

Minutes of the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 2 February 2024

Present: Tina Clements (Chair)

Attendance	
Charlotte Atkins	Peter Kruskonjic (Vice-Chair (Overview))
Philippa Haden	David Smith
Philip Hudson	Samantha Thompson
Graham Hutton	Ross Ward (Vice-Chair (Scrutiny))

Also in attendance: Jonathan Lindop and David Williams

Apologies: Darryl Eyers, Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf and Bernard Williams

Part One

52. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

53. Minutes of meeting held on 11 January 2024

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

54. Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership

The Committee considered a report by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport regarding the governance arrangements, operating model and performance of the Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership (SSRP) (schedule 1 to the signed minutes).

The SSRP was established in 2011 with the aim of increasing collaboration between partner organisations including:- (i) Staffordshire County Council; (ii) Stoke-on-Trent City Council; (iii) Staffordshire Police; (iv) Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and; (v) Highways England, in order to reduce road casualties in the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent areas. Their vision was, "Working Together to Improve Road Safety in Partnership with our Communities" supporting which were the following Strategic Objectives:- (i) To achieve long term sustained reductions in road traffic collisions across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent; (ii) To ensure education and training initiatives are used effectively to reduce the risk of being involved in a road traffic collision; (iii) To agree a considered

approach to engineering and enforcement based on evidence and making best use of sustainable but limited resources; (iv) To engage and support our communities to take responsibility for improving road safety and; (v) To improve public confidence in the safety of Staffordshire's and Stoke-on-Trent's roads.

In 2016, The Partnership agreed to strengthen their governance structure so as to ensure their work continued to receive appropriate direction and scrutiny. Therefore, they established:- (i) a Strategic Board to oversee strategy and take responsibility for key financial decisions and scrutiny and; (ii) an Operational Board to review current local road safety issues and make recommendations to the Strategic Board.

Members heard that recorded road traffic casualties in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent had seen a significant decline from 370 Killed or Serious Injuries (KSI) and 3197 Slight Injuries in 2016 to 261 and 955 respectively during the year. However, they noted that some of this variation was attributed to changes in collision reporting and recording processes over recent years.

However, work was ongoing to ensure resources were directed appropriately based on detailed analysis of casualty numbers and trends which had confirmed a need to continue the focus on children, young drivers and motorcyclists. Evidence also supported the development of initiatives in relation to cyclists, older drivers and commercial vehicles.

Current initiatives included:- (i) the development of the Community Speed Watch scheme to further support communities who were concerned about the speed of traffic; (ii) identification of a dedicated resource to promote road safety information and education through communication and media channels and schools; (iii) upgrading some of the older fixed camera sites through a phased approach; (iv) modernisation of the camera van fleet; (v) continued delivery of the National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme courses, such as the Speed Awareness Course and; (vi) a new Councillor led Neighbourhood Speed Check scheme to fast track access to speeding concern assessments.

During the full and wide-ranging discussion which ensued, Members gave detailed scrutiny to the work of the Partnership since their previous update in March 2023, asking questions, seeking clarification and raising areas of concern as necessary including:- (i) possible reasons for the significant reduction achieved in the Slight Injury category compared to the modest reduction in the KSI category; (ii) the dangers arising from pavement parking; (iii) the need for better engagement with parents in respect of deterring parking outside schools; (iv) how the SSRP can help identify and remove uninsured drivers from the Highway network; (v) the need for greater co-operation with neighbouring Authorities in respect of

cross boarder accident blackspots; (vi) the success achieved by Driver Awareness Training courses in changing driving behaviour and; (vii) the various initiatives being aimed at newly qualified drivers.

In conclusion, Members welcomed the reductions in accident casualty statistics which had been achieved. However, they noted that the most recent data included in the report related to 2021 and expressed concern that without more up-to-date figures, the SSRP were unable to employ an evidence-based approach to their work. Therefore, the Chairman proposed that she writes to the Chief Constable, highlighting their concerns and asking whether there was any further assistance the Committee could give aimed at making more recent data available to the Partnership.

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

(b) That the trends illustrated by the Road Accident Casualty Statistics in the report and the work of the Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership be welcomed.

(c) That the performance of the Partnership continue to be monitored closely and further updates be brought to the Committee, as required.

(d) That the Chairman write to Staffordshire Police expressing the Committee's concern over the absence of more recent accident casualty statistics and offering any support and assistance they could give in making the required data available in a timely manner.

55. Highways Transformation Progress and Performance - Quarterly update

The Committee considered an oral report and PowerPoint presentation (slides attached at Appendix 2 to the signed minutes) of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport updating them on the progress made with regard to the Highways Transformation Programme.

Following his written request for the Committee to scrutinise the Authority's recent performance in completing Highway structural maintenance schemes, County Councillor Conor Wileman attended the meeting and spoke on this item in accordance with the provisions of the County Council's Constitution.

During his report and presentation the Cabinet Member highlighted:- (i) progress with regard to the Highways Investment Programme; (ii) the completion of a structural maintenance scheme (A38 Claymills/A5121 Derby Road Junction) in Burton-upon-Trent; (iii) completion of a carriageway and footway improvement scheme (Mill Street) in Cannock; (iv) completion of a resurfacing and repairs scheme (A518 Bamford Bridge

and Bridge Street) in Uttoxeter; (v) completion of refurbishment scheme (A53) in Leek; (vi) progress with regard to twelve other schemes throughout the County; (vii) the contribution made by the use of new technology (eg JCB Pothole Pro) in repairing the Highway network; (viii) the Authority's performance against various Operational Performance Metrics; (ix) the 2024/25 Investment Programme; (x) progress with regard to Highways Functional Plans; (xi) results of recent Customer Satisfaction surveys undertaken; (xii) the progress made in improving Information, IT and Digital Systems including the on-line Customer Portal and; (xiii) the progress made towards providing an effective and efficient member response capability within the Highway service.

In the full and wide-ranging discussion which ensued, Members gave feedback/their views and spoke of their experiences with regard to the Transformation Programme to date, asking questions, seeking clarification and raising areas of concern as necessary, including:- (i) the use of recycled materials in Highway maintenance works; (ii) recent adverse media coverage in respect of certain Highway Improvement Works; (iii) the need to minimise the impact of pollution from the Highway network on watercourses and; (iv) how future Highways Updates can be better configured so as to assist local Members in communicating with their constituents.

In conclusion, whilst the Committee welcomed news of the progress which had been made in the Transformation Programme, they requested that the Cabinet Member's next quarterly update to the Committee included additional empirical data/performance metrics enabling them to better identify issues of concern, having regard to the matters highlighted by Councillor Wileman and recent press reports.

RESOLVED – (i) That the report be received and noted.

(b) That the progress made in the Highways Transformation Programme to date be welcomed,

(c) That additional empirical data/performance metrics be included in the Cabinet Member's next quarterly update.

(d) That the Cabinet Member be urged to have regard to the Committee's comments in his work to implement the new future delivery model for Staffordshire Highways.

56. Work Programme

The Chairman reported that, with advice from the relevant Cabinet Members and Director of Economy Infrastructure and Skills, the following items had been provisionally prioritised for consideration at their May

2024 meeting:-

- Review of Job and Careers Brokerage Service Performance
- Employment and Skills Strategy – Progress Update;
- Cultural Strategy.

RESOLVED – That, subject to the above-mentioned changes, the Work Programme (schedule 3 to the signed minutes) be approved.

57. Date of Next Meeting - Thursday 28 March 2024 at 10.00 am, County Buildings, Stafford

RESOLVED – That the date, time and venue of the next meeting be noted.

Chair