

Minutes of the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 16 September 2021

Present: Tina Clements (Chairman)

Attendance

Keith Flunder (Vice-Chairman (Overview))	Ian Lawson
Philip Hudson	David Smith
Syed Hussain	Ross Ward (Vice-Chairman (Scrutiny))
Graham Hutton	

Apologies: Mike Deakin, Philippa Haden, Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf, Jessica Shulman and Bernard Williams

PART ONE

15. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

16. Minutes of meeting held on 23 July 2021

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

17. Household Waste Recycling Centres - Insourcing Update and Potential Changes to the Management of Re-use Items

The Committee considered a joint report of the Cabinet Members for Environment and Infrastructure and Climate Change and Commercial Matters updating them on the progress made with regard to insourcing elements of the Authority's future Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) operations and informing them of potential changes to the management of Re-use items in Staffordshire (schedule 1 to the signed minutes).

The decision to insource the operation of HWRCs with effect from 30 March 2022 was made by Cabinet at their meeting on 17 March 2021. Since that time arrangements had been made to notify operational staff currently employed by the existing contractor and those employed directly by the Authority.

In addition, an internal project group comprising representatives of all relevant teams had been established. Meetings of the Group were held fortnightly and an extensive Project Plan and Risk Register had been agreed.

The Group were also focusing on ensuring the transition between the existing operations and revised configuration were satisfactory.

In accordance with the decision by Cabinet, the haulage element of future HWRC operations was to remain externalised. Therefore, staff currently employed by Amey had also been notified.

The management of Re-use items across the entire Staffordshire HWRC network was currently undertaken on behalf of the Council by Katherine House Hospice Registered Charity. These arrangements were established in 2013 by the County Council's previous HWRC provider – HCC Environment. Under the contract, the circa 150,000 items donated annually provided a significant funding stream for the charity. However, a review had identified an opportunity to increase the value of donated items by improving local collection arrangements and diverting them away from other end use streams.

However, discussions were underway with Katherine House to continue with the current arrangements until April 2023 by which time it was hoped to implement a new improved service for the benefit of Staffordshire residents and taxpayers.

During the full and wide-ranging discussion which ensued, Members gave detailed scrutiny to the various changes outlined, asking questions and seeking clarification where necessary. They were pleased to note the significant progress made in implementing the new HWRC arrangements. They also gave consideration to potential future options for the collection and sale of re-use items including:- (i) identification of a lead operating charity via a formal procurement process; (ii) use of one or more HWRC's as collection hubs; (iii) distribution of income generated; (iv) local arrangements required at all existing 14 HWRC sites and; (v) in-house operation of future arrangements.

The Committee agreed that maximising the recycling and re-use of all material collected at HWRCs was essential. A Member spoke in support of consistency in service provision across the County not least to reduce 'carbon miles', where possible. They also paid tribute to existing staff for their efforts during the Covid-19 pandemic and queried whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPEE) would apply so that relevant skills and expertise could be retained.

In response to a further point, the Cabinet Member undertook to investigate the possibility income from the sale of re-use material being allocated to County Councillors for distribution to good causes within their own County Electoral Divisions.

The Chairman then thanked the Cabinet Member for his attendance at the meeting.

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

(b) That a further update report be brought to the Committee at their meeting in April 2022.

(c) That a further report be brought to the Committee setting out performance of the new service against relevant Key Performance Indicators, in due course.

18. Proposal for Scrutiny Review - 20 MPH Speed Limits

The Committee considered a report by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport regarding a review of 20 mph speed limits and Zones which had been undertaken in Staffordshire (schedule 2 to the signed minutes).

Cabinet had reviewed and agreed a new Speed Limit Policy for all A and B roads in the County in 2007 following publication of guidance by the Department for Transport (DfT). In addition, they had approved a phased introduction of 20 mph limits, outside schools, in 2010 which had resulted in a number of part-time 20 mph advisory limits being implemented. Since that time all speed limits in the County had been applied in accordance with the latest national guidance set out in DfT Circular 01/2013 entitled, "Setting Local Speed Limits".

The County Council, as local Highway Authority, had a statutory duty under the Road Traffic Act 1988 to maintain the safety of the road network in their area. The Act required Highway Authorities to undertake studies into road collisions and implement appropriate measures aimed at reducing the likelihood of such incidents from re-occurring. Members heard that a 60% reduction in personal injury collisions had been achieved over the ten-year period 2009-2019 which represented the highest recorded reduction amongst 14 comparable Shire Counties. In addition, Staffordshire had the lowest Killed or Seriously Injured casualty rate in this group during 2019.

A comparison of the casualty statistics for 2010 and 2019 revealed that cyclist casualties had declined by 45% and pedestrians by 50%. In total, 83% of these collisions took place on roads which had speed limits of 30 mph and of the 228 accidents in 2019, speed had been identified as a contributory factor by the Police on only eight occasions.

The Committee were then addressed by Messrs M. Barr and P. Jones of the 20s Plenty for Staffordshire (20PS) campaign group (PowerPoint slides attached at Appendix 1 to the signed minutes) who had submitted a

Staffordshire County Council Proposal for a Scrutiny Review Form dated 16 March 2021 (schedule 3 to the signed minutes) suggesting the following subject for scrutiny:-

“Normalise 20 mph speed limits in built-up areas and villages for safety, public health, sustainability, the climate and because its what residents want”.

The representatives of 20PS provided evidence in support of their request including various statistics, photographs and by reference to practice in other Highway Authority areas, nationwide all of which suggested that the wide-spread implementation of 20 mph speed limits should be adopted in the County.

During the discussion which ensued Members gave preliminary scrutiny to the issues raised asking questions (of the Cabinet Member and representatives of 20PS) and seeking clarification where necessary. They noted Staffordshire’s good performance with regard to accident casualty statistics together with the significant costs associated with implementing additional 20 mph speed restrictions. Therefore, they respectfully declined the request to undertake further scrutiny and include a relevant item in their Work Programme, at this time.

The Chairman then thanked the representatives of 20PS and Cabinet Member for their attendance at the meeting and contributions to consideration of the Proposal for Scrutiny Review Form, by the Committee.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report and Proposal for Scrutiny Review Form be received and noted.

(b) Not to undertake further scrutiny of the introduction of 20 mph limits/zones at this time but to keep the matter under review and consider undertaking further work at the appropriate time as necessary.

RECOMMEND Cabinet – (a) That the introduction of additional 20 mph limits/zones within local neighbourhoods should continue as identified in the County Council’s Strategic Programme of Work and as local community priorities established through the Members’ Divisional Highways Programme.

(b) That residents of Staffordshire be encouraged to engage with their local County Councillors on matters relating to excessive vehicle speeds and traffic calming with a view to seeking local resolution of issues for the benefit of the communities concerned.

19. Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership

The Committee considered a report by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport regarding the governance arrangements and work of the

Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership (SSRP) (schedule 4 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 overall, recorded road traffic casualties in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent had seen a significant decline over recent years. However, changes in the method of recording incidents had resulted in a degree of fluctuation eg a small increase in the Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) Category in 2016 compared to the previous year. Nevertheless, Staffordshire was currently ranked fourth out of 43 Police Force areas based on the 2019 KSI casualty rate, by population.

Whilst the Partnership had adopted a 'zero tolerance' approach to KSIs, in real terms they were working towards achieving a long-term sustained reduction in collisions both in terms of frequency and severity. Their intension was to remain in the top 25% best performing areas in the Country.

Work by the Partnership's Insight and Intelligence Officer had confirmed the need to continue to focus efforts on targeting children, young drivers and motorcyclists. In addition, there was evidence to support the development of initiatives aimed at cyclists, older drivers and drivers of commercial vehicles.

Current key initiatives included: - (i) the funding of road safety education in priority schools within the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent areas; (ii)

funding for the Staffordshire Road Safety Grant fund for community led road safety projects; (iii) the commissioning of support from the County Council to develop road safety information and education through various communication and media channels and; (iv) the upgrade of older fixed enforcement camera sites.

NOTE BY CLERK – Discussion on this item took place under Agenda Item No. 5 – “Proposal for Scrutiny Review – 20 MPH Speed Limits” (minute No. 18) above.

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

(b) That the work of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Road Safety Partnership in reducing road accident casualties be welcomed.

(c) That the governance structure and operating model of the Partnership, as outlined in the report, be supported.

(d) That the on-going performance of the Partnership be monitored closely and further updates be brought to the Committee, as required.

20. National Bus Strategy - Bus Service Improvement Plan Development

The Committee considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport (DfT) regarding the County Council’s Bus Service Improvement Plan which was being prepared in response to the Department for Transport’s National Bus Strategy entitled, “Bus Back Better”, published on 31 March 2021 (schedule 5 for the signed minutes).

At their meeting on 16 June 2021, Cabinet committed to develop an Enhanced Partnership with local bus operators in order to deliver bus service improvements. Having committed to the adoption of an Enhanced Partnership rather than a Franchising Model, there was a requirement for the Authority to submit a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to the DfT by 31 October 2021 in order to access new funding streams which were being made available.

According to guidance published by the DfT, BSIPs should include the following elements:- (i) Targets for journey times and reliability; (ii) Identification of locations where bus priority measures were required; (iii) An assessment of the likely pressures on the road network including factors such as air quality and carbon reduction; (iv) Passenger growth targets; (v) Plans for a fare strategy; (vi) Consideration of the impact of roadside infrastructure eg bus shelters; (vii) Consideration of how the bus network should serve key destinations such as schools etc; (viii) Local consultation; (ix) Commitment to a Bus Passenger Charter; (x) Implementation of bus priority schemes to reduce journey times; (xi) Increased bus services during evening/weekends/nights to smaller towns and villages; (xii) Higher

Frequency of core services; (xiii) Increased promotion and marketing initiatives; (xiv) Greater protection for bus stations from closure; (xv) Development of railway stations as hubs for connecting services; (xvi) Better services to out of town employment and; (xvii) Collaboration with bus operators and energy providers to decarbonise the bus fleets.

During the full and wide-ranging discussion which ensued, Members gave scrutiny to the Authority's initial ideas for their BSIP in terms of content, focus and scope, asking questions and seeking clarification where necessary. They noted that:- (i) Multi operator ticketing; (ii) bus priority; (iii) 'whole route' audits; (iv) high quality bus stop infrastructure; (v) Bus networks; (vi) Patronage growth; (vii) Customer satisfaction; (viii) Emissions; (xi) Development standards and; (x) Marketing had been identified as potential key elements of the Plan. They highlighted the challenging conditions of Staffordshire's current bus market and identified priorities for inclusion in the BSIP and future partnership working. In addition, they acknowledged that the Plan should focus on supporting commercial bus operators to maintain and build on existing services rather than the Authority seeking to provide services themselves.

The Chairman then thanked the Cabinet Member for his attendance at the meeting.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and noted.

RECOMMEND Cabinet - That the following priorities be reflected in the County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP):-

- Improvements to be made to Roadside Information and Infrastructure including bus shelters, bus stops, timetable information and real time information etc.
- Passenger information provided to be consistent and accurate at all locations.
- Improvements to be made to the timing and reliability of local bus services.
- Links to be made to other strategic agendas and policy areas, including climate change and access to education.
- Engagement to be maintained with bus users and local communities as the BSIP and Enhanced Partnership are developed, particularly in the most rural areas of the County.
- Residents to be encouraged to use local bus services in order to improve the financial viability and sustainability of services.

21. Work Programme

RESOLVED – That subject to the following changes, the updated Work Programme (schedule 6 to the signed minutes) be approved:-

- Local Industrial Strategy/Strategic Infrastructure Plan - Item to be postponed until 2022 (currently programmed for meeting on 29 November 2021).
- Insourced Household Waste Recycling Centres operations – Key Performance Indicators - Additional item to be programmed post March 2022.
- Safer Roads Partnership Update - Additional item to be programmed.

Chairman