



# Enterprise and Business Scrutiny Panel

Minutes – 7 January 2014

## Attendance

### Members of the Panel

Cllr John Rowley (chair)  
Cllr Harbans Singh Bagri  
Cllr Phil Bateman  
Cllr Payal Bedi  
Cllr Ian Brookfield  
Cllr Mrs Mills  
Cllr Neville Patten  
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman  
Cllr Martin Waite  
Cllr Jonathon Yardley  
Cllr Caroline Siarkiewicz

### Other Councillors

### Staff

Keren Jones	Assistant Director - Partnerships, Economy and Culture
Lydia Barnstable	Head of Transportation
Tim Philpot	Section Leader Road Safety
Keith Rogers	Senior Transport Strategy Officer
Matthew Vins	Graduate Management Trainee

## Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Gwinnett.

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## Part 1 – items open to the press and public

*Item No.*      *Title*

### MEETING BUSINESS ITEMS

2.            **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest

3.            **Minutes of the previous meeting (19 November 2013)**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. **Matters arising**

Cllr Bateman referred to page four paragraph five, and enquired if any progress had been made about the shop mobility savings proposal and if a cost analysis had been conducted. He highlighted that this needed to be completed, as savings proposals could be brought forward which would diminish the opportunity to conduct this work at a later date. The Panel was advised that work was ongoing and they would be updated on any progress.

Cllr Sweetman referred to page five, and highlighted the need for more detail about how relations with Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) were being developed. She highlighted the need to explore how opportunities for both parties could be created.

Cllr Bateman referred to page seven, and stressed the importance of the gateway sites along the railway corridor. He explained that the sites should be re-designated to allow developments to start.

5. **Scrutiny Work Programme 2013/14**

Matt Vins presented a report about the Enterprise and Business Work Programme. He explained the report would be updated regularly to reflect priority items and topics members wished to consider at following meetings.

Cllr Waite indicated he wished to look at both aspects of what the Council did with business rates, and noted the impact of retention and discretionary relief for small businesses as areas he felt the Panel should explore.

Cllr Sweetman indicated the draft marking plan for Wolverhampton and the Black Country reports could be used together to help explore this.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received and noted.
2. That the work programme would be reviewed each meeting to respond to emerging issues and highlight priority items for future agendas.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

6. **Cycling Strategy**

Cllr Rowley welcomed the attendees from the various cycling forums and groups, and a round of introductions was made.

Keith Rogers presented a PowerPoint report about the review of the cycling strategy. He explained the purpose of the report was to update the existing strategy, which had been formulated in 2005. He indicated that the views from the panel and the stakeholders would be important in shaping the scope and direction of the strategy. He noted there had been investment in canal towpaths and Sustrans had developed the national cycling route 81 which

crossed Wolverhampton. He highlighted that the Local Sustainable Transport Fund had allocated £33 million to the West Midlands.

Keith Rogers advised the panel that a long term strategy needed to be developed and indicated an important aspect of this would be to cater for short trips and to link key locations in the city together. He explained that Darlaston and Coseley had large regeneration plans and these areas needed to be linked into the strategy.

Cllr Rowley enquired how much funding did Birmingham receive following the successful bid to the Department for Transportation and was advised that it was about £17 million, including £6 million for towpath improvement.

Cllr Siarkiewicz asked what work had been done to determine the number of people cycling, and also the nature and types of journeys that cyclists in the city undertook.

Keith Rogers advised that cyclists undertook many varied journeys, and the strategy needed to widen the opportunities for residents to cycle. He indicated that work done during the census had suggested that 2-3% of trips made in Wolverhampton were by cyclist, which he noted was high for the West Midlands area.

Cllr Waite suggested the hub and spoke concept devised in the updated strategy looked sensible considering the layout of Wolverhampton. He highlighted that the unsuccessful bid to unlock Central Government money had been due to a failure to identify the needs of the commuter belt in the city. He highlighted that the layout of the ring road meant cycling routes were hard to navigate and suggested there needed to be segregation between motor vehicles and cyclists on the carriageway. He asked about the political will to do this work, and suggested the economic benefits of cycling could be identified in cities such as Copenhagen due to increased accessibility. He further indicated that the Black Country LEP's bid to become a hub for high-tech industry mirrored that of cities in the US, which employed highly educated people who demanded adequate cycling facilities.

Keith Rogers agreed that cyclist safety needed to improve to entice people to use the network. He explained that they could learn from what London were doing, and also from progressive cities such as Bristol which had invested heavily in cycling.

Julia Brant, from Wolves on Wheels, highlighted the importance of involving stakeholders in the development of the strategy. She explained the cycling campaign consisted of 1,300 members, with high quality expertise, and indicated that one of its members had largely written Wolverhampton's 2005 cycling strategy. She expressed that the drive and hunger needed to implement a dedicated cycling strategy had been absent and highlighted that Wolverhampton was far behind other cities for cycling infrastructure. She indicated that the cycling campaign had put forward its own proposals and offered members of the panel to review it. She suggested Wolverhampton had missed the boat for public funding and advised that the strategy needed

to be taken seriously, otherwise people's lives would be put at risk.

David Wilson, from Wolves on Wheels, suggested the important aspect of the strategy was in its implementation, and advised the panel that key stakeholders needed to be involved throughout the process.

Cllr Patten noted he agreed with much of what had been said. He explained that from the mid-1990's, funding for cycle lanes had been based on route length, and as a result had been implemented haphazardly without much thought as to their location. He referred to part 3.4 and the i54 zone and suggested that the Local Pinch Point Fund could be used to improve cycling access. He indicated that there were issues in the Wobaston Road and Stafford Road area following the creation of a new crossing. He also advised that it was dangerous to cycle through the city centre due to cars being parked on the cycle lanes. Councillors asked if work was being done with JLR to encourage staff to cycle.

Lydia Barnstable informed the panel that a bid had been successful to develop a dedicated cycle lane to serve the i54 site. She explained that the i54 site was covered by a travel plan, which enabled it to generate matched funding for Pinch Point bids. She highlighted the work that the Canals and Rivers Trust had done to improve access onto the canal and improve the towpath. She confirmed that companies based on the i54 site would be members of the travel plan steering group.

Following concerns raised by Wolves on Wheels about dangerous areas for cyclists, Lydia Barnstable confirmed they would involve key stakeholders and users to develop the strategy.

Cllr Bateman explained he understood the views that Wolverhampton was behind many other cities, but he enquired how effective cycling promotion was. He advised the panel that since 1981, cycling to work had only risen from 1% to 2% of journeys. He highlighted the strategy was being too universal in its goals and suggested that a route for commuters should be developed as a pilot scheme. He indicated the strategy lacked key figures and statistics, but highlighted the levels of cycling casualties in Wolverhampton. Due to the relatively low numbers, he questioned the size of the market that the strategy was trying to provide for.

Yvonne Gilligan, from Sustrans, highlighted the progress Birmingham had made following a Scrutiny Committee in which the authority had been lambasted about a lack of progress in improving cycling infrastructure. She advised the panel that within a year Birmingham had developed a cycling strategy which achieved a successful bid of £25 million. She expressed the need to understand what the strategy wanted to deliver, what the vision was, and to gain political support for the proposals. She indicated that key routes needed to be developed which revolved around education or employment centres, and that the proposals needed to be long term to gain support from the LEP, both in terms of the Black Country Strategic Economic Plan and the Black Country European Union Structural and Investment Funds Strategy. She explained that Sustrans had been involved in building many routes and

an investment in cycling clearly heralded benefits to the economy and to health. She advised the panel to involve highways engineers and Sustrans members in the process to achieve the best results.

The panel was advised that cycling infrastructure did not have to be expensive, but it needed to be done correctly to avoid further cost. It was highlighted that the Metro extension proposals had caused some concern, due to the poor infrastructure along the A41 because of the tram tracks. The panel was informed that Glasgow Council had been sued as a result of poorly planned cycling infrastructure. It was noted that cycling in Wolverhampton had decreased between 2001-2011, but increased in Birmingham.

Tim Philpot noted that working with the West Midlands to bid for the Local Sustainable Transport Fund could potentially help unlock funding. He highlighted the importance of improving the link between Bilston and the city centre and agreed that designating one route as a pilot scheme would be useful. He advised the panel of a successful scheme around Moseley Park School which illustrated what cycling was able to bring to Wolverhampton.

Cllr Bagri advised the panel that the Dudley Road area desperately needed some cycling infrastructure as it had a thriving retail core and a lot of children used the route to travel to school.

Keren Jones advised the panel that this was a very early first draft of the Black Country European Union Structural and Investment Funds Strategy and the Black Country Strategic Economic Plan. She agreed with the idea of developing a commuter route, and that this suggestion could be developed with the view to attracting external funding. She explained that an important aspect of the Black Country strategy was the visitor economy and enquired if cycling should be given greater prominence within this sector.

Cllr Brookfield agreed that poor design and planning had damaged the cities cycling infrastructure in the past. He agreed that only one route should be developed to explore the benefits that cycling could deliver and suggested that Wolverhampton city centre was too small for major infrastructure.

Following questions raised about route 81, Yvonne Gilligan from Sustrans advised the panel she would investigate why the whole route had not been completed to Albrighton.

Julia Brant suggested that cycling offered a way to unlock the city centre as other cities had managed, and helped facilitate economic regeneration.

Cllr Rowley advised the representatives from the cycling community that the doors were open for conversations and they would welcome input from users. He agreed that the strategy needed to incorporate the bigger picture, alongside specific sites that would benefit from some tweaking.

Resolved:

That the contents of the Wolverhampton cycling strategy be received.