

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 7 June 2023

Proposed Scrutiny Review - Civil Parking Enforcement

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Decide how they want the Key Lines of Enquiry identified at the Inquiry Day held on 17 April 2023 to be taken forward by giving further consideration to the scope, configuration and timing of a proposed Scrutiny Working Group.
- b. Decide which Members of the Committee should be appointed to serve on the above-mentioned Working Group.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of Scrutiny and Support Manager

Report

Background

1. The Committee held an Inquiry Day on Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) on 17 April 2023 with the aim of:- (i) understanding how the current CPE arrangements in Staffordshire were working; (ii) learning of key performance data for the existing CPE service and; (iii) informing the scope of work by a proposed Civil Parking Enforcement Working Group. This was in response to a request made by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on 10 August 2022, "...if Scrutiny would be prepared implement a sub-committee to look into Staffordshire's parking enforcement teams and policy and review whether it is now fit for purpose...".
2. Further clarification was given by the Cabinet Member on 15 September 2022, "to look at the current parking enforcement arrangements in Staffordshire, evaluate the need and current effectiveness of the service and current service provider and make recommendations based on this evidence".

3. During the Day, Members heard from David Walters (Head of Network and Asset Management; Lee Barnard (Traffic and Network Manager) and; Hayley Fletcher (Traffic and Network Manager) from the County Council's Economy Infrastructure and Skills Directorate who explained:- (i) what CPE entailed; (ii) how it was currently being delivered and; (iii) how Staffordshire were performing in relation to agreed performance metrics and Shire comparators.
4. In the wide-ranging discussion which ensued, Members raised various issues/points of concern and identified key lines of enquiry including:- (i) additional powers were needed by Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) Officers to address dangerous parking; (ii) a greater use of yellow lines was required to restrict parking in dangerous locations; (iii) the current approach to enforcement appeared to be inconsistent across the County owing to a lack of staff resources; (iv) Members' Divisional Highways Budgets were insufficient to implement new Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) for the management of parking; (v) partnership working with Parish Councils and other Partners might identify additional funds for new TROs; (vi) public satisfaction with the current service could be improved; (vii) the cost of Parking Fines and Penalty Charge Notices had not increased since 2008 whereas the cost of enforcement had risen in-line with Inflation; (viii) communication with District and Borough Councils could be improved in respect of off-street parking charges, new development etc and their implications for on-street parking provision; (ix) parking outside schools remained a problem locally and; (xi) previous approaches to Staffordshire Police for Community Support Officers to undertake parking enforcement duties had been unsuccessful.
5. In addition to the above, the Committee have previously expressed interest in exploring how the approach to parking in Staffordshire could be improved to support both climate change ambitions and economic growth.

Next Steps

6. The Enquiry Day highlighted various potential areas of focus and the Committee now need to consider how they want to configure the working group to undertake their assignment. The Group could be established on a time limited basis with a request to report back to Committee by a specified date eg six months or they could be established with a task and finish remit which would be more open ended. Depending on how the Committee wish to proceed will

influence the extent and depth to which the above issues/points of concern and Key Lines of Enquiry are investigated. It should be noted though that Staffordshire's current Parking Strategy runs until 2026 so the timing of any recommendations from the Group (and potentially the Committee) may need to be aligned with Cabinet's timeline for approval of their new Strategy.

7. Also, as parking strategy and enforcement affects communities in all County Councillors' Divisions and taking into consideration the comments made at the Enquiry Day regarding a perceived lack of enforcement consistency across districts, the Committee might wish to constitute the Group so that it includes Members from as wider geographical/economically diverse area as possible. However, care should be taken so as that its size does not hamper their ability to reach consensus and make recommendations.
8. The Chairman of the Committee has asked the Vice-Chairman (Overview), Peter Kruskonjic, the County Councillor for Brereton and Ravenhill (Cannock Chase) County Electoral Division to lead in the work of the Group.

Link to Strategic Plan

9. The County Council's Strategic Plan sets out their ambitions and priorities for the years ahead. It outlines what they want to achieve and how they intend to achieve it over the next three years (2023 to 2026). The Plan's Vision is that Staffordshire is an innovative, ambitious and sustainable county, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy.
10. As a result of this vision the Plan outlines three priority outcomes which the Authority will keep at the heart of what they do and how they aim to achieve them.
11. The County Council's first priority outcome is:- "have access to more good jobs and share the benefit of economic growth" and the second priority outcome is:- "Staffordshire people will live in thriving and sustainable communities". Parking strategy and enforcement have direct influences on both these outcomes and scrutiny of the Authority in balancing the need to ensure prosperity and safety of local communities, falls under the Terms of Reference of the Committee.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

12. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee constituted a Climate Change Working Group in 2021/22. Their scope is to:- "(i) scrutinise/offer challenge to the Climate Change Action Plan and any revisions; (ii) scrutinise any plans/strategies that are developed as a result of an action in the plan; (iii) scrutinise SCC departments to see whether their strategies are aligned with SCC climate change strategy and; (iv) scrutinise other external bodies including public and private sector".
13. The Climate Change Working Group have not yet reported their findings to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and will be continuing their investigations during 2023/24. Depending on what the CPE Working Group decide to include in their review, some co-ordination with Corporate will be required in respect of supporting the Authority's climate change ambitions.
14. The Chairman of Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee is a Member of Corporate and serves on the Climate Change Working Group.

Community Impact

None from consideration of the report and constitution of a Civil Parking Enforcement Working Group.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

- Powerpoint presentation slides to Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 January 2023 and minutes of meeting;
- Powerpoint presentation slides to Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee 27 April 2023 and minutes of meeting.

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