

**Minutes of the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Meeting held on 7 July 2022**

Present: Tina Clements (Chair)

Attendance

Graham Hutton	Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf
Peter Kruskonjic (Vice- Chair (Overview))	David Smith
Ian Lawson	Bernard Williams

Apologies: Philippa Haden, Philip Hudson, Syed Hussain and Ross Ward

PART ONE

12. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

13. Minutes of meeting held on 15 June 2022

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2022 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

14. Highways Transformation Programme - Three Strands Progress

The Committee considered an oral report and PowerPoint presentation (slides attached at Appendix 1 to the signed minutes) of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport updated them on progress made with regard to the Highways Transformation Programme – Three Strands Review.

During his presentation and report the Cabinet Member highlighted: - (i) the New Vision and Ambition for the service; (ii) the three key elements of the current review (‘future highways delivery model; transforming our offer now, ready for the future and; Highways Investment Strategy); (iii) details of the preferred Hybrid Operating Model and Hybrid Mixed-Economy Model; (iv) the various measures which had already been implement to transform the current offer; (v) the aims and approach to be adopted in implementing a new investment strategy including details of the Revenue and capital budgets for 2022/23 (£2m and £15.5m respectively; (vi) details of the Winter Workstack 2022/23 and Right First

Time initiative totalling £1m and current progress thereon and; (vii) various cartographical representations of highway defects, claims and activity in Staffordshire.

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 a County-wide traffic and transport management strategy to reduce 'rat-runs' and divert heavy goods vehicles from minor roads; (iii) the significant cost of maintaining the County's highway network and the importance of effective contract management to ensure quality and; (iv) the need for high quality re-statements by statutory undertakers.

In reply, the Cabinet Member acknowledged the concerns of Members stating that perceptions of the existing delivery arrangements were often poor. However, he reassured them that future arrangements would prioritise quality in order to arrest the decline in the condition of the highway network which had occurred in recent years. He went on to urge Members to use the various channels provided to report highways defects and confirmed that the new emphasis on quality had been communicated to the Authority's existing Highways Strategic Partner. However, the Council's ability to control operations by statutory undertakers was limited.

With regard to 'pot-holes', the Cabinet Member confirmed that new technology had been trialled with a view to improving the speed and effectiveness of repairs and outlined the new approach to communications and 'Local' Member involvement.

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, particularly in respect of the need to build confidence and improve quality, in his work to implement the future delivery model for the service.

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.

(iv) That progress in the Highways Transformation Programme Continue to be monitored closely and further update reports be brought the Committee, as necessary.

15. Ensuring HS2 Connectivity with Existing 'Classic' Network

The Committee received an oral report and PowerPoint presentation (slides attached at Appendix 2 to the signed minutes) by HS2 giving them six monthly update on the impact of the development of the new high speed rail line on education, skills and prosperity in Staffordshire focusing on connectivity of the line with the existing 'classic' network.

The meeting was attended by:- (i) HS2's Senior Area Engagement Manager (Jonathan Lord); (ii) Head of Community and Stakeholder Engagement (Jason Pacey) and; (iii) West Coast Partnership's Regional Growth Manager (Mark Osborne).

During their presentation, the representatives updated them on the progress made towards construction of Phases 1 and 2a of the Project, outlining the work which had recently been undertaken to engage with local businesses, promote skills, education and employment in the area. In addition, they gave news regarding the likely future configuration of rail services in Staffordshire following construction of the line.

In the discussion which ensued Members scrutinised and held HS2 and Cabinet Member to account over their efforts to safeguard/enhance prosperity in the County, raising various matters of concern including:- (i) the compatibility of 'Classic' rolling stock with that of HS2 and the implications for connectivity between important population centres; (ii) the need for a greater focus on the service requirements of residents rather than train operators in the planning of future services and; (iii) the importance of at least maintaining current service provision to smaller destinations with a particular focus on the Trent Valley line.

In conclusion, the representatives assured the Committee that services on the 'classic' network to residents of Staffordshire would not be adversely affected by the operation of HS2 and that the new line would improve connectivity with a view to securing the prosperity of the County in the future.

The Chairman then thanked the representatives of HS2 and West Coast Partnership for their attendance and an interesting and informative presentation.

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

(b) That the efforts made to date to maximise the opportunities available to Staffordshire residents from the construction of the high-speed rail line by HS2 be welcomed.

(c) That a further update be brought to the Committee in January/February 2022.

(d) That the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills continue to be held to account for his efforts to maximise the opportunities available to Staffordshire residents from the construction of the line, where possible.

16. Flood Risk Management - Update

The Committee received an oral report and PowerPoint presentation of the Cabinet Member for Environment Infrastructure and Climate Change informing them of the County Council's new 'FAIR' approach to community flood risk management (slides attached at Appendix 3 to the signed minutes).

During his presentation and report the Cabinet Member highlighted:- (i) additional funding (approximately £6m to end of March 2027) which had recently been secured from the Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs to support the Flood and Coastal Resilience programme in Staffordshire; (ii) the Environment Agency's definition of flood resilience; (iii) the overarching aim of the Programme (ie "to support communities across the region to become more aware, informed and resilient to flooding, working collaboratively with professionals to better plan, protect, respond and recover in a sustainable way".); (iv) an overview of the Flood: Aware, informed, Resilient approach; (v) an overview of the local FAIR approach to Community Flood Risk initiative and indicative timeline for its delivery; (vi) the generic approach to flood risk management be adopted for the whole County and the more targeted approach for those communities most at risk; (vii) the five specific FAIR objectives and; (viii) the collaborative approach to be adopted by the County Council in delivering the programme including staffing and governance arrangements.

In the full and wide-ranging discussion which ensued, Members gave detailed scrutiny to the Authority's approach to flood risk management, asking questions, seeking clarification and raising areas of concern as necessary, including:- (i) the extent of the collaborative working with Partners eg The Canal and River Trust which had already been undertaken in pursuit of the Council's aims; (ii) the detrimental effect on land drainage caused by large scale housing and industrial development in vulnerable areas and the role of the District and Borough Council's planning processes in controlling the causes of flooding; (iii) the need to

increase water retention measures and control its release; (iv) the need to ensure all Partners were meeting their obligations with regard to flood risk mitigation including eg enforcement action by the Environment Agency against sewage discharge and; (v) opportunities which might exist for joint working with other agencies eg the Coal Authority in seeking to reduce the risk of flooding in the County.

In conclusion, Members welcomed news of the additional Government funding for Staffordshire and the progress which had been made by the Authority towards effective flood risk management in the County. However, they urged the Cabinet Member to have regard to their comments during his continued work in this area and undertook to give further scrutiny to the matter, as necessary.

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

(b) That the news of additional Government Funding which had been made available in support of flood risk management in Staffordshire and the progress made to date in this respect, be welcomed.

(c) That the Cabinet Member be urged to have regard to the Committee's comments in his on-going work towards ensuring effective flood risk management in the County.

(d) That the issue of flood risk management be kept under close review and further scrutiny be undertaken, as necessary.

17. Work Programme

RESOLVED – That the updated Work Programme (schedule 4 to the signed minutes) be approved.

Chairman