

## **Minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee Meeting held on 4 April 2018**

Present: Ian Parry (Chairman)

Ann Beech  
Tina Clements  
Keith Flunder

Julia Jessel (Vice-Chairman)  
Bryan Jones  
David Smith

**Apologies:** Maureen Compton, Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf, Simon Tagg and Candice Yeomans

### **PART ONE**

#### **74. Declarations of Interest**

Mr. Keith Flunder declared an interest in minute number 76, in his capacity as Chairman of the Bemersley Waste Recycling Centre Liaison Committee.

#### **75. Minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee held on 18 January 2018**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee held on 18 January 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

#### **76. Review of Charging for Non-Household Waste at Staffordshire's Household Waste Recycling Centres**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Mary Bond of South Staffordshire District Council, who had been invited to attend the meeting in her capacity as Chairman of the Joint Waste Management Board (JWMB), and asked that she share her experience and any lessons learned since the introduction of the charges. Mrs. Bond informed the Committee that initially members of the Board had disagreed with the principle of charging owing to concerns that it would lead to an increase in fly tipping. There had also been a lack of consultation and communication on the proposals, which had resulted in misleading headlines in the local press. It also had not been emphasised that the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) were run by the County Council and consequently the Customer Services Team at South Staffordshire District Council had initially been inundated with complaints. In relation to fly tipping, Mrs. Bond informed the Committee that in May 2016 changes had been made to the way in which these incidents were recorded, and consequently the evidence was inconclusive as to whether there had been an increase. However there was no evidence of an increase in residual waste collections. In summary, earlier consultation and better communication with the refuse collection agencies would have prepared everyone much more effectively.

The Chairman thanked Mrs. Bond for the useful feedback, and agreed that lessons had been learned around clarity and communication. It had been recognised that at first people were not clear about how to pay and what to recycle and that this information had not been sufficiently publicised.

In considering the number of fly tipping incidents by size, it was noted that the number involving a small van or larger amount had increased, whilst those involving a car boot or smaller amount had decreased. Members were informed that large scale fly tipping incidents were most likely to be related to criminal operations on a commercial scale and had no potential link to the charging at the HWRCs. Large scale fly tipping incidents had been rising over the last 2 years. Mrs. Bond was asked for clarification of how incidents of fly tipping were recorded at her District, and responded that previously when a variety of waste was collected it was recorded under the category of the largest component. However, these were now recorded separately under each category of waste involved and consequently could look like an increase in the number of incidents. Looking at the analysis of fly tipping incidents per local authority members commented that most had seen a decrease, apart from Stoke-on-Trent. At worst the situation was static, at best reducing. It was acknowledged that there were a variety of reasons for fly tipping, but particular concern was expressed over operators who deliberately collected waste and then dumped it. Members agreed that they would like to see the criminality of waste management being addressed.

The committee was informed that the Government had committed to reviewing current guidance and to clearly define what can and cannot be charged for in relation to the disposal of some types of waste at HWRCs. Prior to introducing charging the authority had sought legal advice over which materials could be charged for. The authority believed the charges in place at Staffordshire's HWRCs were legal and appropriate. A commitment had been made to review the charging scheme when new Government guidance was issued. The HWRC service contributed to the authority's strategic ambition to achieve zero-waste to landfill. The current landfill rate in Staffordshire stood at approximately 2%, whereas nationally 16% of all waste handled by local authorities was landfilled in 2016/17, demonstrating how Staffordshire was excelling in reducing waste to landfill. In the period November 2016 – October 2017 a contribution of £200,351.20 was raised through the charges towards the cost of overheads and disposal of chargeable waste.

In relation to concerns over the inability to pay by cash, 13 complaints had been received in the period November 2016 – October 2017, although only five of these had been received since December 2016. The authority had fully assessed the risk of accepting cash on the HWRCs prior to introducing the charges and it was considered that storing cash on the sites exposed them to security risks. Every year a customer satisfaction survey was completed for the HWRCs, conducted by an independent surveyor. The overall customer satisfaction score in 2015/16, prior to the charges being introduced, was 89.5%. In 2016/17, the year in which charges were introduced mid-year, the customer satisfaction score was 88.8%. The customer satisfaction score for 2017/18 had been presented as 94.5%. Complaints had been received from the public when charging was introduced, with 51 made in the first month. Thereafter complaints did not exceed 15 in a month and in the last six months there had been ten in total.

The authority had responded to customer feedback by providing a comprehensive list of chargeable items to improve awareness of the items which are charged for and had increased signage on sites. Site Operatives had received additional training to help address some of the uncertainties raised by both staff and customers alike during the first few months of implementation. Site Operatives had also been provided with pocket

guides to support decision making for charges and conversations with customers. Members were informed that charges had applied to 2.5% of the HWRC site users.

Members suggested that it may be helpful to advise District and Borough Councils on the recording of the data which was supplied by them to the authority, in order to ensure consistency and comparability. They also felt that there was more to be done around publicising what waste was free to recycle, and suggested that the JWMB could have a role to play in this, in making households aware. Mrs. Bond agreed, and said that options could include stickers attached to bins, and calendars could incorporate information on HWRCs, such as opening hours. Members also suggested that MyStaffs App could be used to publicise the details of the scheme.

The Chairman thanked Mrs. Bond and the Cabinet Member for Communities, who in turn thanked the Committee for their constructive questions.

**RESOLVED** – That:

- a) The impact of introducing charging for non-household waste at Household Waste Recycling Centres in Staffordshire be noted; and
- b) Additional measures be taken to improve communications and publicise the charging policy.

## **77. Briefing Report: EU Funding Case Studies**

The Select Committee had received a report at their meeting on 15 December 2017 which highlighted the contribution being made to the County Council's economic growth programme by the current round of EU funding programmes. Members had requested further details via case studies of key projects and programmes supported by EU funding.

They received a briefing paper and presentation on: Keele University (the Smart Innovation Hub); the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Growth Hub; and the Low Carbon Business Evolution Programme.

The Keele Smart Innovation Hub was a transformational project focused on technological growth and innovation. It had 3 key elements: the Business Hub, providing advice/support; commercial incubation space; and academic facilities (the Keele Business Management School). Members questioned what the benefits of the Hub were to the County, and whether any jobs created were in the public or private sector. It was confirmed that benefits included the creation of new jobs (a mix of public and private sector), helping businesses to grow, and attracting new types of businesses to the area. Members questioned who was responsible for measuring the outputs outlined in the Business Plan and were informed that this was done by the County Council, central Government, and monthly meetings with the LEP.

The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Growth Hub provided a single point of contact for business support. It had 4 key elements: a telephone helpline; business advisors; events/workshops; and a small business grant scheme, involving grants up to £10,000. Members were informed that the Growth Hub provided "hands on" advice and interventions at the start of the business's journey, helping to mould business ideas, and

assisting with business cases and financial injections. The Growth Hub was considered to be performing above expectations.

The Low Carbon Business Evolution Programme helped businesses to become energy efficient and reduce their carbon footprint. It had 3 key elements: an energy audit; an energy efficiency plan; and a small grant scheme up to £20,000. Members acknowledged the significant monetary benefit this could offer to businesses and queried how it was promoted to companies. They were informed that this was managed by the Staffordshire Business and Environment Network, who held monthly information seminars, which were well attended (50 – 100 attendees) and were well received.

The Committee also considered factors which affected success in accessing EU funded business support grants. They were informed that all enquiries from businesses were screened/filtered before applications for grants were submitted, and therefore the majority of applications were successful. Applications were also required to comply with strict eligibility criteria and have a strong and sustainable business case with tangible outcomes. They were also subject to stringent and invasive due diligence procedures involving financial performance and company history checks, and required to comply with strict conditions of grant, i.e. open procurement, audits and inspection regimes.

**RESOLVED** – That the briefing report and 3 EU funding case studies be noted.

## **78. Work Programme**

The Select Committee received a copy of their Work Programme. In relation to the item on HS2 Construction Routes and Road Safety it was agreed that this should be considered at the meeting on 19 July 2018, and that the Scrutiny and Support Manager should email a list of the Select Committee members to all members and request that they pass their questions and concerns to them to raise at the meeting on their behalf. It was also suggested that it would be helpful to invite representatives from Highways England and HS2 to attend the meeting.

It was also agreed that it would be helpful to consider the items on the Infrastructure + Improvement Plan and Delivering Housing in Staffordshire at the meeting on 20 September 2018.

**RESOLVED** – That the above proposals in relation to the Work Programme be agreed.

**Chairman**

---