

Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on 24 July 2009 at 3pm in the Civic Offices.

(NB These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting).

Present

Councillors Caroline Scott (Chair)
Mike Blake
Margaret Foster
David Fuller
Richard Jensen
Jim Patey

Also present

Bill Murphy, Highways Manager.
Charles Stunell, Former Head of Transport and Street Management.
Simon Moon, Head of Transport and Street Management.
Jane Di Dino, Scrutiny Support Officer

20 Declarations of Interest (AI 1).

No interests were declared.

21 Apologies for Absence (AI 2).

No apologies were sent.

22 Minutes of Last Meeting (AI 3).

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 18 May be agreed as a correct record.

23 Review of the City Council's Contract with Colas (AI 4).

A letter from Councillor Henderson dated 22 June was tabled in which he explained that he felt conservation areas are very important to the city and was therefore disappointed that no special provision had been made for them in the PFI contract. He is concerned that this has led to a deterioration in the standard of work carried out and suggested that the Council could use its links with France and Spain in order to obtain granite kerbs at a competitive rate.

Colas Portsmouth PFI contract presentation - 25 June.

The Chair informed the Panel that she had attended a very interesting presentation in June by Colas on the work carried out during the Core Investment Period. She was informed that Network Condition is currently at 24% i.e. rated excellent and that this has been verified independently.

Councillor Scott had also inspected the lighting columns in Old Portsmouth and was very pleased to observe that the replacements were not obviously different from the original ones.

Charles Stunell introduced Simon Moon as the new Head of Transport and Street Management. He explained that he would remain available to the Panel for the duration of this review.

The Panel requested clarification on the following points:

The reasons for the delay in completing road works in Waverley Road.

Bill Murphy, Client Manager (Highways & Coastal) explained that Colas originally carried out a patching operation on this section of footway replacing individual slabs that were potential trip hazards. Colas then agreed to include the section of footway into the Core Investment Programme (CIP). This then meant that the section of footway was repaved with new slabs. The completed footway works were inspected and it was noted that a number of rainwater channels were omitted. Colas were instructed to carry out remedial works and the missing rainwater channels installed. It was noted that a small amount of slabs were cracked caused by vehicles parking on the footway. Colas may decide to install a line of bollards to prevent this from happening in future.

The footway in Waverly Road is considered to be in a sound and safe condition. All remedial works were carried out at Colas' expense with no cost to the Council.

Some of the issues that were raised by Mr Thompson regarding paving existed since the Council constructed this area in 1987 and therefore were not caused by Colas.

The contract passed responsibility for the works to Colas and officers only inspect approximately 5% of works.

Lighting Columns Replacement.

Mr Stunell explained that over 9,000 lights have now been replaced. The working relationship between Colas and Southern Electric is generally very good. However, Southern Electric has a limited number of jointers and sometimes these are called away from jobs to attend emergencies. Colas cannot use any other company they are bound to use Scottish & Southern jointers.

Safety of Sites.

Mr Stunell explained that some holes had been left open for up to 6 weeks. It is not the Council's fault, but as the Highways Authority, it would be responsible. Bill Murphy, Highways Manager informed the Panel that Colas has a team that is responsible for monitoring work sites to ensure that they are safe. Members noted several incidents where holes had been left unattended and the work sites were insufficiently cordoned off from the public. Additionally, there were incidents where spoil left overnight had been thrown at house windows and cars. Mr Stunell informed the Panel that the Colas is responsible for ensuring that the sites are safe. Bill Murphy explained that under the Traffic Management Act the Council could insist that Colas take more action to secure a site at no extra cost. The Council is currently negotiating with Colas to ensure that a new site of works is adequately guarded at night.

Bus Stop Kerbs.

The Council has already started to install raised bus stop kerbs throughout the city under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Neighbourhood Forum Meetings.

A senior council officer always attends these meetings when requested and any actions arising are noted and the results given to the Link Officer. If it is a single query from a resident query the officer reports back to them directly. Councillor Foster reported that the Portsea Action Group is very pleased with Colas' work in its area.

Plant Maintenance.

Mr Stunell explained that the Council maintains plants that are in raised planters and Colas is responsible for the maintenance of planter and shrubs at ground level. An asset management survey of all the greenery in the city will be completed in September. The Council will then start negotiating with Colas to include maintenance of shrubs in the contract. It is hoped that new planting will start early in the new year.

Councillor Foster noted that drivers' vision is obstructed by overgrown shrubs on the approach to the Market Way roundabout. Mr Stunell responded that he would look into this, as Colas is responsible for maintaining the shrubs there.

Councillor Foster observed that she has requested that cutting back of shrubs in Portsea several times, but it was not carried out due to confusion over who owns the land. Simon Moon informed the Panel that the Council has a very good geographic information system, which shows land ownership. Mr Stunell offered to arrange a meeting on site with the relevant officers and Councillor Foster to resolve this issue.

10% of the payment to Colas is related to network usage by heavy goods vehicles (HGVs).

Mr Stunell explained that at the time of the contract, this seemed to be appropriate given the predicted growth figures for HGVs, which wear out roads more quickly than other vehicles. The number of HGVs using the city's road is calculated using annual road user surveys. However, the maximum % of HGVs was reached very early on so there was no need to carry out any more surveys. The Cabinet therefore agreed to make an amendment to the contract (variation number 4). The money saved by not carrying out these surveys (almost £1m) has been re-directed to street lighting and footway works in conservation areas.

Paving in Old Portsmouth.

At a previous meeting, the Panel had heard that the type of paving had not yet been agreed. Mr Stunell explained that the planning officer wanted high quality material used even if this meant that it could only be used on a smaller area. Colas has since sourced the stone and it has been agreed by the Council. Friends of Old Portsmouth have been consulted and the costs are within budget.

The Repainting of Road Markings (e.g. parking bays) after Resurfacing Works.

The Chair observed that a resident had waited a number of weeks before their disabled parking bay was repainted. Mr Murphy explained that if the resurfacing

consists of surface dressing then the chippings require to be swept up over a period of 2-3 weeks before the road markings can be repainted. Mr Moon commented that Colas should have informed the resident of the timeline to avoid unnecessary stress.

Councillor Patey observed that residents pay £25 for disabled parking bays to be repainted if these have been worn away.

Manhole Covers.

Councillor Foster reported that a manhole cover in Portsea has been marked out ready for replacement for the last few months. Mr Stunell explained that officers and members receive a weekly list of works to be done by Colas and that this particular manhole is scheduled to be replaced this week.

The Chair expressed dismay that Colas uses flimsy barriers around work sites that are often blown into the road. The barriers that utility companies use are much more solid.

Mr Thompson, a member of the public and former witness to this review was invited to speak to the Panel. He explained that he was concerned that the questions he had raised at a previous meeting had not been addressed.

24 Date of Next Meeting (AI 5).

To be agreed.

The meeting closed at 3pm.