

At an Extraordinary meeting of the WASHINGTON AREA COMMITTEE held at TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES HEADQUARTERS on TUESDAY, 19TH MARCH, 2013 at 6.00 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Scaplehorn in the Chair

Councillors Farthing, Fletcher, Kelly, Lauchlan, F. Miller, G. Miller, Padgett, D. Snowdon, D. E. Snowdon, D. Trueman, H. Trueman, Walker and Williams.

Mike Poulter	-	City Services
Les Clark	-	City Services
Karon Purvis	-	Chief Executives
Paul Wood	-	Commercial and Corporate Services
Colin McCartney	-	Gentoo

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Thompson. Neil Revely and Brian Hodgkinson.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Highways Maintenance Programme 2013-14

The Head of Street Scene provided a report (copy circulated) to update Members on the input and allocation of the 2013-14 Highway Maintenance Budgets.

(For copy of presentation – see original minutes)

Les Clark, Head of Street Scene presented the report and advised that at the Washington Area Place Board, Members were asked for their input into the 2013-14 Highway Maintenance Capital programme and also the allocation of the various categories of highway maintenance funded through the revenue budget.

During the meeting, Members were asked to nominate streets from a select list prepared by officers, up to a value of £60,000 to consider for inclusion in the 2013-14 Highway Maintenance Capital Programme. In addition, following the meeting, Members brought forward their own selection of streets for officers to examine, consider and cost up.

At the March Place Board, Officers presented their assessments of both the streets on the select list and the additional streets brought forward by Members. The Place Board agreed that it would be beneficial if, from the lists provided, Officers;

- a) Identified priority schemes up to a value of £60,000 (Option A)
- b) Nominated their top four priority schemes (Option B)

It was agreed that these options would be brought forward to the Area Committee for consideration. In the case of option B, the Area Committee would be asked to consider any possible sources for the additional funding required.

Councillor H. Trueman commented that a great deal of tarmac that was being laid, was not lasting and enquired if it was felt we were getting a good job from the contractors. Councillor Trueman also advised of alternative methods for pothole repairs that had been demonstrated at a LGA conference.

Mr Clark advised that quality checks were carried out and the contracts were renewed on a regular basis. Works were looked at upon completion and contractors were requested back for rectification works if deterioration had occurred, so he was fairly confident that the Council was getting as good a service as available.

Mr Clark commented that there were possible reasons for the perception of a lower quality in works as deterioration was mainly caused by more cars on the road and harsher winters experienced recently.

Mr Clark also commented that there were a number of different technologies out there and the Council would be trialling these in the future.

Councillor F. Miller informed of a residents complaint in relation to a patched road which only lasted a week.

Mr Clark advised that the issue should be passed back to the department for investigation but was unusual.

Councillor F. Miller enquired if the cause could be down to the heavy Lorries that used the road. Mr Clark advised that this could be a factor but the condition of the road would also be down to its age and the fact it hadn't been repaired in some time.

Councillor Williams enquired that if there were different contracts for different pieces of works carried out, how would people know who was responsible for the repairs and the relevant people to contact to rectify/complain.

Mr Clark informed the Committee that consideration was being given into moving away from a Sunderland only contract with all Local Authorities in the region being able to tap into, to see if we could get better value.

In response to Councillor Williams query in relation to if they would be looking at what works best rather than just purely a monetary decision, Mr Clark advised that the process was carried out on a balance of cost and quality.

Councillor David Snowdon commented that the roads had deteriorated due to weather conditions/flooding and queried what would happen if the situation occurred again after this money had already been spent tackling the issues on the list.

Mr Clark advised that a section of the Revenue Budget was held back for emergency repairs, should they be needed.

Councillor Walker referred to the list and raised concerns that trying to decide which 50% of Coverdale Avenue to tackle could cause more issues.

Councillor G. Miller referred to the two options available and commented that Option A was paid for whilst Option B would involve finding another £40,000 through SIB money, something he was not a fan of as he believed that should only be used to fund local projects and queried the effect this would have on the budget.

Councillor Kelly commented that he was of the opinion that SIB money was never spent on issues that were normally paid for out of mainstream budgets and he was opposed to spending further SIB on this matter, therefore his personal opinion was to go with Option A so that SIB could be spent on other projects.

Councillor H. Trueman commented that we seemed to suffer due to poor repairs from the Utility Companies after they had carried out major works.

Mr Clark advised that they did check the work of the Utilities Companies and were developing better relationships, with a little more capacity to check and a better network of intelligence it was as good as it could be with the level of resource available.

Councillor David Snowdon agreed with Councillor Kelly and felt that the money was there for specific projects and enquired if the Committee would receive the money back should there be an underspend from the emergency funds of the Revenue budget.

Mr Clark advised that this would not happen at present but it may be something that was brought into the programme in the future.

Mr Clark also wished to point out that Officers had tried to give Members as many options as possible but were happy to stick to the £60,000 budget as detailed in Option A.

The Chairman clarified that it was the Members of the Place Board who had requested more options for possible further funding and it was in no way a fishing exercise by Officers.

Councillor H. Trueman commented that there was an option there to “bite the bullet” and fund these works with the help of SIB which he was happy to do.

Councillor G. Miller commented that he saw the logic in Councillor Truemans statement but his concern was that using SIB money could limit the Area Boards scope and we needed to ensure the Area Committee had sufficient funds as we had not identified the amount we were going to spend next year.

Councillor Farthing commented that SIB money should not be used for anything other than that, but would have been happy to use it if we could’ve implemented some form of apprenticeship scheme for young people to acquire experience in the field of highways maintenance so that it would also help achieve the Area Committees objectives and tackle some of it’s priorities.

Councillor Kelly commented that he was keen to protect the SIB budget and suggested that discussions take place over possible funding of Highways Maintenance programmes after the plans of the Area Boards and Area Committee had been identified as SIB money needed to be used to address Area Committee priorities first.

Councillor Kelly proposed that Option A be agreed with the addition that further consideration be given at the end of the financial year should there be any underspend of SIB money available. The proposal was seconded by Councillor G. Miller.

Having been put to the vote, with 12 Members voting in favour, and 2 Members abstaining, it was:-

1. RESOLVED that Option A (as set out in the report circulated) be agreed and that further consideration be given at the end of the financial year as to the possible use of SIB money to fund additional maintenance work.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting

(Signed) B. SCAPLEHORN,
Chairman.