

## **Minutes of the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 3 February 2023**

Present: Tina Clements (Chair)

### **Attendance**

Philippa Haden	Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf
Philip Hudson	David Smith
Graham Hutton	Ross Ward (Vice-Chair
Peter Kruskonjic (Vice-	(Scrutiny))
Chair (Overview))	Bernard Williams

**Also in attendance:** Victoria Wilson

### **PART ONE**

#### **48. Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

#### **49. Minutes of meeting held on 9 January 2023**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2022 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

#### **50. HS2 Impact on Staffordshire - Update**

The Committee received an oral report and PowerPoint presentation (slides attached at Appendix 1 to the signed minutes) by HS2 giving them a six-monthly update on the impact of the development (Phases 1 and 2a) of the new high speed rail line on education, skills and prosperity in Staffordshire.

The meeting was attended by HS2's:- (i) Senior Community Engagement Manager – Phase 1 (Jonathan Lord) and; (ii) Senior Community Engagement Manager - Phase 2a (Victoria Roberts).

During their presentation, the representatives highlighted:- (i) various project milestones; (ii) the publication of the Independent Commissioners/Construction Commissioners report on 12 December 2022; (iii) Phase 1 Programme of Works over the next twelve months; (iv) indicative timescales for the construction of Phase 2a and the progress made to date; (v) local business engagement; (v) Jobs and Skills: Opportunities for local people; (vi) promotion of and engagement

with education; (vii) Community and Business Funds allocations and; (viii) the construction of an Interchange north of Solihull and the opportunities available for Staffordshire residents.

In the discussion which ensued Members scrutinised and held HS2 and the County Council's relevant Cabinet Members to account over their efforts to safeguard/enhance prosperity in the County, raising various matters of concern including:- (i) further educational opportunities/support for Apprentices following completion of their training; (ii) disturbance to local villages and communities during the construction phase and how this might be mitigated by scheduling/timing of the works; (iii) sites of archaeological interest along the route and how artefacts were being displayed in the County for the benefit of local residents; (iv) the balance of unallocated budgets in the Community and Business Funds initiatives; (v) routing of lorries to and from sand and gravel extraction sites in the south of the County; (vi) the need for better communication and co-ordination between HS2 and the Highways Authority to ensure disruption to local road users was minimised; (vii) opportunities for schools to engage with HS2 through the National Curriculum and in a wider context and; (viii) promotion of the 'green agenda' by HS2 through their letting of contracts for the line.

In response to requests, representatives of HS2 undertook to liaise with the respective Members regarding construction of a power supply unit in East Staffordshire Borough and haul routes to and from Saredon Quarry, South Staffordshire.

In conclusion, Members welcomed news of HS2's engagement with local businesses which had seen over £110m spent with them since the start of the project. However, whilst 39 Apprenticeships had been created in Staffordshire so far (out of an estimated national total of 2000 by the end of the project) they looked forward to the letting of contracts for Phase 2a which was expected to increase this number significantly. In addition, they were encouraged by the Phase 1 Contractor's approach to recruiting local first.

Notwithstanding the above, the Committee were mindful of the potential disruption to Staffordshire's economy and communities caused by construction of the line and agreed that the matter should be kept on their Work Programme for further scrutiny as necessary.

The Chairman then thanked the representatives of HS2 for their attendance and an interesting and informative presentation.

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

(b) That the efforts made to date to maximise the opportunities available to Staffordshire residents from the construction of the high-speed rail line, by HS2 be welcomed.

(c) That a further update be brought to the Committee in July/August 2023.

(d) That the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills continue to be held to account for his efforts to maximise the opportunities available to Staffordshire residents from the construction of the line, where possible.

## **51. Staffordshire History Centre Update**

The Committee considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture updating them on progress with regard to the development of the Staffordshire History Centre (schedule 1 to the signed minutes).

Staffordshire County Council and William Salt Library had been working in partnership since 2025 to create and deliver the Staffordshire History Centre project. The Project was part funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund and envisaged a new facility located on Eastgate Street, Stafford. The Centre was to become a key part of the County's cultural and heritage visitor offer, bringing three collections together for the first time and delivering a four-year programme of activities. It was anticipated that it would be opened to the public in Autumn 2024.

During the full and wide-ranging discussion which ensued, Members gave detailed scrutiny to the progress made in the Project, asking questions, seeking clarification and raising areas of concern as necessary including: - (i) the 'carbon footprint' of the new building having regard to its energy efficient design and use of renewable power sources; (ii) scope for accommodating/displaying museum grade artefacts to the public in the absence of a County Museum; (iii) security considerations relating to the design of the Centre having regard to the value of its contents; (iv) the visual impact of the access to the site within the context of the wider regeneration of Eastgate Street; (v) future promotion of the Centre as a local and national visitor attraction and; (vi) building links to other sites of historical interest within Stafford town and beyond.

In conclusion, Members were pleased with the progress made in the Project to date and paid tribute to the Cabinet Member and her team for their valuable work in bringing it nearer to fruition. They agreed that completion of the Centre would be a significant addition to Destination Staffordshire and looked forward to further positive updates during the period leading up to the official opening in 2024.

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

(b) That satisfactory progress had been achieved to date in the development of the Staffordshire History Centre.

(c) That further updates be brought to the Committee, as necessary.

**52. Work Programme**

That the updated Work Programme (schedule 2 to the signed minutes) be approved.

**Chairman**