

# Minutes of the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 22 March 2023

Present: Tina Clements (Chair)

## Attendance

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

**Also in attendance:** Amanda Darlington, Darryl Eyers, Anthony Hodge, Melanie Langdown, Jonathan Lindop, Nicola Swinnerton, Philip White and David Williams

**Apologies:** Philippa Haden and Samantha Thompson

## PART ONE

### 53. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

### 54. Minutes of meeting held on 3 February 2022

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2022 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

### 55. Staffordshire Community Learning Service's Annual Self-Assessment Report 2021/22

The Committee considered a report of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills regarding Staffordshire Community Learning Service's Annual Self-Assessment for 2020/21 (schedule 1 to the signed minutes).

The Service provided a range of formal and informal education and training opportunities to meet the needs of learners (aged 19 years and over), the economy and wider community across Staffordshire. Their work was funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) through direct grant totalling £1.6 per annum.

Learning programmes were delivered by both the Direct Delivery Unit and various Partner organisations who targeted and prioritised vulnerable adults with barriers to learning. The four main strands of delivery during the year were:- (i) Community Learning Framework 2019-2023; (ii) Community Learning Trust Responsiveness Fund; (iii) Wider Family Learning Grants and; (iv) Direct Delivery (Accredited Provision – Adult Skills), with courses being provided through a combination of classroom based, online and hybrid/blended learning.

The Service's Annual Self-Assessment was based on service-wide data and other evidence including: (i) learner feedback; (ii) information on learner destinations; (iii) course documentation and; (iv) quality monitoring reports. The process involved benchmarking against an internal Quality and Performance Framework together with Ofsted's Education and Inspection Framework (2019) which defined the criteria for high quality provision and continual improvement and monitoring.

OFSTED had introduced a new Education Inspection Framework in 2019 according to which Staffordshire achieved an overall rating of 'Good' for 2021/22. In addition, a full inspection of the service was undertaken between 31 January and 2 February 2023 which had resulted in an Overall Effectiveness score of 'Good'. However, various areas for improvement had been highlighted including:- '(i) Leaders should ensure that where learners already have existing knowledge, skills and experience in their areas of study, tutors encourage these learners to set challenging learning goals so that they can make the progress of which they are capable; (ii) Leaders should ensure that the process for recognising and recording progress and achievement is rigorous across all curriculum areas so that it is always clear as to the progress that learners make; (iii) Leaders should ensure that all learners are routinely supported to develop their English and mathematics skills, enabling them to use these skills to support their wider lives and prepare them well for their next steps; (iv) Leaders should ensure that all improvement actions are clear and precise, supporting rapid improvement in the few areas that require it".

During the full and wide-ranging discussion which ensued Members gave detailed scrutiny to the work of the Service and results of the annual Self-Assessment and OFSTED inspection, asking questions, seeking clarification and raising issues of concern as necessary, including:- (i) the additional measures needed to increase participation in courses undertaken via digital learning; (ii) the availability of Community Learning for Staffordshire residents from neighbouring Authorities; (iii) opportunities for Staffordshire Residents to further their education, training and skills post contact with the Service; (iv) access to Community Learning by remote communities where transport links to training centres

were limited and; (v) the information provided by the Service to people seeking work after completion of courses and links to Job Centre Plus etc.

In conclusion, Members said they were satisfied with the performance of the Service during the year as highlighted by the Annual Self-Assessment and recent OFSTED report. Focusing on the areas of improvement, they sought an assurance from the Cabinet Member that these could be addressed within a satisfactory timescale. In addition, they requested that he consider maintaining links with those residents who had completed courses with a view to providing any further education required and to help monitor the success of the programme in helping people into work.

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

(b) That the 'Good' performance of the Community Learning Service during 2021/22 be welcomed.

(c) That the Cabinet Member continue his efforts to increase participation rates in Community Learning during 2022/23 especially via digital channels.

(d) That the Cabinet Member consider maintaining links with those residents who had completed Community Learning Courses with a view to providing any additional support necessary and to monitor the success of the Authority's programme in helping people into work.

(d) That the Cabinet Member consider undertaking communication and publicity campaigns to highlight the work of the Service and its 'Good' OFSTED rating, as appropriate.

## **56. Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership**

The Committee considered a report by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport regarding the governance arrangements and operating model of the Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership (SSRP) (schedule 2 to the signed minutes).

The SSRP was established in 2011 with the aim of increasing collaboration between partner organisations including:- (i) Staffordshire County Council; (ii) Stoke-on-Trent City Council; (iii) Staffordshire Police; (iv) Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and; (v) Highways England, in order to reduce road casualties in the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent areas. Their vision was, "Working Together to Improve Road Safety in Partnership with our Communities" supporting which were the following Strategic Objectives:- (i) To achieve long term sustained reductions in road traffic collisions across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent; (ii) To ensure education and training initiatives are used effectively to reduce the

risk of being involved in a road traffic collision; (iii) To agree a considered approach to engineering and enforcement based on evidence and making best use of sustainable but limited resources; (iv) To engage and support our communities to take responsibility for improving road safety and; (v) To improve public confidence in the safety of Staffordshire's and Stoke-on-Trent's roads.

In 2016, The Partnership agreed to strengthen their governance structure so as to ensure their work continued to receive appropriate direction and scrutiny. Therefore, they established:- (i) a Strategic Board to oversee strategy and take responsibility for key financial decisions and scrutiny and; (ii) an Operational Board to review current local road safety issues and make recommendations to the Strategic Board.

Members heard that recorded road traffic casualties in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent had seen a significant decline from 370 Killed or Serious Injuries (KSI) and 3197 Slight Injuries in 2016 to 191 and 1042 respectively. However, they noted that some of this variation was attributed to changes in collision reporting and recording processes over recent years.

However, work was ongoing to ensure resources were directed appropriately based on detailed analysis of casualty numbers and trends which had confirmed a need to continue the focus on children, young drivers and motorcyclists. Evidence also supported the development of initiatives in relation to cyclists, older drivers and commercial vehicles.

Current initiatives included:- (i) the development of the Community Speed Watch scheme to further support communities who were concerned about the speed of traffic; (ii) identification of a dedicated resource to promote road safety information and education through communication and media channels; (iii) upgrading some of the older fixed camera sites through a phased approach and (iv) continued delivery of the National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme courses, such as the Speed Awareness Course.

During the full and wide-ranging discussion which ensued, Members gave detailed scrutiny to the work of the Partnership since their previous update in September 2021, asking questions, seeking clarification and raising areas of concern as necessary including:- (i) a perceived decline in the standard of driving during and following the 2020 Covid-19 Pandemic; (ii) the funding available for upgrading existing fixed safety camera sites; (iii) the key role of the Police in enforcing speed limits; (iv) the impact of warning letters on residents' driving behaviour and the need to target speeding drivers from out of County; (v) the advantages of mobile safety camera equipment in ensuring the best use of scarce resources; (vi) the role of the latest digital technology in providing more safety camera sites;

(vii) cross boarder co-operation with neighbouring Authorities/Partnerships and; (viii) the extra work required in order to achieve greater reductions in road traffic casualties and fatalities.

In conclusion Members welcomed the reductions in road accident casualty statistics which had been achieved whilst recognising the need for further work in this area. They expressed their continued support for the Partnership and looked forward to receiving further encouraging news in the future ie when more recent statistics had become available.

In response to a request, the Cabinet Member undertook to liaise with a Member of the Committee regarding the specific case of cross boarder speed limit enforcement he had highlighted.

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

(b) That the work of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Road Safety Partnership in reducing road accident casualties be welcomed.

(c) That the governance structure and operating model of the Partnership, as outlined in the report, be supported.

(d) That the on-going performance of the Partnership be monitored closely and further updates be brought to the Committee, as required.

## **57. Staffordshire Local Transport Plan**

The Committee considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Highway and Transport updating them on progress towards the development of a new Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Staffordshire covering the period to 2050 (schedule 3 to the signed minutes).

Highways Authorities were required to produce an LTP under the Transport Act 2008 which set out the policies, plans, programmes and schemes aimed at delivering their vision for the transport network in their areas. The County Council had recently received £178,000 from Government in order to facilitate preparation of their fourth iteration of Staffordshire's LTP.

Staffordshire's current LTP incorporated Integrated Transport Strategies for each District and Borough and whilst the current LTP had not been updated since 2011, all the Integrated Transport Strategies had been updated between 2013 and 2018. However, it did not reflect the current challenges facing the Authority in respect of the following areas:- (i) climate and the environment; (ii) new economic strategies; (iii) Planning best practice; (iv) New technology; (v) National transport policy and

targets; (vi) post pandemic, economic recovery and cost-of-living and; (vii) HS2.

The Department for Transport (DfT) had published new draft guidance covering the preparation of LTPs in September 2022. However, the final guidance was still awaited. Ongoing engagement with DfT suggested that LTPs would be required to focus on:- (i) Planning transport for people and place, which prioritised active and sustainable travel, while also recognising the importance of private vehicle journeys where appropriate; (ii) Transport being an enabler of housing and commercial growth, and LTPs being a core part of spatial, energy, health and digital access planning; (iii) Decarbonising transport, setting out a clear and ambitious response to the climate emergency and meeting net zero by 2050. Delivering quantifiable carbon reductions must become a fundamental part of local transport planning and funding. Government funding for transport was to be dependent on the LTP delivering quantifiable carbon reductions and; (iv) Improving transport for the user, ensuring that the network was safe, reliable and inclusive.

Members heard that much of the Council's existing work to maintain, enhance and support the operation of the Staffordshire's transport system would remain relevant in the new LTP. However, reacting to the above-mentioned challenges required a fundamental change to how transport was delivered.

During the full and wide-ranging discussion which ensued Members gave detailed scrutiny to the proposed approach for the preparation of the new Plan including the Guiding Principles, governance arrangements, timelines and proposed engagement (as set out in the report), asking questions, seeking clarification and raising areas of concern, as necessary including:- (i) the role of cycling and how the LTP would encourage the development of additional non-commuter routes; (ii) the need to ensure Staffordshire embraced all the opportunities envisaged by the finalised LTP Guidance so that both rural and urban areas could benefit from improved transport links and; (iii) the need for all Partners to collaborate more effectively so that the issues which had previously prevented an integrated approach to transport planning could be avoided in the future.

In conclusion, Members welcomed news of the Plan which they said would be critical in achieving the Vision and Outcomes contained in the Authority's Strategic Plan 2022/26. They expressed their support for the proposed approach to the preparation of the LTP and looked forward to the publication of finalised Guidance from Government so that further progress could be made.

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

(b) That the proposed approach to the preparation of a new Local Transport Plan for Staffordshire be supported.

(c) That further scrutiny be given to the work of the Cabinet Member in drafting a new Plan, at the appropriate time.

## **58. Highways Transformation Progress and Performance Quarterly Update.**

The Committee considered an oral report and PowerPoint presentation (slides attached at Appendix 4 to the signed minutes) of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport updating them on the progress made with regard to the Highways Transformation Programme.

During his presentation and report the Cabinet Member highlighted:- (i) the Future Highways Delivery Model (including an overview of the Functional (Hybrid Mixed Economy) Model); (ii) various measures aimed at transforming the Authority's offer (including Member Offer Planned Improvements; Overview of Design, Build and Rollout; Target Rollout of Improvements and Investment); (iii) Additional Investment Update (including Innovating Future Delivery).

In the full and wide-ranging discussion which ensued Members gave detailed scrutiny to the progress made in the Programme to date, asking questions, seeking clarification and raising areas of concern as necessary, including:- (i) the need for additional communication initiatives aimed at informing elected Members of the County Council so that they could better disseminate relevant information on Highways services to their local communities; (ii) the need to maintain robust scrutiny of the Authority's current strategic partner to ensure satisfactory performance against key metrics; (iii) the responsibilities of third parties eg statutory undertakers, landowners and the impact of their activities on the condition of the Highway network; (iv) concern regarding a pause in the programme of treatment to footpaths and; (v) the opportunities for local business to tender for highway works.

In reply, the Cabinet Member spoke about the need to improve the public perceptions of the service by moving away from a 'do what we can with the resources available' model to optimising service delivery through prioritisation. Also, better joined-up working with schedulers across the sector would ensure that disruption to the public during works was minimised. However, the role of Members in disseminating information and community engagement etc would be crucial in achieving a successful transformation.

In conclusion, the Committee agreed that satisfactory progress had been made in the Highways Transformation Programme to date but urged the Cabinet Member to have regard to their comments and concerns particularly in respect of performance management of the Authority's existing strategic partner. They also looked forward to participating in a proposed Workshop for all Members later in 2023/24 with a view to embedding change and welcomed news of the additional significant investment which had been secured.

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

(ii) That satisfactory progress had been made in the Highways Transformation Programme to date.

(iii) That the Cabinet Member be urged to have regard to the above-mentioned comments in his work to implement the new future delivery model for Staffordshire Highways.

## **59. Work Programme**

The Scrutiny and Support Manager highlighted additional proposed changes to the 2022/23 Work Programme not included in the attachment (schedule 4 to the signed minutes), as follows:-

### **27 April 2023 Meeting**

- Tree Planting Net Zero by Nature – postponed until late summer 2023;

### **2 June 2023 Meeting**

- Traffic and Network Management Plan – New item;
- Review of Residential Overnight Education – New item.

**RESOLVED** – That, subject to the inclusion of the above, the updated Work Programme be approved.

## **60. Date of next meeting - Thursday 27 April 2023 at 10.00 am, County Buildings, Stafford**

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



**Chairman**