and particularly outreach to parish councils.
- Explore how the safer streets funding can be channelled as effectively as possible in the county's rural areas.
- Explore how we cultivate / new funding sources to further the priorities of the CSP.

In addition to the recommendations above, the committee requested that the CSP:

- Present the evidence gathered on the healthy relationships education and its measurable impact on reducing domestic abuse/peer-on-peer/violence against women and girls in younger people.
- Present the evidence of the 'Drive Campaign' in relation to prevention of controlling and coercive behaviours/mental abuse related crimes.
- Explain how its priorities are changing as a result on new funding and interventions such as the serious violence duty and resulting strategy.
- Explain where improvements to sharing of data is enabling clearer understanding of trends and measures and how they influence operational practice.
- Explore innovative/smarter ways of working in relation to funding streams being deployed.

**Status: Ongoing**