

CABINET – 20 JUNE 2019

REFERENCE FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 4 JUNE 2019

68. Final Report of the Scrutiny Review of Highways Maintenance

The Committee received a report of the Director of Strategy, which set out the findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Highways Maintenance.

One of the co-Chairs of the Scrutiny Review Group, who was also a Member of the Committee, introduced the report of the Review Group and informed Members that the review had been undertaken as a result of the concerns expressed by residents in the 2017 Residents' Survey. The purpose of the review had been to better understand and influence how the work relating to the highways was prioritised in order to better inform, engage and consult residents. She explained how the Review Group had arrived at the recommendations set out in the Review Report. She highlighted the need for informed and effective communication with residents.

Members of the Committee made the following observations:

- that communication with residents was a key issue and, in order to create an effective database, it was essential that all complaints were logged. It was important that both residents and Councillors followed due processes, which would help with the RAG Status and identify hotspots in the borough. She pointed out that the processes in place ought to be made easier to use. She alluded on her own experiences with her constituents and highlighted the need to keep residents informed of the actions taken by officers in order to show that officers had listened to them and to improve perception of the Council;
- frequent and open communication with residents was important. He also suggested that the Scrutiny Lead Members ought to give consideration to the timings of review group meetings as it was not always possible for Members to attend daytime meetings;
- it was important that residents did not feel disengaged. Communication with Councillors was also important. For example, it was essential that Members were kept informed of any contract renewals so that they were aware of possible changes to services;
- communication ought to be transparent and would help build trust. It was important that priorities identified were implemented. The Member

cited an example of roads in his Ward which had been prioritised for re-surfacing only to find roads with less priority being re-surfaced;

- political input was important due to Councillor knowledge. It was important that the use of the EE-members portal for reporting issues did not result in Councillors becoming a form of a 'telephone exchange'. The Member referred to how addressing of 'little things made a big difference'.

The same co-Chair of the Scrutiny Review Group thanked members of the Review Group for their participation in the review process. She also thanked officers for sharing the challenges they faced in delivering services and showcasing their skills with humour.

The same co-Chair of the Review Group also thanked Members of the Committee for their comments that evening and suggested that, based on their comments, a 'wash-up' of the work of the Review Group was essential in order to 'home in' on their experiences and suggestions on communication and related matters.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report of the Scrutiny Review Group on Highways Maintenance be endorsed;
- (2) **the report and the recommendations be submitted to Cabinet for consideration and response;**
- (3) the implementation of the recommendations be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee after 12 months.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Background Documents:

Agenda of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 4 JUNE 2019: Report on the Scrutiny Review of Highways Maintenance

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