

## **Minutes of the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 10 November 2022**

Present: Tina Clements (Chair)

### **Attendance**

Philippa Haden	Peter Kruskonjic (Vice-Chair (Overview))
Philip Hudson	David Smith
Graham Hutton	Bernard Williams

**Also in attendance:** Darryl Evers, Tim Moss, Mandy Pattinson, Jonathan Price, Idris Roberts and Simon Tagg

**Apologies:** Syed Hussain, Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf and Ross Ward

### **PART ONE**

#### **33. Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

#### **34. Minutes of meeting held on 19 October 2022**

**RESOLVED** – That, subject to the addition of County Councillor Philip Hudson’s name to the list of Apologies, the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2022 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

#### **35. Staffordshire Local Area SEND Re-Visit Inspection & SEND Accelerated Progress Plan Six Month Review**

The Committee considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND) regarding the outcome of the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (OFSTED) re-visit inspection in January 2022 and the progress which had been made since towards implementation of an Accelerated Progress Plan (schedule 1 to the signed minutes).

The Inspection had taken place between 18 and 20 January 2022 with the purpose of determining whether sufficient progress had been made in addressing the areas of significant weakness as detailed in the Written Statement of Action. The subsequent Re-visit Inspection Report, published in March 2022, identified that significant progress had been

made in addressing six out of the eight original weaknesses within the following areas still requiring improvement ie:-

- 'Co-production, particularly with parents';
- 'Quality of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans'.

In response, the local area established a task and finish group comprising representatives from The Parent and Carer Forum, The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Services (SENDIASS), schools, local Clinical Commissioning Groups together with officers from the Social Care and Education Authorities in order to develop an Accelerated Progress Plan (APP).

The APP set out:-

- The governance and accountability structures and processes that would support the next phase of improvement;
- The actions the local area was now taking to respond to their outstanding concerns;
- The impact measures and milestones to which the local area was working including the improvements expected to be delivered in the next 3, 6 and 12 months.

The Department for Education (DFE) and NHS England Advisers conducted a six-month review of progress against the APP in September 2022 and concluded:-

- 'The inspectors were particularly grateful for the contributions from parent carer forum (PCF) and school representative;
- It was clear that the local area is beginning to make sustainable improvements to SEND services and to the lives of children and young people;
- The evidence provided alongside the feedback from partners demonstrated the range of actions in place to accelerate improvement.
- Parent representatives confirmed that they are building good foundations within the SEND Strategic Partnership. It was noted that the PCF is embedded in the work being undertaken in the APP along with other SEND developments including, contributing to the SEND newsletter'.

In addition, they were encouraged that:-

- 'The Strategic Partnership continues to show commitment and engagement in the SEND improvement programme.
- SCC have good systems in place to oversee the improvement programme;

- The programme management is focused on the need to capture evidence of impact, in addition, to completion of actions;
- The eight district hubs have provided an opportunity to strengthen the strategic partnership between the LA, health and schools;
- Work on the Voice Project included the Voluntary Youth Service (VYS), the PCF and SENDIASS;
- Staffordshire County Council undertake quarterly surveys to inform panel practice and use the analysis of that along with analysis of complaints and tribunals to inform improvements;
- Staffordshire County Council have introduced tight monitoring of annual review amendments and made changes to the district model to improve SEND key worker capacity'.

In the full and wide-ranging discussion which ensued, Members gave detailed scrutiny to the findings of the six month review, asking questions, seeking clarification and raising areas of concern as necessary including:- (i) the importance of resolving on-going issues surrounding the timely production of acceptable EHC Plans; (ii) the staffing structures required to enable further progress to be made towards addressing the two outstanding areas of weakness as identified in the January 2022 inspection and; (iii) clarification of the processes undertaken prior to receipt of statutory requests for EHC Plans with a view to their speedier production.

In conclusion Members were encouraged that significant progress had been made as highlighted in the six-monthly review report. They were especially mindful of the Authority's responsibilities and aspirations for all children and looked forward to further improvements being made during the period until the twelve-month review in April 2023.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the report be received and noted.

(b) That the outcome of the Department for Education and NHS England's six-month review of progress against Staffordshire's SEND Accelerated Progress Plan be welcomed.

(c) That their commitment to assisting with the achievement of the various actions set out in the Accelerated Progress Plan, by the Authority be re-affirmed.

### **36. Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) - Forward Investment, Policy Review and Re-use**

The Committee considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Environment Infrastructure and Climate Change regarding the future of

Staffordshire's Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) in respect of forward investment, policy review and arrangements for re-use of deposited items (schedule 2 to the signed minutes).

The County Council had a network of 14 HWRCs across Staffordshire together a further jointly funded site at Lower House Farm, Warwickshire, whose primary function was to receive household waste. There was no statutory duty to accept commercial or trade waste at any of these sites.

Since April 2022 the operation of HWRCs had been brought in-house and better access to data had revealed a significant increase in the deposit of bulky and trade waste (especially at the Cannock site). This situation had significantly increased disposal costs and pressure on existing budgets. In addition, there had been minimal capital investment across the network during the time the service had been outsourced. Therefore, various changes to existing policies were being considered with the aim of ensuring residents were not having to subsidise the disposal of bulky/trade waste and to finance improvements, as follows: -

- **Policy 4 (Van and Trailer Use)** - Introduce a van permitting or vehicle recognition-based system for vans and cars with trailers used by Staffordshire residents disposing of household waste generated from domestic properties.
- **Policy 15 (Commercial (Trade) Waste)** – Option (a) - Staffordshire only business and commercial waste accepted at all sites and increase trade prices per load for larger vans and pro rata increase when traders use cars, small vans and or trailers;  
  
Option (b) - Staffordshire and non-Staffordshire business and commercial waste accepted at larger sites only and increase trade prices per load for larger vans and pro rata increase when traders use cars, small vans and or trailers and;  
  
Option (c) - Staffordshire and non-Staffordshire business and commercial waste accepted at all sites and increase trade prices per load for larger vans and pro rata increase when traders use cars, small vans and or trailers and;
- **Policy 14 (Schools and Charities)** – Introduce a short application process which would allow local voluntary groups eg Scouts, litter pickers, village/church halls etc to apply for exemption from charges on a case by case basis.

Whilst it was anticipated that the above-mentioned proposed Policy changes would have minimal impact on the majority of Staffordshire residents, it was proposed to undertake public consultation in order to

seek their views, the views of traders and businesses so that, where possible, any concerns or queries could be mitigated.

The re-use of items collected at HWRCs was currently managed by the Katherine House Hospice registered Charity which received approximately 150,000 items per year of which 80% were offered for sale. The current arrangements were due to expire in April 2023. However, negotiations were underway to extend the contract until April 2024 to enable further consideration to be given to a longer-term solution following a separate public consultation.

In the full and wide-ranging discussion which ensued, Members gave detailed scrutiny to the proposed policy changes and investment strategy, asking questions, seeking clarification and raising areas of concern as necessary including:- (i) the arrangements adopted by similar waste disposal authorities for the deposit of bulky and trade waste at their HWRCs including proof of residency; (ii) the need to ensure that any new arrangements were simple for residents to understand and not overly bureaucratic; (iii) the need for effective communication about any changes to be implemented; (iv) the potential for encouraging waste separation by traders at source through an appropriate charging structure; (v) areas for potential investment following the Committee's site visit on 7 November 2022; (vi) the likely effect of the proposed changes on the incidence of 'fly-typing' in the County; (vii) the need to ensure consistency in the application of any changes in policy across the HWRC network; (viii) the status of Parish Council's under Policy 14 above and; (ix) the lessons which could be learned from the recent introduction of charges for Green Waste collections by Staffordshire District and Borough Councils.

In conclusion, the Committee welcomed news of the investment proposals for HWRCs and stressed the importance of improving the service for the benefit of residents by increasing income from the collection/disposal of bulky and trade waste. Furthermore, they stated their preference for Option (a) above in relation to Policy 15 – Commercial (Trade) Waste.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the report be received and noted.

(b) That the good performance of the newly internalised service against Key Performance Indicators be noted.

(c) That the proposed changes with regard to Policies 4 (Van and Trailer Use) and 14 (Schools and Charities) above, be supported.

(d) That Option (a) is the preferred change with regard to Policy 15 (Commercial (Trade) Waste) above.

(e) That the public consultation measures in respect of the proposed changes as set out above, be supported.

(f) That a further update on the proposed changes be brought to the Committee in due course.

### **37. Digital Infrastructure in Staffordshire Update**

The Committee considered a report and PowerPoint presentation of the Cabinet Member for Environment Infrastructure and Climate Change updating them on the roll-out of digital infrastructure in Staffordshire (schedule 3 to the signed minutes).

During his presentation the Cabinet Member highlighted:- (i) the recent Building Digital UK's (BDUK) (an executive agency, sponsored by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport helping to bring fast and reliable broadband and mobile coverage to hard-to-reach places across the UK) procurement exercise which had concluded that Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent had no market interest; (ii) the other initiatives by which the Authority continued to encourage infrastructure investment in digital and connectivity; (iii) the take-up of the Gigabit Voucher scheme in remote areas of the County; (iv) the County Council's participation in groups influencing Government policy communications and connectivity; (v) recent support given to Newcastle Town Council in the roll-out of public WiFi and; (vi) recent initiatives aimed at stimulating demand for broadband in Staffordshire.

In addition, the Cabinet Member circulated a copy of a letter dated 18 October 2022 to the Minister of State for Media, Data, and Digital Infrastructure following the above-mentioned announcement by BDUK, raising concerns about the procurement process, the impact of the decision on the delivery of broadband in the County and seeking a review of Staffordshire's deferred status.

In the full and wide-ranging discussion which ensued, Members gave detailed scrutiny to the efforts made by the Authority in ensuring broadband connectivity across the County since their last update, asking questions, seeking clarification and raising areas of concern as necessary including:- (i) their disappointment following the decision by BDUK; (ii) disturbance to local residents arising from poorly co-ordinated infrastructure installations by suppliers; (iii) the quality of highway re-instatements by suppliers following installations and; (iv) the need for better communications with local residents regarding installations and the availability of the Gigabit Voucher Scheme.

In conclusion, the Committee were encouraged by the news that Staffordshire remained on target to deliver 100% gigabit connectivity across the County by 2030 with the majority being available by 2027.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the report and PowerPoint presentation be received and noted.

(b) That the County Council’s approach to deploying the Digital Infrastructure Strategic Framework continue to be supported.

(c) That a further update be brought to the Committee in six-months time.

### **38. Work Programme**

**RESOLVED** – (a) That clarification be sought from the Director of Corporate Services regarding scrutiny of the Authority’s Communications Strategy and consideration be given to any role the Committee might take in furthering the objectives of the Strategic Plan in this respect having regard to their Terms of Reference.

(b) That the updated Work Programme (schedule 4 to the signed minutes) be approved.

### **39. Date of Next Meeting - Friday 16 December 2022 at 10.30 am**

**Chairman**