

Minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee Meeting held on 1 June 2015

Present: Simon Tagg (Chairman)

Attendance

Len Bloomer	Geoff Martin
Maureen Compton	Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf
Tim Corbett	Sheree Peale
Ian Hollinshead	Paul Woodhead
David Loades (Vice-Chairman)	Candice Yeomans

Also in attendance: Mike Lawrence and Mark Winnington

Apologies: George Adamson and Mike Worthington

PART ONE

1. Declarations of Interest

David Loades placed on record his involvement with the Loggerheads Library Support Group (see minute 3 below).

2. Minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee held on 6 March 2015

RESOLVED - That, with an amendment to minute 39 clarifying that voting on SACRE is undertaken on a committee basis, the minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

3. Libraries in a Connected County – part 4: Mobile & Travelling Library review

The way in which people access information and reading has changed and continues to evolve. Since 2008 Staffordshire Library Service had changed the way it is both delivered and managed to reflect this and has delivered £1.1million of savings.

As part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2015-2018 review, further savings of £350,000 had been identified to be made from the Mobile and Travelling Library Service.

Members were informed that a small percentage of the Staffordshire population were members of the Mobile and Travelling Library Service, there being 13,000 members during 2013/14 (1.5% of the population). During that period 5,600 members borrowed from the service (0.66% of the population) with mobile and travelling libraries generating 6.4% of Staffordshire issues. In 2013/14 visits to mobile and travelling libraries was 2.7% of total visits to all Staffordshire libraries. As with static libraries use of mobile and

travelling libraries had fallen consistently over a ten year period, with visits declining by 7.5% in the last four years. During this same period mobile libraries reached 350 communities, making over 800 individual stops.

The Select Committee heard that it cost £652,303 per year to run the mobile library service. Comparative costs per visit showed that it cost £7 to use the mobile library service whilst costing £2.26 to visit a static library.

Members received details of the current mobile library stops, the proposed new library stops and the set of principles that had been developed to inform future planning of mobile routes. Members were also made aware that there could be costs associated with reducing the service.

A letter had been received from Claire Geoghegan on behalf of Friends of Penkridge Library, raising a number of concerns which Janene Cox, Commissioner for Tourism and the Cultural County, answered as follows:

- Concerns over consultation on the opening hours of five static libraries, Burton, Lichfield, Newcastle, Tamworth and Penkridge, querying why there was no mention of this within the proposed consultation on the mobile library service Select Committee paper. Approval had already been granted separately to consult on opening hours at these libraries at the February Cabinet. The report under consideration today was looking specifically at a request to consult on the mobile and travelling library service;
- Concerns over the length and timing of the proposed consultation, feeling that undertaking this process during the summer months would preclude those on holiday from taking part in the process and that the consultation should be longer than nine weeks. The summer is the service's busiest time, attracting its highest number of users, particularly new and young users, during this period. The Service had been advised that eight weeks was sufficient for the consultation period, however a nine week period had been chosen as this covered three mobile library loan periods, allowing those using the service three opportunities to take part in the process through their mobile library. The consultation would also be available on line.

Members felt the two consultations, (both the static library opening hours consultation outlined in the letter and that of the mobile library service) must be interlinked and were informed that whilst this was accepted, there had been no mention of the opening hours consultation in this document as approval to undertake consultation had already been agreed. The information gained from both consultation processes would be dovetailed and not considered in isolation.

Members were surprised that having been given detailed data on a number of issues, the referral to possible costs incurred from reducing the service was vague. No firm costs could be given at this time as these would depend on options chosen and decisions made as a result of the review, for example around lease costs on vehicles and possible redundancy costs. However a ball park figure on possible costs could be made available to Members.

The report referred to community impact assessments but there was no specific reference to an equality impact assessment and Members felt there should be an

assessment made on the potential impact taking account of the issues raised within the Equalities Act 2010.

The report indicated that longer and more frequent stops were more memorable and Members queried whether the proposed 15 minute stop could deliver this. The proposals were to have a more central stop in the community that was able to stay for longer, rather than a larger number of much briefer stops. Concerns were expressed at whether the 15 minutes was a minimum and whether this time would be reduced on occasions when, for example, traffic difficulties had made the service late arriving at a stop. Members were informed that mobile library drivers knew their communities well and were able to make up time lost from delays in a number of ways but would not leave a stop early when their local service users had not visited.

Members raised concerns at the length of the proposed consultation, feeling that 12 weeks would be preferable and indeed usual rather than the proposed nine week consultation period.

Concerns were also raised at the proposed savings, which would halve the current funding for this service. The Cabinet Member, Children and Community Safety, informed the Committee that this was a Cabinet decision based on savings necessary to work within the budget given. The majority of County Council services were also required to make significant savings whilst £20m extra had been allocated to support extra care for the elderly and vulnerable. Members raised the issue of rural communities, and particularly those that were within the two mile radius referred to within the proposals but were isolated and with little public transport. More creative ways of utilising the mobile library service were suggested, with shared vehicle use with other community based services. The Cabinet Member assured the Select Committee that a range of options would be considered to ensure that a service continued to be provided.

Members also asked that the results of the consultation should be brought back to the Select Committee for their consideration.

A tendering process was being undertaken on a number of static libraries and Members felt that changes to the mobile library service may affect how communities see the future of their library. It was felt that this cross-over of review could create confusion. The procurement process ended on 31 July with a view to contracts being awarded from September. Members were informed that these were parallel decisions and that the procurement process would not be considered in isolation.

Within this report the Select Committee had been asked to comment on the six principles to redefine and reshape Staffordshire's mobile and travelling library service. Following their discussions the Select Committee agreed the comments listed below.

RESOLVED - That the Select Committee comments below be fed into the proposals to be considered by Cabinet on 17 June 2015:

- that some flexibility be afforded in the proposed 2 mile radius to take account of elderly and/or vulnerable residents in hard to reach locations;
- they agreed with principle two and three, that a service continue where at least three visitors within a community use the mobile library service and that where a

community has been identified as needing the service they receive a visit at least once every three weeks;

- they agree a minimum stop of 15 minutes but with a common sense approach to the community/specific stop;
- agree that the service continues for those in greatest need;
- support an annual review of the service.
- Members also request ball park figures of the possible costs to reducing the service;
- that equalities impact to these proposals be made more explicit within the consultation; and,
- Members felt that the consultation period should be extended to 12 weeks rather than the proposed 9 week period.

4. Rail Strategy

Staffordshire is uniquely placed at the centre of the country's rail network, located on key transport arteries and corridors giving easy access to large economic centres. The West Coast Mainline (WCML) runs north to south throughout the county providing frequent connections to London, Manchester and Liverpool. Staffordshire's rail network also plays an important role in the movement of freight, being located at the centre of important regional and national routes with good connections to a number of freight terminals. The most important freight route for Staffordshire is WCML, one of the country's principal routes with over 50 freight trains operating along it per day in each direction.

The County Council was also a member of the North Staffordshire Community Rail Partnership which worked to promote and develop the Crewe-Derby route and was also known as the North Staffordshire Line.

Rail played an important part in facilitating economic growth and had a vital role in Staffordshire's economic competitiveness and wellbeing. Many opportunities around rail were emerging within Staffordshire at the current time and it was essential that Staffordshire maximised the potential benefits these opportunities might bring.

There was a recognition that the industry was disparate and that the County Council had no significant resources to invest directly into rail. The Council therefore worked to influence planning and investment in the rail network. To assist with this a rail strategy was essential to effectively influence the future of rail use in the County. Members heard how the strategy had been developed and influenced by both the Rail Summit and a rail survey. Once the final document had been produced the Strategy would contain Staffordshire's aspirations and requests and would be used as a lobbying document with Government and the rail industry.

The Strategy had therefore been established to:

- Provide a sound basis to effectively respond to national consultations including re-franchising;
- Provide a clear set of priorities to enable available investment opportunities to be maximised;
- Take advantage of any emerging opportunities such as entrepreneurial private enterprise and open access opportunities;

- Help shape the devolution proposals for West Midlands Rail and Rail North, providing greater accountability and decision-making in relation to local rail services;
- Help shape the industry's Long term Planning Process for future investment in the rail network;
- Help provide the best possible opportunities to gain access to the existing and future National and European High Speed Passenger Network; and
- Help plan for the best use of released capacity on the classic network upon completion of HS2.

The Select Committee received details of the way in which the Staffordshire Rail Strategy would integrate with, and influence, wider policy and strategy, supporting the securement of greater investment and economic growth in Staffordshire. It also outlined the vision and objectives, considering the importance of: rail on economic growth; passenger and freight services; HS2 and local connectivity; and, articulating priorities for investment, both long and short term, and their delivery.

Members remained concerned over the impact of HS2 on Staffordshire. The Cabinet Member, Economy, Environment and Transport, shared Member's concerns. The County Council position remained opposed to HS2 whilst working to ensure all possible mitigation was received should the project go ahead. In particular there was a recognition that Staffordshire needed infrastructure to benefit from the possible HS2 stop at Crewe, otherwise there would be no benefit at all to Staffordshire in HS2's improved speed and capacity. Members discussed the differing Stoke and Crewe Station bids to gain the HS2 stop and the implications of both for Staffordshire. Until a decision was announced it was difficult for further work to be undertaken on this issue.

Members congratulated the officers on the report which they felt was clear and well written. They raised concerns over the cost of train fares and of parking at stations, including the disparity of such parking charges between stations. Whilst these were acknowledged as issues the County Council had little opportunity to address them other than influencing choice during franchising as one of the stakeholders. It was important to try and improve passenger experience and Staffordshire's vision was to ensure rail was affordable, and Members suggested that this should be made more explicit in the Strategy document.

The Select Committee also suggested that more detail around the impact of HS2 should be included, particularly Staffordshire's mitigation work. However the Strategy was written to consider the way forward for rail and until an announcement was made on Phase 2 it was difficult to give clear plans for the future on this issue. Members felt that if HS2 was not addressed in more detail then the majority of feedback during the consultation would be around the lack of such HS2 detail. After some discussion Members agreed that an appendix to the Strategy outlining the Council's position and the mitigation work undertaken would make clear the continuing issues.

Members were happy to support the Strategy to be published for consultation with the following additions:

- further detail on fare pricing and parking charges, indicating the extent of the County Council's influence over these issues and their vision for more affordable travel and better passenger experiences;

- an appendix detailing the impact of HS2 on Staffordshire and their mitigation work.

RESOLVED – That:

- a) the presentation on the Draft Staffordshire Rail Strategy be received;
- b) subject to the amendments listed above the Strategy be published for an eight week consultation period; and
- c) the Select Committee receive an update on the Strategy at the conclusion of the consultation process.

5. The Staffordshire Economy

The Select Committee received a presentation on the Economy of Staffordshire, Right for Business, More and Better Jobs.

In common with most parts of Britain, Staffordshire's economy had changed substantially over recent years. This economic restructuring had been significantly exacerbated by the recession of the late 2000's which led to a fundamental shift away from public sector employment growth and a renewed focus on strengthening employment in the private sector. Although Staffordshire had maintained a strong manufacturing base, part of this was characterised by a reliance on sectors that had been particularly vulnerable to the recession.

Since the peak of the recession the County Council has had a clear focus on providing the right conditions to allow Staffordshire people to access employment opportunities. 13 employment sites have been identified in the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan, which between them have the potential to attract around 27,000 jobs in the area. The total number of jobs within the County had now broadly recovered to pre-recession levels. From a low of 365,000 jobs in 2011, there are currently around 383,000 jobs in Staffordshire.

Staffordshire now has one of the lowest Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) rates nationally. From a peak of 20,555 JSA claimants in April 2009 (3.8% of the working age population), there were currently 5,432 claimants in Staffordshire (1.0%). JSA claimant rates were highest in Cannock Chase at 1.4%, however no Staffordshire district recorded a rate above the 1.9% Great Britain rate.

The Keele University Science and Business Park was raised with Members as an example of the Council working in partnership to create the right conditions for growth. This enterprise had originally been conceived in 1987 and was considered to be one of the leading developments of its kind, targeting innovation medical and high-technology businesses. The site was home to around 900 jobs with companies such as Navman, Cobra Biologics and Biocomposites. Members were particularly pleased to note that every job at the site was taken by a resident from Staffordshire or Stoke-on-Trent, with almost 60% from Newcastle-under-Lyme alone. Almost 80% of people working at the site had at least a NVQ level 3 qualification. There remained significant room for expansion at the site following an £8.4m investment from AWM in 2007 to open up the 70 acre phase 3 extension.

The County Council was working in partnership with Keele University to bring forward a new development at the site, "IC5" which broke ground in May 2015. The development would create 30,000 sq. ft. of additional office and workshop accommodation, and had the potential to create 130 jobs from businesses looking to invest in Staffordshire, and local businesses looking to expand.

Rebalancing Staffordshire's economy towards a larger and more productive private sector was key. Since 2011 Staffordshire had seen a decrease of approximately 8,700 jobs in the public sector compared to an additional 13,100 employee jobs in the private sector. Members understood that the establishment of Entrust accounted for a proportion of this change. Staffordshire's increase in private sector employment was higher than the change seen nationally. 99% of all employers in Staffordshire could be classed as micro, small and medium businesses.

The types of sectors and occupations that Staffordshire residents were employed in had changed over recent years. In 2013 manufacturing (41,700 jobs), health (39,900 jobs) and retail (34,300 jobs) provided the highest number of jobs across Staffordshire. The greatest growth in jobs since 2011 had been in wholesale (+2,600 jobs) business administration and support services (+1,900 jobs) and retail (+1,500 jobs). Since 2011 the percentage of residents employed in the top three occupation classification, ie those considered to be higher value jobs, rose from 39% to 42% in 2013. Staffordshire remained below the England average for employment in these groups (45%), however the County had seen a larger increase than nationally between 2011-2013.

It was also important to look at the value and type of jobs not just job numbers. Since 2011/12 Staffordshire had focused on creating better jobs and had seen some success, with wage levels increasing between 2008 and 2014. Wage levels nationally had increased at a faster level, however it was explained that the national figure was skewed by wage levels in London and the South East.

The Select Committee were reminded of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Wellbeing Economics which published its first report "Wellbeing in four policy areas" in September 2014. The report evidenced that having a job was vital for an individual's wellbeing. The findings also clearly showed that getting people into higher paid and more secure employment had a positive impact on wellbeing and therefore the potential to deliver significant long-term savings by reducing demand on public services. To help deliver more and better jobs the Council were focusing on skills to appropriately develop the workforce, to attract higher value industries to the area whilst enabling residents to take advantage of those better jobs.

The Select Committee were pleased to note the improving picture in Staffordshire. However Members asked for clarification on the number of zero hours jobs included in the growth figures, sharing concerns that there was a need to ensure the employment figures were not skewed by this type of contract. Unfortunately it was not possible to identify the specific number of zero hours employees as data was not readily available and it was acknowledged that businesses tended to be reticent about sharing this information and therefore it would not be possible to make an accurate estimate.

Members acknowledged the importance of a skilled work force and emphasised the importance of apprenticeships as an alternative to university education. Ensuring there

were the right number of opportunities was also key, with Members raising an issue over the disparity in those wishing to study health care/nursing and the lack of study places within this area.

Members also asked for a breakdown of the employment by gender and full time and part time hours within Staffordshire. This information could be made available to Members after the meeting. Members also asked for a breakdown of figures of private sector providing public sector services. Again this detail could be made available after the meeting.

Members suggested that future scrutiny should be undertaken around apprenticeships and skills, which could be considered within the Education Trust. Members also wished to consider the LEP. The Chairman, with the agreement of the Committee, intended to write to the Chairman of Corporate Review Committee explaining their wish to scrutinise the work of the LEP within the context of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Growth Deal.

RESOLVED - That :

- a) the progress and performance of the Staffordshire Economy be noted;
- b) a breakdown of figures be provided on: the employment by gender and full time/part time hours within Staffordshire; and, private sector providing public sector services;
- c) future scrutiny be undertaken on the Education Trust, referring to apprenticeships and skills, and the LEP;
- d) the Chairman write to the Corporate Review Committee Chairman advising him of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee's wish to scrutinise the work of the LEP.

6. Work Programme Planning

The Select Committee considered their work programme planning for 2014/15 and their draft work programme which included carry over items from last year and a number of suggested new items.

A range of working group activity was also included for their consideration and Members agreed:

- that Mike Worthington be their representative on the Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Services Working Group following a request from the Chairman of the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee for a representative from the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee to join this working group;
- that Simon Tagg, David Loades and Ian Hollinshead be the members for the Infrastructure+ Working Group, considering the type of performance information the Select Committee will wish to scrutinise and within what time scale; and,
- that Tim Corbett, Geoff Martin and Martyn Tittley be members of the working group to consider heavy goods vehicles on the A515 following the presentation of a petition at full Council. An email would be sent to Select Committee Members following this meeting, asking if they wished to join this group.

Members were reminded that they could raise any issues for inclusion on the work programme either with the Chairman or Scrutiny Manager.

RESOLVED – That the draft work programme be accepted and that working group representation be as outlined above.

Chairman