

Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 1 October 2015

Attendance

Members of the Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Ian Angus (Chair)
Cllr Mary Bateman
Cllr Philip Bateman
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal
Cllr Christopher Haynes (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Keith Inston
Cllr Lynne Moran
Cllr John Rowley
Cllr Caroline Siarkiewicz

Employees

Nick Edwards	Service Director - City Assets
Marianne Page	Section Leader - Transportation
Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer
Glyn Roberts	Interim Head of Assets

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies**
Apologies were received from the following member(s) of the panel:

Cllr Andrew Wynne
Cllr Valerie Evans
- 2 Declarations of interest**
Cllr Phil Bateman declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 5
Wolverhampton Active Travel Strategy.
- 3 Minutes of the previous meeting (3.9.15)**
That the minutes of the meeting held on 3.9.15 be approved as a correct record and
signed by the Chair.
- 4 Matters arising**
There were no matters arising from the minutes.

5 **Wolverhampton Active Travel Strategy**

Marianne Page, Section Lead – Transportation, presented the report. Section Lead outlined the background to the development of the active travel strategy and the individuals and groups that had been consulted about the plans. Section Lead commented on the positive response received to the proposals.

Section Lead explained that the refreshed travel strategy is intended to respond to the concerns about obesity and the work done with public health to promote active travel that could contribute to improving the situation. The document will also be used to provide evidence that could support future funding bids.

The focus at this stage was on deciding, based on the comments received, the best that can be achieved with the available resources.

Section Lead commented on the public aspirations of the plan and how this had informed this work.

The panel commented on previous reports highlighting low levels of physical activity in Wolverhampton and its poor performance in national league tables. The panel welcomed any initiatives that could help promote and encourage people to become more physically active. The panel commented that the issue itself has not been given enough priority by the Council in the past and the document presented the opportunity to promote cycling and walking as attractive travel alternatives to the public.

The panel commented that the overall experience of people who either choose to walk for leisure or as alternative to using car or public transport was poor compared to that offered by other cities. The main walking routes into the city centre are along the main routes used by cars and other vehicles which presents a challenge to encouraging people to choose alternatives such as walking or cycling.

The panel discussed the issue of cyclist sharing road space with vehicles and expressed concerns about safety and how best to deal with traffic levels. The panel discussed the benefits of giving cyclists and walkers priority in active travel strategy plan.

The panel commented on previous traffic schemes on A449 Stafford Road aimed at encouraging cyclists to use it. The panel highlighted the importance of seeing what is effective and avoiding piecemeal improvements to the road network which do not encourage cyclists to use them more.

The panel commented on the potential of using canal network route for pleasure and alternatives walking routes. The panel commented on the potential to promote canal routes to the hospital and the health benefits. The panel suggested the installation of mile markers on routes would be helpful in encouraging people to think about alternatives. The panel commented on the potential of using mobile phone technology to give information about walking routes.

The panel queried if the aims and outcomes detailed in the Active Travel Strategy were achievable and its links with other related plans.

Service Lead explained that the plan is a joint venture with other partners and that it is not deliverable by Wolverhampton alone. Service Lead discussed the role of Hugh Porter as the active travel champion. The aim is that activities will start to be implemented from January 2016 onwards.

Cllr John Reynolds responded to comments about the potential to promote the use of canals. Cllr Reynolds explained that members of the Canal and Rivers Trust are working with the Council to look at options to engage the public and to make existing routes more attractive experience for users. Cllr Reynolds commented on the use of solar panel lights installed on the canal towpaths in Birmingham as an example of simple changes that could be made to encourage people to use it. Service Lead commented that this is a good example of an innovative solution to a problem and the plan is aimed at encouraging new ideas which could possibly attract external funding.

The panel praised the report and supported the aims of the plan.

Resolved:

The panel comments on the draft Wolverhampton Active Travel Strategy be noted and included in the revised report to be presented to Cabinet on 9 December 2015.

6 **Sustainability Implementation Plan monitoring report 2014/15**

Ric Bravery, Sustainability Officer, explained that the aim of the Sustainability Implementation Plan monitoring plan was to raise the profile of sustainability. Sustainability Officer gave a summary of current projects and on-going actions and update on future planned work.

The panel commented on the whether the Council had done enough work in the past to tackle the issue of air pollution as part of wider efforts to make an impact on climate change. The panel compared the performance of Wolverhampton in improving air quality with other local authorities.

Nick Edwards, Service Director, commented that Wolverhampton has been proactive in the air quality agenda. Wolverhampton has been working with colleagues across the West Midlands to improve the situation. Cllr John Reynolds commented on the appointment of the Traffic Commissioner and the action taken stop a local bus company operating in Wolverhampton because of the poor condition of the bus fleet and the failure to meet emission standards. The role of the Transport Commissioner is to promote safe, fair, efficient and reliable passenger and goods transport through effective and efficient licensing and regulation of the commercial vehicle industry. Cllr Reynolds was encouraged by the action taken by the Commissioner to ensure that only quality operators providing bus services in Wolverhampton.

Cllr Reynolds commented on the progress made against the original actions detailed in the plan. Cllr Reynolds praised the work of Ric Bravery and his team. In particular, the recognition of his skills and knowledge and the leading role in number of sustainability projects across the Black Country region on behalf of other local authorities.

Resolved:

The panel comments on the Sustainability Implementation Plan to be included in the revised report to be presented to Cabinet on 21 October 2015.

The panel accept the recommendation regarding the granting of delegated authority to the chair of the Sustainability Advisory Group to approve the final draft of the monitoring and progress report.

**7 Review of Commercial Property Portfolio
Exclusion of press and public**

Resolved:

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within the paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Review of Commercial Property Portfolio

Glyn Roberts, Interim Head of Assets, presented a report on the management of the Council's commercial property portfolio.

Resolved:

The panel suggestions and comments aimed at reducing the number of garage sites voids and encourage alternative uses that would benefit the local community to be considered in the report to be presented to Cabinet Resources Panel.