

MINUTE of MEETING of the ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL of WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, on 8 JUNE 2017.

Present – Councillors Tom Conn (Chair), Alison Adamson, Diane Calder, Dave King, and George Paul.

Apologies – Councillor Chris Horne and Cathy Muldoon

In Attendance –

Robin Lever, Senior People's Forum Representative
Linda Lockie, Voluntary Sector Gateway Representative

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. MINUTE

The panel confirmed the minute of its meeting held on 27th April 2017 as a correct record. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

3. ENVIRONMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Services advising of current levels of performance for all indicators which were the responsibility of the Environment Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.

The Head of Operational Services advised that the council's performance management system, Covalent, measured the performance of service activities through the use of key performance indicators (KPIs). Covalent used a simple traffic light system to show if progress was on target (green), in danger of falling behind target (amber) or below target (red).

The report advised that there were currently 29 High Level Key Performance Indicators under the remit of the panel and which were categorised as follows:-

- 18 green
- 5 amber
- 6 red

Appendix 1 to the report contained full details of each indicator.

In conclusion, it was advised that the report informed the panel of the performance of the wide range of activities within Operational Services. The information contained in the report and appendices would allow the panel to focus on the issues that services currently faced and included indicators where services performance was currently below target.

It was recommended that the Panel note the performance information and determine if further action or enquiry was necessary for any of the indicators mentioned in the report.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

4. UPDATE REPORT ON A801 AVON GORGE CROSSING

The panel considered a report by the Head of Operational Services (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on the A801 Avon Gorge Crossing.

The report recalled that at a meeting of the full council held on 7th March 2017, a motion was considered on the A801 Avon Gorge Crossing. The council had noted its concern over the failure of the Scottish Government to fund a solution to the long standing traffic risks at the Avon Gorge and agreed to write to the Scottish Government to demand that they fund the Avon Gorge project as a matter of priority. The council had instructed officers to bring a report back to the appropriate committee or PDSP, within 3 months outlining proposals for the introduction of traffic management measures on the West Lothian side of the Avon Gorge to address dangerous manoeuvres, as well as update on discussions with the Scottish Government concerning the funding of a solution to the traffic issues at Avon Gorge.

The report provided the panel with an overview of the Avon Gorge road and bridge, including details of average daily traffic volume and breakdown of traffic, including number of HGVs. It explained that an economic assessment, updated in 2009, had given a Benefit to Cost ratio of 2.23 and had concluded that the scheme would deliver significant time and accident savings.

Information on National Planning Framework 3, which outlined the need for improved transport links and access routes to the area including new and/or replacement roads to provide an improved connection to the M8 motorway, was given in the report. The upgrades to the A801 between Grangemouth and Junction 4 of the M8 were included within Intervention 21 of the Scottish Government's Strategic Transport Project Review (December 2008).

The Development Management & Transportation Planning Manager advised the committee that in May 2017, the construction of the bridge and road was estimated at circa £32million. A breakdown of the anticipated costs was provided in the report. It was estimated that the procurement process would take between 6 and 9 months and construction was estimated to take between 18-24 months. The scheme would be procured and contracted by Falkirk Council as a fixed price lump sum contract.

Members noted from the report that Transport Scotland had previously

indicated that the earliest they could fund the project was 2020-21 and was therefore the main constraint on the project. The level of contributions was previously stated at 25-25-50 between Falkirk Council, West Lothian Council and the Scottish Government. Base on the 2017 estimates, a capital allocation of £8m would require to be made in the council's capital programme moving forward.

The panel noted that following the council meeting on 7th March, the Chief Executive had written to the Minister for Transport and the Islands. The response from the Minister, provided in the report, confirmed that the Scottish Government remained committed to the upgrade and would making funding available in due course although the real terms cuts in Scotland's capital budget meant they would require to identify suitable funding opportunities to ensure progress. They planned to include the upgrade in the second cluster of investment under the Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) project following the M9 improvements and the project was scheduled for delivery around 2021.

The report explained to the panel that the A706/A801 had been analysed as part of the council's Accident Investigation and Prevention (AIP) Casualty Reduction Programme 2017/18. Over the period July 2011 to June 2016, there were a total of 8 accidents: 6 caused by failure to give way, 1 northbound shunt; and 1 mechanical failure. The main pattern of give way accidents was due to right turn failures from the A801 to the A706.

A scheme for the introduction of traffic signals had been ranked eight out of eight during the AIP programme. The estimated costs of an improvement at the site was £250,000 and would give a First Year Rate of Return of 25.2%. The scheme was therefore not affordable during the current financial year. Safety on the route would continue to be monitored through the AIP programme.

It was recommended that the panel note the content of the report.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

5. ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION AND PREVENTION (AIP) – CASUALTY REDUCTION PROGRAMME 2017-18

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Services providing details of the Accident Investigation and Prevention Casualty Reduction Programme 2017-18.

The council's Road Safety Plan and Community Safety Strategy identified the need for a road casualty reduction programme utilising accident investigation and prevention (AIP) techniques. The current casualty reduction programme commenced in 2007-08 and since then a total of 79 schemes had been completed.

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The report explained that it was too early to assess fully the effects of all these schemes on casualty reduction. However, full monitoring had now been carried out on the schemes introduced in 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13. Initial monitoring had been carried out on schemes introduced in 2013-14 and 2014-15. The results of the first 7 years were provided in Table 1 of the report.

The results of the monitoring continued to be very encouraging and indicated an overall reduction in accidents at treated sites of approximately 54%, giving a first year rate of return of 422%. A full explanation of the first year rate of return calculation was provided in the appendix to the report.

For the 2017-18 programme officers had identified so-called “site for concern” in four ways and these were summarised in the report. The accident patterns at each of the sites for concern were investigated and a total of 9 sites would be taken forward for development of remedial measures had been prioritised based upon value for money criteria. The available funding would allow the introduction of around 6 schemes in 2017-18, subject to final scheme costs. As the accident data was analysed on an annual basis, the programme would be re-ordered next year to take account of up-to-date accident problems.

The Head of Operational Services concluded that the AIP programme was the council’s main opportunity to make a significant impact in meeting casualty reduction targets and the schemes prioritised for financial year 2017-18 maximised the council’s investment through the first year rate of return prioritisation and would deliver improvements across West Lothian.

It was recommended that the panel note the report and refer it to the Council Executive with a recommendation that the list of prioritised casualty reduction schemes for 2017/18 be approved.

Decision

To note the terms of the report and refer it to the Council Executive with a recommendation that the list of prioritised casualty reduction schemes for 2017/18 be approved.

6. FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2017/18

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration advising of the Food Service Plan 2017-18 and of the need for the council to approve an annual food service plan, a copy of which was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

Since 1 April 2015 Food Standards Scotland had been responsible for all

strategic and policy aspects of food standards and food safety in Scotland. A key initiative of the agency was to create a framework agreement in order to audit the standards of food law enforcement by local authorities. The framework required local authorities to produce a food service plan which outlined how food safety and animal feeding stuffs would be monitored and controlled.

Safe food and drink was something which the vast majority of the population took for granted and the safety of this fundamental human need relied on a competent, trustworthy and properly regulated and managed supply monitored mainly by Environmental Health Officers working with local authorities. The purpose of the Food Service Plan was to outline how such controls were delivered in West Lothian using existing resources.

The service plan identified the different aspects and approaches of service delivery to ensure a rounded, balanced and effective approach to public health protection. The plan also reflected the prioritisation of the service and recognised that not all aspects would be delivered in line with the requirements of the food law code of practice (Scotland). The Food Service Plan also reflected a number of positive outcomes in terms of improvements to food safety standards within West Lothian food establishments including increasing levels of compliance, maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction from business operators and increasing the number of Eatsafe awards.

The Food Service Plan detailed important elements of performance by presenting statistics and case studies to illustrate the balance between the output and outcomes of service delivery. Everyone working within the service had a responsibility for ensuring delivery of the best service possible. Performance was also monitored and assessed by various methods and reported internally and publically.

The Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration concluded by providing details of the performance of the previous Food Service Plan for 2016-17 and provided a list of the challenges that remained in the new Food Service Plan for 2017-18.

It was recommended that the panel:-

- a. Note the contents of the report and accompanying Food Service Plan; and
- b. Agree that the report and Food Service Plan be presented to Council Executive with the recommendation that it be approved.

Decision

1. To note the terms of the report; and
2. Agreed that the report be forwarded to the next appropriate meeting of the Council Executive with the recommendation that it be approved.

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2017/18

The panel considered a report by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration (copies of which had been circulated) providing the Health and Safety Service Plan 2017/18 and advising of the need for the council to approve an annual health and safety service plan, a copy of which was appended to the report.

In order to meet the requirements of the National Local Authority Enforcement Code, the council was required to develop and approval an annual health and safety service plan. The national code was given legal effect under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

The plan outlined how health and safety would be monitored and enforced within West Lothian businesses and individuals who created the risk, environmental health officers had a duty to ensure effective risk management, supporting businesses, protecting the West Lothian community and contributing to the wider public health agenda. The panel noted that although elements of health and safety activity was reflected in the service management plan for Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration, the creation of a detailed health and safety plan was a distinct requirement.

The key role of the service was public health protection and the service plan provided an overview of how this would be delivered in West Lothians. The report listed the key issues which officers had to address to protect public health and explained that service priorities had been established to ensure the best practical service was provided. The priorities reflected guidance issued by the Health and Safety Executive in regard to prioritising safety inspections and enforcement activity. An overview of the financial and human costs of work related illness and injury was provided in the report.

The report then moved on to provide information on how performance would be monitored and assessed. The changing nature of demands on the service required a flexible approach to balancing priorities and officers and managers continued to take a constructive and professional approach to such matters ensuring good performance in a number of areas. The panel noted that delivery of the 2016/17 service plan had been impacted by an ongoing vacancy within the commercial team although an appropriate focus had been maintained in the highest risk aspects of work.

The report concluded with information on the key challenges for 2017/18 and beyond.

It was recommended that the panel:-

1. Notes the content of the report and accompanying Health and Safety Service Plan; and
2. Refers the Health and Safety Plan 2017/18 to the Council

Executive with a recommendation that it be approved.

Decision

1. To note the terms of the report.
2. To refer the Health and Safety Plan 2017/18 to the Council Executive with a recommendation that it be approved.

8. ENVIRONMENT PDSP WORKPLAN

The panel considered the contents of the workplan that would form the basis of the panel's work over the coming months.

Decision

To note the contents of the workplan.