Minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee Meeting held on 13 September 2016

Present: Simon Tagg (Chairman)

Attendance	
Ann Beech	Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf
Len Bloomer	Sheree Peaple
Ian Hollinshead	Paul Woodhead
Kevin Jackson	Mike Worthington
Mike Lawrence	Candice Yeomans
Geoff Martin	

Also in attendance: Mark Deaville, Gill Heath and Mark Winnington

Apologies: David Brookes

PART ONE

15. Declarations of Interest

Mr. Geoff Martin declared an interest in minute number 18 as an ex-haulier.

16. Minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee held on 26 July 2016

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee held on 26 July 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

17. Executive Response to the Final Report and Recommendations of the Working Together to Address the Impact of Heavy Goods Vehicles/HCVs on Roads in Staffordshire

The Select Committee considered the Executive Response, and accompanying Action Plan, to the final report and recommendations of the "Working Together to Address the Impact of Heavy Goods Vehicles/HCVs on Roads in Staffordshire" Working Group. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport recognised the work which had been undertaken by the Working Group and welcomed the conclusions and recommendations of their report. Having reviewed the 24 recommendations it was noted that 11 of the recommendations would be completed by the end of 2016 and a further seven were the subject of on-going "business as usual" activities. The remaining six recommendations had significant resource implications and had been placed on hold this financial year but would be considered for funding in 2017/18 alongside other priorities as part of the annual budget review process. In terms of the specifics of the HCVs using the A515, some heavy goods traffic would need access to drop off/pick up in the communities along the route as well as communities served off the A515. However, there was also potentially other heavy through traffic, but evidence was needed in able to understand

this much better in order to put the right solution in place. Work would be undertaken with local parish councils and local councillors to develop this evidence base. Clearly any through HCV traffic should be encouraged to use the most appropriate route which minimised the impact on Staffordshire's communities. Work would also be undertaken with the local parish councils to consider any interim solutions.

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport expressed his gratitude to the Working Group for their comprehensive, detailed and thorough report. The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that he fully understood the serious issues and local difficulties involved and that it would be important to move forward in a measured way. It was important to ensure the safe and efficient movement of goods and development of the local economy whilst taking into account individual's quality of lives.

There were complex issues to be addressed, which would require a number of agencies to work together to find solutions. To this end, a Staffordshire Freight Forum was to be set up, which would include representatives from Highways England, the Road Haulage Association and Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce along with officers from the county council. It was agreed that it would be helpful for MPs to engage with this group, as well as local councillors. The Cabinet Member suggested that it may be helpful to have a member of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee on the Forum. The Chairman welcomed the invitation but said that it would be useful to look at the remit of the Forum, as it may be more appropriate for a member of another Select Committee to attend. There were also plans to update Staffordshire's Freight Strategy when funding was available. It was queried whether the Forum would be accessible to the public and the minutes made available, in order for them to be involved and engaged. The Cabinet Member responded that the group was in the early stages of being established but could not see why the content and discussions should not be public knowledge.

It was suggested that the County Council needed to be more proactive rather than reactive in its approach to finding funding, as it was a concern that those actions which had currently been put on hold would remain so when reported back in six months. It was acknowledged that funding was an ongoing challenge, but that all available options would be proactively investigated.

Members commented on the impact on the community when small rural businesses grow and the local road systems were not built to support them. Routing plans on planning applications were therefore crucial, and local planning authorities should take into account the Freight Strategy and Local Strategy and should also look to site industrial developments close to major infrastructure.

In relation to a query on the recommendation on road safety at the Richard Crosse School, the Cabinet Member commented that the safety of children and parents was of paramount importance and that all schools presented a challenge. The County Council have a part to play, with initiatives such as "20 is Plenty" and "Ditch the Distraction" but that personal responsibility was also a key element.

Several members referred to traffic issues within their divisions, and the Chairman pointed out that the Working Group had focused on the two petitions which had been submitted to Full Council in May 2015, but that it had been emphasised that this was a

county-wide problem. The Cabinet Member agreed that it was not only county-wide but a national issue and that the Forum would be looking at issues in other divisions.

It was queried how some of the recommendations would be enforced, given that personal experience had been that weight restrictions had been ignored and traffic barriers knocked down. Members were informed that there was national guidance on reducing street clutter, based on evidence that this could have a positive effect on driver responsibility. The comment was also made that enforcement should be easier with the development of modern technology and that legislation needed to be introduced around this.

Members welcomed the report and the proposals to establish a Freight Forum.

[Note by Clerk: In relation to recommendation 16 on the Action Plan, following a query on the wording, officers subsequently requested that the word "sighted on" be replaced with the words "made aware of".]

RESOLVED – That:

a) the formal response of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to the recommendations of the "Working Together to Address the Impact of Heavy Goods Vehicles/HCVs on Roads in Staffordshire" be received;
b) the content of the accompanying action plan be noted;
c) the Select Committee will monitor the action plan and implementation of the agreed recommendations on a six monthly exception basis, until all recommendations have been fully implemented.

18. Future Operating Model for Staffordshire's Arts Service

The Cabinet Member for Communities and the Environment outlined proposals for the Future Operating Model for Staffordshire's Arts Service, following Wolverhampton University's decision to leave the Shire Hall Gallery. It was proposed that the Arts Service should vacate the Shire Hall and remodel the Arts Offer to realise a net saving of £62,223. This would enable the Arts Service to achieve their full Medium Term Financial Strategy saving of £118,000 in 2017/18. It was also proposed that Strategic Property should investigate alternative options for how the space in the Shire Hall could be used so that it is brought back into beneficial use and generates a revenue stream for the County Council.

The redefined Arts Offer would involve:

- A focus on community arts provision, retaining Arts Development, Exhibitions and Community Arts officer posts to enable the service to deliver the offer.
- The delivery of a Countywide "Pop Up" Service, utilising new and existing venues (County Council, District and Borough buildings).
- Cessation of the delivery of an annual exhibition programme in the Shire Hall.
- Discontinuation of the craft shop and museum.
- Exploring the re-provision of the multi-sensory room.
- Exploring developing the Shire Hall building as a multi-purpose space.

Members raised a number of concerns in relation to the proposed "Pop Up" events, in particular how they would be funded and resourced, and stated that they would have

liked to have seen a more detailed proposal around the anticipated costs, for example to demonstrate that costs such as transport and insurance had been included. There was also concern that if a local venue could not be found that plans to provide an event in that area may be abandoned. Members also raised concerns at the staffing level proposed to support these events and the dependence on borough and district councils to support events and provide space at a time when they were facing difficult financial challenges themselves.

In response, members were informed that there was an exhibition budget and that the current post of Exhibition Officer for the Shire Hall would be redefined to make it Countywide. It was acknowledged that there was a reduced level of District & Borough Arts Service provision throughout the County to support "Pop Ups", however work would be undertaken with library staff and volunteers to ensure that exhibitions did take place.

Of particular concern was the relocation of the Multi-Sensory Environment Room, which members felt should be in Stafford Town Centre. It was acknowledged that this was an important and valued facility and that there was a strong commitment to its re-provision. Work was being undertaken with a number of organisations, to explore options for its relocation.

In response to questions about the future of the Shire Hall members were assured that it would remain a County Council building with a repair and maintenance budget. In any event, it would be difficult to sell the building as it was attached to the Judge's House. Efforts would therefore be made to make it more attractive for letting. There was general concern over the loss of such a high profile building in such a key location in the town centre and the impact that this would have on other local businesses. Members sought reassurance that there had been consideration of other planned developments in the area and the impact that they may have on the future of the Shire Hall. The Select Committee asked to see the outcome of the feasibility study on alternative use of the building which was being done by Entrust. The Chairman commented that the Building should not be lost to Stafford or Staffordshire, and appreciated officers' and the Cabinet Member's reassurances on this. Future developments would be monitored through the Work Programme.

RESOLVED – That:

a) the comments of the Select Committee be fed back to the Cabinet Member for Communities and the Environment to report to Cabinet at its meeting on 21 September 2016 for them to be taken into account during their consideration of this matter;
b) developments around the future use of the Shire Hall be monitored through the Work Programme.

19. Work Programme

The Select Committee received a copy of their 2016-17 Work Programme. Members requested that a report on the progress on the Countryside Estate be added.

RESOLVED – That:

a) a report on the progress on the Countryside Estate be added;

b) the amendments agreed at the Triangulation meeting be added and the updated Work Programme be presented to the next meeting.

a) On-Street Parking Enforcement and Residents Parking Zones

Since the decriminalisation of parking enforcement in 2008 enforcement powers had been shared between local authorities and the police. Prior to April 2015 on-street enforcement was carried out on behalf of the County Council by each of the eight district/borough councils. In April 2015 the arrangements changed and the County Council entered into a single arrangement with Stoke-on-Trent City Council for enforcement and back office services.

Members considered a briefing paper on on-street parking enforcement and residents' parking zones, with a view to this being considered as a main item for scrutiny at the November meeting. It was suggested that it would be helpful to invite a representative from the Police to attend this meeting and that it would be important to undertake some preparatory work to identify questions and concerns to raise with them. It was also suggested that an officer be invited to attend from Stoke-on-Trent City Council. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport agreed that it would be productive to look at responsibilities around parking enforcement, including personal responsibility.

RESOLVED – That on-street parking enforcement and residents' parking zones be placed as a main item for scrutiny at the November meeting and that representatives from the Police and Stoke-on-Trent City Council be invited to attend.

Chairman