

**Minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee Meeting held on 15 November 2018**

Present: Ian Parry (Chairman)

**Attendance**

Ron Clarke	Kyle Robinson
Tina Clements	Jessica Shulman
Mike Deakin	David Smith
Keith Flunder	Simon Tagg
Bryan Jones	Bernard Williams

**Also in attendance:** Councillor Helen Fisher, Cabinet Member for Highways.

The Chairman welcomed both Mike Deakin and Jessica Shulman to their first meeting of the Committee as Parent Governor, Co-opted Members.

**Apologies:** Julia Jessel and Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf

**PART ONE**

**25. Declarations of Interest**

There were none at this meeting.

**26. Minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee held on 19 September 2018**

A Member asked that a breakdown of the £5m extra funding (page 3) be detailed in the minutes. Officers agreed to check if the information had been available at the meeting and include if appropriate.

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee held on 19 September 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

**27. Staffordshire Freight Strategy 2018**

The Chairman welcomed Mr Ian Ashbolt, (President of the Staffordshire Parish Council's Association) Mr Andrew McRea (Chief Executive of the Staffordshire Parish Council's Association) and Parish Councillors Victor Kelly, Richard Painter, Tony Holmes, and Mike Allen who had all been invited to the Committee to contribute to the Freight Strategy debate.

The Committee considered the updated Staffordshire Freight Strategy which had been refreshed as a result of a scrutiny review which had taken place to look at the impact of heavy goods vehicles on Staffordshire's roads. The Strategy considered: both road

and rail based freight activity; Local, Regional, National and International Freight Networks; the impact of freight; managing the impact of freight; and the action plan.

The Strategy had an important part to play in delivering the Council's vision for a connected Staffordshire where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy. From a policy context, the strategy fits within the Staffordshire Local Transport Plan (LTP3) and government policy 'Creating growth, cutting carbon: making sustainable local transport happen'.

Councillor Helen Fisher, Cabinet Member for Highways; Clive Thomson, Commissioner for Connected and Sustainable County; Darryl Eyers, Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills; and Nick Dawson, Connectivity Strategy Manager attended the meeting to present the strategy and answer questions.

The Chief Executive of the Staffordshire Parish Council's Association explained that the general view of his members was that although the Strategy was welcomed, it did not fit with the National Rail Strategy and also did not address local housing growth throughout the county. Other Parish Councillors present at the meeting felt that the Strategy did not explain how the strategy would improve the current situation; how it would mitigate the issues caused by the M6 or the A5; local roads were not designed for the levels of traffic currently experienced; and there was no mention of the West Midlands transport plan or other neighbouring conurbations.

A Member of the Committee asked if the emergency services had been consulted over the strategy so that their planned emergency routes could be incorporated. Other neighbouring authorities Freight Strategies such as Shropshire and Cheshire's also needed to be considered. There was also little mention of Stoke on Trent in the strategy and yet it has the largest population and direct links to the M6 and A50.

A Committee Member stated that the M6 toll is widely used particularly for coaches and asked how we were planning for this increased activity long term. The impact of traffic on the A50 when the M6 is closed was discussed. It was felt that the A50 corridor and its ever-increasing volume of traffic was not mentioned in the document nor was the connection with HS2 developments and the proposed hub. The HS2 hub may bring in more traffic and increase the demand for development sites.

The issue of planning consent for industrial/commercial buildings/warehouses without appropriate consideration of the local road network was sometimes an issue. Members raised the issue of the relationship with local planning authorities and possible ways of encouraging them to consider including planning conditions such as timed activity or weight restrictions.

Members felt that the Local Authority (LA) should be able to direct traffic away from smaller county lanes onto main arterial routes. The possibility of a national Freight grid that could be used purely for commercial vehicles was discussed.

Members discussed how the size of vehicles and how the national trend of reducing the number of local distribution centres and satellite depots and the increase in 40 tonne articulated vehicles for local shop deliveries, was putting increased pressure on small roads. Also, the way consumers shop, and the increased use of timed home delivery

services and delivery drivers who don't know the area, encourages drivers to take direct routes which are often on unsuitable roads.

Concern was expressed by the Committee that the action plan attached to the report contained a number of actions which fell to the Community Liaison Officers to implement and it was not clear that they would have the capacity to deliver and therefore expectations needed to be managed.

Members suggested that smart technology could be used to track vehicles and enforce weight restrictions etc. However, this would need a change in legislation. The role of MP's and the need to lobby them to facilitate such changes was necessary.

It was felt that there was a lack of lorry parking facilities in the County and this resulted in overnight parking in country lanes which offer no facilities for drivers. The strategy didn't include lorry parks or parking areas and the Committee felt this needed to be addressed.

Members felt that the use of domestic satellite navigation systems by Heavy Commercial Vehicles (HCV) was proving problematic as this rarely contained information on weight restrictions or bridge heights. Additional legislation to enable conditions on operating licenses to be added and greater enforcement through use of technology was again discussed.

The Staffordshire Freight and Community Forum met every four months. It was noted that it had a very broad membership and could set up its own working groups if it wished to look at issues in more depth. The Committee asked to see the Forum's terms of reference.

The use of motorways and dual carriageways and the need for introducing specific lanes for large vehicles or different speed restrictions was raised by Members. Again, it was mentioned that this would require a change in legislation and MPs would need to be lobbying on the Councils behalf.

It was highlighted that figure 4 in the Strategy suggested that more freight was being transported by water than by rail and this was questioned. Officers agreed to check the figures.

It was also requested that the cost of the traffic on infrastructure such as collapsed drains and on grass verges should be included in the strategy. Future strategies should try to address reducing mileage and dealing with quarry vehicles and their movement close to schools.

Members asked that when Industrial sites were being developed, local planners could look to use any local opportunity such as existing/disused railway lines again, for example developments at Stoke and Lichfield have not used rail lines that could have been bought back into use and taken freight off the roads.

A question was asked on the Council's policy on weight restrictions and how this was used. In response, the Committee heard that there was no intention to remove existing weight restrictions, but they did tend to have a knock on effect by pushing vehicles onto

other roads. Generally, they were used as a last resort. Enforcement was carried out if specific problems were highlighted. Again, the use of technology was discussed as a possible solution and groups like Community Speed Watch could be set up to monitor local problem areas.

The Cabinet Member stated that she would take on board the comments and suggestions made by the Committee and suggested that the Members may want to invite Highways England to a future meeting of the Committee as there were some issues that the County could not address.

The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that the Strategy would be going to the Staffordshire Freight and Community Forum as part of the consultation process and then to Cabinet for approval.

The Chairman thanked the Parish Councillors and the Staffordshire Parish Council Association for attending the meeting and contributing to the debate.

The Committee made the following suggestions, observations and comments on the strategy:

1. The Document needs to contain a Strategic Vision and stronger links to other Strategies such as the West Midlands Freight Strategy and other neighbouring authorities such as Derbyshire, Shropshire and Cheshire.
2. We need stronger links to the Local Planning Authorities (LPA) and the development of housing and its impact on the road network and demand for goods delivered by HCV's.
3. The diversion of freight from villages and town centres, should this be central to the strategy?
4. M5/M6 link road and the movement of traffic from the M6 onto the County network was an issue when for example, traffic is diverted off the M6 due to its closure.
5. Rural network roads are not sufficient to handle the HGVs
6. Overnight parking of HCVs and the provision of lorry parks needs to be addressed.
7. Freight Sector use large vehicles to deliver locally, these are often too big for the roads. There are few local/ smaller distribution centres now.
8. We need to work with the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner on Police and Fire routes.
9. There is no specific link to M6 Toll in the strategy and how this impacts on adjoining roads and a long term view.
10. Links to LPAs as industrial units (sheds) are built in inappropriate locations without due consideration of the size of vehicles using them or hours of opening and the impact on local communities.
11. Local MPs' role in lobbying, particularly to promote some of the national/legislative changes required to implement this strategy for example enforcement of weight restrictions and the use of smart technology.
12. The use of domestic 'Sat Navs' by large freight carriers which don't highlight bridge heights or weight restrictions, and could there be a nation grid for Freight operators to use?
13. Stoke-on-Trent links need to be recognised in the report.

14. There needs to be a move to get as much freight as possible onto rail e.g. could large industrial parks which are built on old train paths (Stoke and Lichfield) have the lines reopened as part of the planning requirements?
15. Weight restriction enforcement - can we use Automatic Number Plate Recognition (AMPR) or Community Enforcement like Speed Watch to enforce?
16. The action plan mentions Community Infrastructure Officers delivering some of the actions and there was concern that these officers would not have adequate capacity.
17. Need to consider the cost of HCVs on smaller roads such as collapsed drains and grass verges.
18. The Committee welcomed the Staffordshire Freight and Community Forum and the work it did and asked to see the terms of reference.

**RESOLVED:**

- a) That the Committees suggestions, observations and comments on the strategy be taken on board prior to consideration at Cabinet.
- b) That details of freight traffic on rail and water be provided to the Committee.
- c) That a copy of the Staffordshire Freight and Community Forum's Terms of Reference be shared with the Committee.

**28. Work Programme**

The Select Committee received a copy of their Work Programme for 2018/19.

**RESOLVED:** That the Work Programme be agreed.

**Chairman**