

Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 11 April 2019

Attendance

Members of the Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Mary Bateman
Cllr Philip Bateman MBE
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Cllr Christopher Haynes (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Keith Inston
Cllr Martin Waite (Chair)

Employees

Martin Stevens (Scrutiny Officer) (Minutes)
Kate Martin (Director for City Housing)
Steve Woodward (Head of Environmental Services)
Jenny Lewington (Service Manager Housing Strategy and Policy)
Paul Hodgetts (Environmental Business Support Manager)

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Apologies**
Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Ian Angus, Cllr Beverley Momenabadi and Cllr John Rowley.

- 2 **Declarations of interest**
Cllr Martin Waite declared a non-pecuniary interest on item 5, Housing Strategy as a Board Member of WV Living.

Kate Martin, Director for City Housing declared a non-pecuniary interest on item 5, Housing Strategy as a Director of WV Living.

Cllr Philip Bateman declared a non-pecuniary interest on items 5,6 and 7 as a Board Member of the Canal and River Trust – West Midlands Partnership.

- 3 **Minutes of the previous meeting**
The minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2019 were approved as a correct record subject to reference to Hereford Council being replaced with Herefordshire Council.

On a point of clarification, it was made clear that the sentence, “there were many studies that showed over a course of a month cyclists spent more in city centres than people travelling by car, because they travelled more frequently to the city centre,” referred to spending money, rather than time.

4 **Matters arising**

Cllr Christopher Haynes confirmed that he had received the briefing note which had been requested at the last meeting.

5 **Housing Strategy**

The Director for City Housing introduced a report on the City Housing Strategy. She offered to bring the City Housing Strategy back to the Scrutiny Panel at the end of the consultation process.

The Service Manager for Housing Strategy and Policy commented that, The Housing White Paper had set a target of achieving 300,000 new homes every year by the mid-2020s. The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 now required Councils to engage and work with households threatened with homelessness 56 days in advance of the date they were expected to become homeless, which was 28 days earlier than previous. Welfare reforms continued to provide challenges for residents, the Council and Registered Providers. Housing and land use were a key West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) priority with an investment prospectus setting out up to £10 billion in development schemes. The WMCA Strategic Economic Plan anticipated 500,000 new jobs would be created by the year 2030. The plan recognised the challenge of building new homes.

The Service Manager for Housing Strategy and Policy stated that the Black County Core Strategy set a target of around 63,000 additional homes (net) to be delivered over the period 2006-26 to accommodate its growing population. The target for Wolverhampton was 13,400 homes or 670 homes each year. 5,640 homes had been built up to 2018, and land was available for another 9,000 homes. In private sector housing the highest number of category 1 hazards were in the lower value properties.

Members complimented Officers on the excellent presentation that had been given on the Housing Strategy.

A Member of the Panel commented that he wanted the Housing Strategy to be more explicit about fire safety. The aging population correlated with vulnerability. With the Council encouraging independent living, there was more likely to be people suffering with Alzheimer’s and Dementia living at home in the future. Areas that he thought the strategy could be more specific on in relation to fire safety were construction materials, hard wiring of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and sprinkler systems. In response the Director for City Housing stated that she was committed to driving safety within the strategy and its wider promotion. The Council’s first focus had been the high rising blocks. They were now starting to address the vulnerable blocks. The Council would of course respond to any national changes arising from the Hackitt and Grenfell Inquiries.

A Member of the Panel commented that he wanted the Council to go above and beyond the minimum standards required by current regulations. The Government

had even said that Councils should progress in improving standards before new regulations were in force.

A Member of the Panel asked about the Council's Allocations Policy. They were mindful of ensuring that new estates were a mixed community.

A Member of the Panel raised a concern about the use of Brownfield sites and potential private development. They were particularly concerned about an area on the border of Wednesfield and South Staffordshire where there was a threat of thousands of homes being constructed. These potential homes would dramatically effect demand on facilities such as health, education, public transport and the road network. He wanted the strategy to contain information on border development. The Director for City Housing acknowledged the Councillor's point and commented that there was some information in the spatial strategy. She did however agree that the strategy could be strengthened to take into account border development and the infrastructure demands on the City, where it occurred. It was important to work with the Planning Department and future developers on the points the Councillor raised.

There was a discussion about the Cultural Offer of the City and making it more attractive for people to live within the City Centre. It was believed this would help to fill the properties for sale and to let.

There was a discussion about TMOs and the Council's ability to fine them due to a lack of compliance with the legislative requirements. The Director for City Housing confirmed there would be a new TMO Policy in October 2019.

Resolved: That the Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel receives a future report on the draft Housing Strategy before it is agreed by the Executive.

6 **Environmental Services Performance Data 2018/19 - Quarter 3**

The Head of Environmental Services advised that the Quarter 4 results of the Environmental Services Performance Data 2018/2019 were now available and had been circulated in addition to the Quarter 3 results which had been included with the agenda. The Quarter 4 results are attached to the signed minutes.

The Environmental Business Support Manager and the Head of Environmental Services explained the Performance Data results giving explanations for the data.

7 **Environmental Services Customer Satisfaction Survey**

The Head of Environmental Services introduced a briefing note on the Environmental Services Customer Satisfaction Survey undertaken in September / October 2018. A total of 139 people had completed the survey. This was considered a small sample size based on the city population of 250,000 and gave a confidence interval of 8.3. The confidence interval projected that if everyone in Wolverhampton had completed the survey the actual result would not vary by more than 8.3% i.e. a score of 65% could vary between 57.3% and 73.3%. He directed Members towards paragraph 3 of the briefing note which summarised the results of the survey. The number of people completing the survey had been disappointing and it was hoped that this would be improved next year.

8 **Work Plan**

The Chair suggested two items be added to the work programme: -

- 1) The latest plans for Hickman Avenue and changes to Willenhall Road.
- 2) The impact of the introduction of average speed cameras in Wolverhampton.

A Member of the Panel suggested an item should be added to the work programme concerning, what the strategy was to exploit the most out of the canal network in Wolverhampton from an economic, public health and leisure perspective.

The Panel paid tribute to the Chair of the Panel, Cllr Martin Waite for his work as the Chair over the course of the last municipal year.

9 **Future Meeting Dates**

The future meeting dates of the Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel were reported as follows: -

20 June 2019 at 6pm

5 September 2019 at 6pm

7 November 2019 at 6pm

30 January 2020 at 6pm

19 March 2020 at 6pm

The meeting closed at 8:10pm.