

# Minutes of the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 28 March 2024

Present: Tina Clements (Chair)

Attendance	
Charlotte Atkins	Peter Kruskonjic (Vice-Chair (Overview))
Philip Hudson	David Smith
Graham Hutton	Bernard Williams

**Also in attendance:** Darryl Eyers, Jonathan Lindop and Simon Tagg

**Apologies:** Philippa Haden, Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf, Samantha Thompson and Ross Ward

## Part One

### 58. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

### 59. Minutes of meeting held on 2 February 2024

**RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

### 60. Household Waste Recycling Centres Update

The Committee considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Environment Infrastructure and Climate Change regarding the outcome of public consultation on Staffordshire's Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) together with proposed policy changes for implementation in 2023/24 (schedule 1 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 had been implemented with the aim of ensuring residents were not having to subsidise the disposal of bulky/trade waste and to finance improvements including:- (i) Commercial (Trade) Waste Policy; (ii) Van & Trailer Permits and; (iii) access by voluntary/charitable organisations and individuals to Staffordshire County Council's HWRCs.

Members noted the impact of the changes as illustrated by performance metrics and customer comments/feedback, set out in the report. They also heard that since the introduction of the above-mentioned policy changes, the County Council had not been made aware of any significant increase in fly tipping by Staffordshire District/Borough Council's.

During the full and wide-ranging discussion which ensued, Members gave detailed scrutiny to the work of the Partnership since their previous update in March 2023, asking questions, seeking clarification and raising areas of concern as necessary including:- (i) the future of the County's HWRC network including the, currently temporarily closed, site at Wombourne; (ii) other potential major issues for HWRCs in the future; (iii) the need for signage at sites to be clear and up to date and; (iv) the need for effective communication of any significant policy changes in the future for the benefit of residents.

In conclusion, Members said they were satisfied with the progress made in implementing the policy changes and also welcomed news regarding the Capital Investment Programme. They commented on the improvements which they had witnessed since the service had been brought back in-house and looked forward to a further update on the arrangements to be adopted for disposal of material for re-use at HWRC Cannock.

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

(b) That satisfactory progress has been made to date on the implementation of the various policy changes and Capital Investment Programme set out in the report, having regard to the Key outcomes contained in the County Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2026.

(c) That the management and operation of the County Council's Household Waste Recycling Centres, including arrangements for the re-use of material collected, be monitored closely and further scrutiny be given at the appropriate time, as necessary.

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

The Committee received an oral report and PowerPoint presentation (slides attached at Appendix 2 to the signed minutes) by HS2 giving them

a six-monthly update on the impact of the development of the new high speed rail line (Phases 1 and 2a) on education and prosperity in Staffordshire.

The meeting was attended by Jonathan Lord, HS2 Senior Area Engagement manager.

During the presentation, HS2's representative highlighted:- (i) progress of the Phase 1 works; (ii) HS2's continuing approach to communication with stakeholders, interested parties and local communities; (iii) latest developments regarding cancellation of Phase 2 of the line; (iv) metrics relating to skills, employment, education and the supply chain for Quarter 3 2022/23 and 2023/24; (v) current employment opportunities; (vi) various case studies illustrating engagement initiatives, recruitment to key posts and local business involvement and; (vi) allocation of HS2 funds and community investment.

In the discussion which ensued Members scrutinised and held HS2 to account over their efforts to safeguard/enhance prosperity in the County, raising various matters of concern including:- (i) progress with regard to linked highway schemes including improvements to M6 Junction 15/A500; (ii) impact on supply chains including aggregate from Alrewas Sand and Gravel Quarry; (iii) future rail services along the line in Staffordshire; (iv) community investment qualification criteria; (v) the impact of the development on Tamworth and; (vi) HS2's intension regarding staff currently employed on Phase 2 of the line.

In conclusion, whilst Members referred to the County Council's original opposition to the project, they acknowledged the opportunities which had been provided by the development for residents of the County so far. They stressed the importance of HS2 sustaining and improving the momentum which had been achieved in promoting education skills and prosperity together with the speedy re-instatement of Phase 2 sites no longer required. They therefore requested HS2's representative to provide a further update on progress to the Committee in six month's time.

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

(b) That the various opportunities which had been provided for residents of Staffordshire arising from the development of the line, be welcomed.

(c) That a further update on progress with regard to the impact of the development on education and prosperity in the County be given to the Committee in six-month's time.

## **62. Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) - Annual Report 2022/23**

The Committee considered a report of the Chairman of Staffordshire Standing Advisory County on Religious Education (SACRE) regarding their 2022/23 Annual Report which covered their work during the period September 2021 to September 2022 (schedule 2 to the signed minutes).

SACRE was a statutory Committee of the County Council whose role was to inform and advise the Authority on all matters relating to religious education and collective worship in Staffordshire's 'Maintained' schools. Whilst the Scrutiny Committee had a limited role in scrutinising the work of SACRE, the County Council commissioned support for them from Entrust. Therefore, Members were interested to learn whether these arrangements had operated satisfactorily and if not, to hold the Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND) to account as, necessary.

Members noted that the support commissioned by the County Council through Entrust had included clerking, venue hosting and advisory services (as supplied by a part-time Advisor in Religious Education (RE) post for up to twelve days work per year). In addition, the Advisor also provided in-service training courses to teachers whose schools had bought into this enhanced service.

During the discussion which ensued, they were pleased to note that the support given to SACRE compared well with that of other areas in the Country (as set out in the Annual Report) and that the Advisory Council had no concerns regarding their operation during the year.

In response to questions from a Member regarding:- (i) inclusivity; (ii) examination results in RE and; (iii) RE in Academy Trusts, the Scrutiny Support Officer undertook to liaise with the Chairman of SACRE to furnish her with a reply.

The Committee then thanked Reverend Prebendary Michael Metcalf, in his absence, for an interesting and informative report.

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

(b) That the support commissioned by the County Council for SACRE during 2021/22 was appropriate and effective and that no further issues required scrutiny at this time.

### **63. Work Programme**

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the completed Work Programme 2023/24 (schedule 3 to the signed minutes) be noted.

(b) That the draft Work Programme 2024/25 (schedule 3 to the signed

minutes) be approved.

**64. Date of Next Meeting - Thursday 30 May 2024 at 10.00 am, County Buildings, Stafford**

**RESOLVED** – That the date, time and venue of the next meeting be noted.

**Chair**