

TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on Wednesday, 26 June 2019 at 5.00 pm at the Civic Offices, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Simon Boshier (in the Chair)

Councillors Chris Attwell

13. Apologies for Absence. (AI 1)

Apologies had been received from Councillors Hugh Mason and Judith Smyth.

14. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

No interests were declared.

15. Minutes of the Previous Meeting. (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 June were noted.

16. Future topics for review. (AI 4)

Drug-Related Harm

Lisa Wills, Strategy and Partnership Manager suggested that the panel consider carrying out a review of drug-related harm. She explained that:

- The functions of community safety had been moved across several departments.
- There was currently a flux regarding the focus on scrutiny.
- The Safer Portsmouth Partnership was no longer meeting and the Health & Wellbeing Board had taken on its agenda items.
- The review would cover health, crime, re-offending and young people.
- The Director of Public Health's annual report which would be published shortly covers drug-related harm.
- Portsmouth and Brighton are the most significant in terms of country lines in the South or England.

In response to questions from members, she clarified that:

It would be difficult at this stage to identify possible tangible outcomes and value that a scrutiny review could bring.

Funding is an issue. The budget for drug treatment had reduced significantly in the last few years.

Joint working across Southampton and Portsmouth is also an issue.

The police received £1.2m to target knife crime and serious violence. It is an issue in Hampshire but less so than in Hampshire and not more than London, Birmingham and Manchester. Details of how this funding would be spent have not yet been published.

The Proceeds of Crime Act: Funding is underutilised. A bid had been submitted to fund research.

Portsmouth's proximity to London is a factor in the high level of county line drug crime. The dealers recruit young people to create demand in the areas. Portsmouth has high rates of drug-related deaths and crack cocaine use.

The accessibility of the public highways

The Chair explained that he was interested in carrying out a review of the accessibility of the public highways. He had received a number of complaints from motor scooter users who cannot use some alleyways and footpaths because they are blocked by Z barriers. He had also witnessed problems for people with visually and physically impairments having difficulty with navigating a stretch of the seafront promenade due to A boards and promenade decorations. He had also been approached by the Portsmouth Disability Forum and Portsmouth Politics about similar problems.

In response to questions from members, Michelle Love, Safer Travel Manager clarified the following points:

The promenade

It became a right of way due to people walking there for over 20 years. It is not an adopted highway and therefore the Highways Act does not apply in relation to enforcement. There is an ongoing issue with A boards causing obstructions.

The Public Highway

A premises holder must have a licence to have items outside e.g. A boards, tables and chairs and flowers but only within an amenities area marked out by studs. Enforcing this regulation is an issue. The council is keen to encourage businesses but safety is paramount.

The council's contractor Colas is responsible for removing obstacles on the public highway. A boards are considered to be obstructions. The staff are not able to simply remove them. A photo must be taken, then a letter sent to the premises owner, then after a certain amount of time Colas returns and if the boards are still there they can be removed.

Roadworks

There is clear legislation regarding roadworks not obstructing the highway. Colas is responsible for dealing with that.

Z Barriers

Most z barriers were installed between 40 and 50 years ago. Some had been removed but this resulted in the pathways being used as rat-runs by people on mopeds.

Narrow Footways

Part of the pavement in North End was widened recently. The minimum width for the carriageway is 6.5m to allow space for two-way traffic and a bus lane.

Asset Register

This is maintained by Colas. It might be useful for a scrutiny review to look at this and then compare it to a web audit of what changes would be desirable.

Replacement items.

Schedule 4 of the Portsmouth Highways Maintenance PFI contract with Ensign/Colas lists the required contractual standards for all assets on the PFI network. Colas have a duty to inspect and replace assets e.g. barriers when they fall below the contractual standards, if the legislation regarding those assets has changed then the replacement will meet current legislation. This will create a cost neutral improvement for Portsmouth City council.

Routes.

The routes are being audited as part of the development of the Walking & Cycling Strategy.

Near Miss Trial

Tristan Samuels, Director of Regeneration added that this had been extended. This data along with the near miss data goes to Colas report, inform strategies.

Route4U Mobile Phone App.

The Route 4 U app was launched on 20 June, Clean Air Day. When you see an obstacle on the highway you are prompted to say if it's a short, medium or long term obstacle.
Short: e.g. cars on the pavement. This is reported to the parking department.
Medium: e.g. scaffolding. This is reported to Colas.
Long term: e.g. Z barriers. This is reported to the Council.

After analysis a project initiation document and a funding bid can be submitted.

Parking on Pavements.

Members noted that if there are no Traffic Regulation Orders in the area or double yellow lines, cars parked on pavements are a police matter.

Courier mopeds parked on pavements are an issue in some areas.

Sewage in Langstone Harbour.

The Chair explained that at its February meeting, the Full Council had asked that this panel consider a review of sewage in Langstone Harbour.

The Chair asked what value a scrutiny review of this topic could add.

Tristan Samuels explained that the Environmental Agency had recently launched a criminal investigation into Southern Water's activities.

There are also ongoing issues with nitrates in the Solent. Natural England's position is that new dwelling type planning applications should not be granted for the time being. Southern Water has stated that 5% of the nitrates problem is from sewage and 95% is from agriculture; this has not been verified.

He had spoken to Southern Water in the last two weeks and they reported that they were meeting all their obligations with regards to the Environment Agency and their licences are intact.

It was his opinion that a scrutiny review could not add any value as regional bodies like Partnership for South Hampshire were already reviewing this issue.

Carbon Footprint

The Chair noted that Councillor Smyth had asked the panel to consider a review into the council's carbon footprint. He added that in March the Full Council had instructed that a Climate Change Board be established.

In response to questions, Meredydd Hughes, Assistant Director of Buildings explained that one of the board's aims would be to monitor the reduction of the city's carbon footprint.

Tristan Samuels added that the board would be cross party and would be a lobbying group that monitors stakeholders and partners' work streams.

The Chair noted that the Scrutiny Management Panel could request a report on the work of the board to review its work.

RESOLVED that the following review be submitted to the Scrutiny Management Panel for allocation to its 2019/20 work programme:

The accessibility of public highways.

The meeting concluded at 6.00 pm.

Councillor Simon Boshier
Chair