

**SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL**

**Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development  
Committee**

**Meeting held 9 April 2014**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Cate McDonald (Chair), Ian Auckland (Deputy Chair), Trevor Bagshaw, Jayne Dunn, Keith Hill, Ibrar Hussain, Steve Jones, George Lindars-Hammond, Tim Rippon, Steve Wilson and Martin Lawton (Substitute Member)

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Terry Fox, and Councillor Martin Lawton attended as his duly appointed substitute.

**2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

**4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

4.1 12<sup>th</sup> February 2014

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2014, were approved as a correct record and, arising therefrom, (a) the Chair confirmed that she had responded to the two questions raised by Peter Hartley, together with the questions he had raised at previous meetings, (b) the Policy and Improvement Officer, Matthew Borland, confirmed that Councillor Ben Curran, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, had provided a written response to the seven questions raised by Peter Hartley, at the meeting of the Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2014, relating to the World Student Games 1992 and (c) further to an issue raised by Councillor Trevor Bagshaw, relating to the ability of bus companies in other countries being able to accommodate cycles on their vehicles, the Chair stated that the report of the Cycling Inquiry Task and Finish Group had been finalised, and contained a recommendation that Sheffield City Region Authority and public transport operators review their policy in terms of allowing rigid cycles on buses in the City.

4.2 18<sup>th</sup> February 2014

The minutes of the special meeting of the Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2014, were approved as a correct record.

## **5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

- 5.1 Matthew Borland reported that he had received a question from Julie Fakes, who had relatives buried in Crookes Cemetery, and was querying why a number of gravestones at Crookes Cemetery had been damaged, allegedly by the City Council for health and safety reasons.
- 5.2 The Committee agreed that the question would be referred to the relevant Council officer, with a request that they respond to Ms Fakes.

## **6. CITY CENTRE VIBRANCY**

- 6.1 The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Place, on the City Council's plans to maintain and grow a vibrant City Centre. The report contained details on the Vibrancy Model, an update on the progress made in terms of the steps taken to maintain the vibrancy of the City Centre and information on footfall, overnight visitors, spend by overnight visitors, retail rankings, hotel occupancy and visitor attractions.
- 6.2 The report was supported by a presentation by Richard Eyre, Head of City Centre Management and Major Events. With regard to the proposed future development of the City Centre, as well as the planned events for 2014, Mr Eyre reported on the work of the City Centre Business Improvement District (BID), which was being progressed by a Steering Group comprising representatives from the City Centre's public sector, and the retail, leisure, education and office sectors, as well as the night-time economy, and which aimed to deliver a wide range of initiatives, focusing on making the City Centre a better place to visit, work and live. Mr Eyre stated that a BID was a defined area which, in this case comprised the City Centre, within which business with a rateable value of over £30,000 would, subject to a majority vote in a ballot, pay a levy that was 1% of their rateable value. This would bring in additional money which would be used to fund projects within the City Centre. The BID, which was being led by the private sector, with support from the City Council, would be funded primarily through the levy, but could also draw on other public and private funding streams. A ballot of 640 businesses and retailers in the City Centre was expected in November 2014 and, if successful, the BID could generate in excess of £800,000 additional funding per year.
- 6.3 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-
- The footfall was measured by monitoring people walking to and from specific points in the City Centre by CCTV. The cameras were in operation 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. The method of measuring footfall, which was operated by a company called Spring Board, was comparative with methods used by other major cities.
  - In comparison to most other key cities, hotels in Sheffield had a lower rack rate and the City had a low spend to visit ratio. The City still lacked some top

end hotels, as compared with other key cities, such as Leeds and Newcastle.

- It was hoped that a majority vote for the BID would be achieved as part of the ballot as this would provide funding for improvements to the trading environment in the City Centre, which would hopefully encourage the establishment of more businesses. The Council was also working with Paul Lancaster Estates and other property agents to look at offering premises at low rents for small businesses. The City Centre Management Team was working closely with colleagues in Creative Sheffield to put pressure on landlords to make vacant premises available for small businesses, either rent free or at very low rates.
- As part of the first stage of scoping, to see if a BID was needed, approximately 230 City Centre businesses and retailers, including both independent and multiples, had been surveyed and asked whether they had any issues and if so, what could be done to resolve them.
- The social media was deemed a very useful and effective method of communicating and marketing events in the City Centre. This was presently managed by the City Centre Management Team, but if the BID was successful, responsibility would be transferred to the BID Company. The Team had received nearly 7,000 “likes”, up from 105 at the same time last year.

6.4 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, the information reported as part of the presentation now made and the responses to the questions raised; and
- (b) requests the Policy and Improvement Officer to make arrangements for a walkabout in the City Centre, to provide an opportunity for Members of this Committee, relevant Council officers and representatives from the business and retail sector, to raise any issues in connection with the City Centre, and for such issues to be discussed at a meeting of the Committee to be held during the Municipal Year 2014/15.

## **7. STREETS AHEAD - PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND STREET LIGHTING**

7.1 The Committee received a report of the Head of Highway Maintenance providing an update on the Streets Ahead project. The report was supported by a presentation by Steve Robinson, Head of Highway Maintenance, Sheffield City Council, Graeme Symonds, Network Director, Amey and John Barnett, Commercial Director, Northern Powergrid.

7.2 Also in attendance for this item were Councillor Jack Scott, Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Streetscene and Mike Hammond, Connections Manager, Mick Hickling, Operations Manager, and Siobhan Barton, Stakeholder

and Communications Manager, Northern Powergrid.

7.3 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- Significant progress had been made in terms of cleaning out gullies under the project, with most being cleaned out during the first year. Some gullies could not be cleaned due to cars being parked over them, and approximately 25% of the gullies required some form of repair work.
- Amey was performing above its performance indicators in dealing with litter and flytipping. There was now a multi-agency approach – Making Sheffield Cleaner – which reviewed where improvements could be made across the City, including in parks and on housing land.
- The City Council’s Highway Maintenance Service had a duty to respond to appropriate Freedom of Information requests received in connection with Amey’s work. This duty was included in the Streets Ahead contract, and many such requests had already been received and dealt with. In connection with this issue, Northern Powergrid also published information in terms of its performance on its website, with the purpose of being open and transparent.
- In terms of communicating information on intermittent faults to street lights to those residents affected, Northern Powergrid would prefer to deliver letters to all households affected, providing information on the faults, together with timescales for repairing such faults, rather than having Fault Aware signs stuck on those street lights where there was an ongoing electricity supply fault. Councillor Jack Scott indicated that he would be happy, from the Council’s point of view, to stop putting up such signs if there was a commitment from Northern Powergrid to deliver such letters.
- Amey had approximately 1,250 staff working on the project, of which 482 had transferred from the Council under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE). It was believed that the vast majority of the TUPE staff were still employed by Amey. A considerable amount of work had been undertaken in terms of changing working practices following the transfer.
- It was not the intention of the project to replace all kerbs, and Amey was only replacing those which were damaged beyond repair.
- A number of quality issues had been identified in connection with the installation of the new street lights and in response, two teams of staff had been tasked to deal with the problems to date.
- No new LED light had failed to date, as far as anyone was aware, although there had been a number of issues with regard to intermittent faults with the electricity supply to street lights. In approximately five years’ time, when all the LED street lights were installed, and linked to a central control system,

Amey would be aware of light failures automatically and therefore, would not rely on being informed by members of the public.

- Amey apologised for the problems being experienced with regard to the installation of the new street light columns, and subsequent connection, as well as the inconvenience caused by the barriers having to be erected to cover excavation holes. There had been a number of issues due to unexpected problems but, after a year since the project commenced, Amey were now familiar with a number of such issues, and were able to resolve such issues much quicker.
- It was accepted that there had been longer than expected delays in terms of filling in excavation holes dug for the installation of the new street light columns, which had resulted in the barriers erected to protect such holes being there for long periods of time. There had been a number of problems regarding such barriers, including them being blown down in high winds, young people using them as play equipment and even people stealing and/or selling them, which had resulted in considerable resources being allocated in terms of policing this.
- Amey and Northern Powergrid were working very closely to reduce the time period between when the old streetlights were disconnected and the new lights being connected and switched on, as this was one of the main issues that was causing inconvenience and frustration for residents.
- Some of the problems in terms of faults to the street lights had been as a result of the use of the fifth core network as on such types of cable network, smaller fuses were required (30 amp), which did not take much to blow. When Northern Powergrid's equipment could locate precisely where the fault was, there was often no technical reason identifiable for why such faults occurred. Where street lights were connected to the mains cable network, the faults were be easier to repair.
- In terms of an end to end audit in respect of Northern Powergrid's performance, the company was regulated by OFGEM, with all its processes being subject to an annual audit and strict governance arrangements. All the company's performance statistics were scrutinised and signed off at quarterly governance meetings.
- Approximately 2.9 million square metres of grass verges were maintained as part of the project. Some verges were damaged by inconsiderate parking and persistent overrunning, and there were a small number of options for permanent solutions to that, such as protection, hardening or enforcement.
- As part of the project, all street lighting columns, including the concrete columns, would be structurally assessed. Some concrete columns had deteriorated due to corrosion of reinforcement, and Amey suggested that any concerns regarding specific concrete columns should be referred to them.

- In terms of members of the public reporting complaints or issues in connection with the project, the vast majority of people had called the City Council's Call Centre on 0114 273 4567, and they had received a response in terms of what action would, or had, been taken.
- The Council had not imposed any penalties on the utility companies in terms of them excavating into new road surfaces, as part of their planned works, after zone works had been completed under the project. This was because the new road surfaces were subject to protection under the Highways Act. In terms of the companies' emergency works, every effort was made, where possible, to stop this happening, but everyone appreciated that it was the right thing to repair leaks in pipes. The Council and Amey held monthly meetings with the utility companies to discuss whether they had any such works programmed.
- Some mobile phone applications could be used to report highway issues to the Council, which included Love Clean Streets and Fix My Street.
- It was envisaged that the high performance levels would continue under the contract following the initial five-year investment phase. As and when the contract moved to the maintenance phase, there were likely to be a number of personnel changes, with more managers and staff having maintenance experience being employed by Amey.

7.4 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, the information reported as part of the presentation and the responses to the questions raised;
- (b) requests Steve Robinson, Head of Highway Maintenance, Sheffield City Council, working with colleagues in Amey and Northern Powergrid, to draft a report, together with an Action Plan, on the following issues raised, for submission to a future meeting:-
  - (i) The repair process for intermittent faults as an end to end process;
  - (ii) The communication of intermittent faults to the public;
  - (iii) Making the installation of the new street lights a slicker process;
  - (iv) Communication of updates to customer and Member-reported faults; and
- (c) thanks those representatives from Amey and Northern Powergrid for attending the meeting and reporting on the progress of the project and responding to the questions raised.

**8. WORK PROGRAMME**

- 8.1 The Chair requested that if any Members had any ideas in terms of topics they would like the Committee to consider, as part of its Work Programme 2014/15, they should refer them to the Policy and Improvement Officer.

8.2 Councillor Steve Wilson referred to two issues he considered should be scrutinised – The Future of the City Centre and The Impact of Broadband.

**9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

9.1 The next meeting of the Committee would be held on a date to be arranged.