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| | | AGENDA ITEM 4 |
| | | CPSC/08/19 |
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| Committee: | Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee | |
| Date: | Tuesday 30 April 2019 | |
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Ringway Jacobs Joint Task and Finish Group – draft report

Members are asked to discuss and endorse the final draft of the Ringway Jacobs Task and Finish Report. The final draft of the report will follow publication of the agenda to allow time for amendments to made following discussion at the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee on the 18th April 2019. A summary of report recommendations can be found below.

Summary of recommendations

Contract Re-procurement

1. Members of the Task and Finish group conclude that the most sensible option for the cabinet member is to renew the contract with Ringway Jacobs for five years, with the caveat that a number of changes are made to current arrangements. These are set out in the recommendations below in the following categories: ongoing scrutiny, maintenance, reporting of defects, customer services and communications and supply chain works.
2. Members still have serious concerns regarding the readiness of Essex County Council (ECC) to re-procure. Within three years, both Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee and Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee need to be satisfied that ECC is in a secure position to re-procure, with a clear place for scrutiny factored into the timeline.

Ongoing Scrutiny

3. A working group (hereafter referred to as the Ringway Jacobs and Essex Highways Working Group) should be established to facilitate an ongoing engagement with Ringway Jacobs and ECC Highways officers. This will continue the work of the task and finish group, encouraging member-driven scrutiny looking at procurement, highways policy and overall contract

performance. This should meet quarterly. A six-monthly update, presented by the Chairman of this working group, will be delivered to both scrutiny committees. The group will be comprised equally of members from both the Place Services and Economic Growth and Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committees and operated through current task and finish arrangements.

4. The annual review of KPI's that are presented to the Cabinet Member should also be presented to the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee for further review, with time to offer recommendations.
5. The Ringway Jacobs and Essex Highways Working Group will continue the benchmarking work of this committee, exploring the work of other highways authorities.
6. The cabinet member is to be commended for improvements in the quality of relationships between members and Ringway Jacobs officers. This is due, in large, to the success of the 'buddy system'. Member relationships with regards to local pieces of work however, could be improved. There should be a mechanism put in place for direct scrutiny of specific contract elements or pieces of work, even if this simply involves the local member being consulted upon request. This could be through an enhanced version of the 'buddy' system already in operation.

Maintenance

7. The cabinet member should consider asking officers to review the risk matrix. As it stands, serious defects that might register significantly on the 'risk impact' scale, but only slightly on the 'risk probability' scale could potentially receive a less urgent timescale for repair than their impact would necessitate. This should be addressed. Members should be engaged through the Ringway Jacobs Working Group to aid in the review and update of the risk register.
8. The Cabinet Member and officers should explore reviewing the current maintenance strategy (last updated in 2008) with a view to determining suitability to ECCs current policy priorities and is encouraged to make use of the Working Group. This should include a conversation around road classifications and priorities as well as the current criteria for defects to warrant repair.
9. Members noted with concern that particular KPIs outlining timescale requirements for streetlight repairs had been removed from the contract. Members ask that KPI A14 (Average number of days taken to repair lighting faults within control of LA) is reinstated.
10. Members should receive a more accurate indicative timetable for remedial works and larger schemes, with estimates on timescales provided for communication with local residents.

11. A specific KPI should be included within the contract for all work carried out by utility companies to be inspected before the two-year maintenance repair ends. This inspection should determine whether the work has been completed properly and to an agreeable standard.

Reporting of defects

12. Officers and Members raised a number of concerns regarding the interaction between Ringway Jacobs and Essex Highways systems (confirm/online reporting tool). This should be seen as a priority moving forward, to ensure a more effective, joined up service is offered in future.
13. The ease with which faults can be reported has a huge amount of impact on overall public perception of the highways service offered by ECC. Ringway Jacobs and ECC should learn from best practice in terms of fault reporting with a view to designing a more effective system. This should provide members of the public with more detailed information regarding the defect including an estimated timescale for repair. We are aware that work is already being undertaken to improve the online tools and the Working Group would welcome being involved in this moving forward.
14. All Members should receive quarterly training opportunities on issues around reporting of defects, changes to the online tool, and follow up enquiries. (Change to quarterly drop-ins and training for changes/improvements).

Customer Services and Communications

15. It was noted by members that, While ECC and Ringway Jacobs are both excellent with regards to reactive communications, both need to work together to produce a more proactive communications agenda. Members of the Working Group gave considerable time investigating this area and would like to undertake further analysis as part of its future programme. Members understand that expectations need to be managed, but feel strongly that Ringway Jacobs should be measured on overall public perception through an additional KPI – the manner of which to be determined by the cabinet and officers, with input from the Essex Highways Ringway Jacobs Working Group.
16. Members question the value of the National Highways Tracker (NHT) as an effective method of measuring satisfaction. Officers and Members should explore whether the NHT is fit for ECC, and whether an in-house alternative could potentially lead to greater ownership of results, more validity of feedback, and more control over the questions asked.
17. A single, clearer set of lines of responsibility for informing members of changes to roadworks and reported repairs be implemented which could be written into the Ringway Jacobs contract.

Supply Chain

18. The Cabinet Member should consider the potential for ECC to employ or contract its own independent inspectors to assess the quality of works carried out by Ringway Jacobs parent companies, as well as the wider supply chain. This could be conducted as a sampling exercise, with a KPI associated to ensure that the quality of works remains consistent.
19. ECC needs to more closely oversee larger pieces of supply chain work. The working group should be more engaged moving forward and provided assurances as to the value for money and quality of work provided by third parties.
20. All third parties carrying out work on ECCs behalf should be branded accordingly, explicitly stating that the organisation is representing ECC. The quality and consistency of signage on Essex Highways works also needs to be greatly improved in terms of the information provided and the expected timescales outlined for completion.
21. The Cabinet Member should explore encouraging Ringway Jacobs to adopt an incentive-based scheme when procuring further works beyond those originally contracted. This could take the form of a ranked preference system as already in operation in authorities such as Leicestershire County Council.
22. ECC should draw more on expertise from within the Supply Chain Forum, collectively determining solutions to local government pressures around efficiency and reputational damage. There need to be mechanisms in place to ensure that these efficiencies are monitored and fed back into the supply chain. The Ringway Jacobs working group should engage with the minutes of these meetings and the Chairman of the Ringway Jacobs working group should be invited to attend Supply Chain Forum meetings.
23. Ringway Jacobs is to be commended for its social value work and commitment to activities beyond those required through the contract, especially with regards to work carried out with the armed forces. ECC should be better at publicising this work. The Cabinet Member should encourage Ringway Jacobs to adopt more internal social value measures, particularly around hiring more apprentices into the Ringway Jacobs workforce. The Cabinet Member might consider adding a KPI determining a minimum expectation (i.e. number of apprentices as a percentage of the overall workforce) into the contract.

Session aims

Members to agree the report and recommendations as set out in the final report.

