

# Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 28 February 2019

## Attendance

### Members of the Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Greg Brackenridge  
Cllr Val Evans  
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal  
Cllr Christopher Haynes (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr Keith Inston  
Cllr Beverley Momenabadi  
Cllr Martin Waite (Chair)

### In Attendance

Cllr Steve Evans (Portfolio Holder for City Environment)

### Employees

Martin Stevens (Scrutiny Officer) (Minutes)  
Ross Cook (Service Director – City Environment)  
Mike Butler (Lead Officer for Waste)  
Lina Martino (Consultant in Public Health)  
Sean McBurney (WV Active Manager)  
Ric Bravery (Strategic Health Lead City Planning)  
Tim Philpot (Professional Lead – Transport Lead)

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

*Item No.*      *Title*

- 1      **Apologies**  
Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Ian Angus, Cllr Mary Bateman, Cllr Philip Bateman and Cllr Arun Photay.
- 2      **Declarations of interest**  
There were no declarations of interest.
- 3      **Minutes of the previous meeting**  
The minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2018 were approved as a correct record.

4 **Matters arising**

The Chair asked whether Cllr Phil Bateman had received the information on insurance claims he had requested at the previous meeting. The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that he had received the information.

Cllr Haynes requested a briefing from the Head of Transport on the impact on the transport network in Wolverhampton of the new quarry being opened in Staffordshire. The Chair stated he would ask the Head of Transport to provide a written briefing note to Cllr Haynes and himself.

5 **Waste Management Delivery Plan**

The Lead Officer for Waste introduced the report on the evaluation of the Waste Management Delivery Plan. The changes to the bin collection service had been a two-year process. A substantial number of Council staff had been involved in the programme including those in finance and human resources. It had therefore truly been an organisational wide achievement.

The Portfolio Holder for City Environment remarked that the Council had been required to transform the waste collection service due to budget pressures. Approximately 76% of Councils were now collecting general house waste on a fortnightly or even three to four-week basis. Bringing the waste collection service back in-house had brought added benefits including better efficiency and accountability. As an example, he cited the improvements in the expediency of clearing the waste from fly tipping.

The Portfolio Holder for City Environment stated that the food waste collection service was no longer economically viable. Government funding had been withdrawn and only about 10% of residents made use of the food waste collection service. 50% of the space on the collection wagons had been required to run the food collection service. This had meant the wagons were having to return to the depot, more often than was required if the food collection service was not being run. Removing the food waste collection service made the wagons much more efficient on their collection rounds. Bringing the service back in house had been a good reason to purchase new wagons and design them to be as efficient as possible to the service needs of the Council.

The Portfolio Holder for City Environment remarked that all Wolverhampton residents had been offered the opportunity of upgrading their general waste bin to 240 litres. He thought that given the scale of the waste collection changes, the transformation had gone reasonably well. He acknowledged that the garden waste service was now a chargeable service for those wishing to receive the service. He thought the £35.00 per annum charge was very reasonable and was one of the cheapest in the country. He believed Wolverhampton was the only Council in the country that offered a 50% concessionary rate, lowering the cost to only £17.50. Wolverhampton was not unique in charging, as 55% of Councils now charged for garden waste collection. Hereford charged £3.50 for the collection of five garden waste filled bags.

The Portfolio Holder remarked that all 20,000 purple garden waste bins ordered by the Council had been purchased by Wolverhampton residents. The garden collection service had commenced last Monday. The Portfolio Holder applauded the Officers and staff that had been involved in the transformation of the service, whom he described as being excellent throughout the process. He also commended the

support from the Scrutiny Panel and Members of the Council in their work to secure a relatively smooth transformation process. He believed the Council were offering a better service than the private sector. He was very pleased with the overall take up of the garden collection service.

A Member of the Panel asked about the availability of the Purple Bins should more people request one as they had heard there was a shortage. The Lead Officer for Waste responded that there was a manufacturing issue. The company had complied with the Council's original order of 20,000 bins. The Council had requested additional bins due to the demand. The new bins were now awaited. The Portfolio Holder commented that the current Government consultation was on food waste and would not be ending until the end of May 2019. Central to any Government plans was how food waste collections would be funded.

A Member of the Panel asked if there was a clear need for residents to have a larger green coloured bin instead of their smaller brown bin, could the Council enforce the replacement of their current bin. The Head of Environmental Services responded that the Council had been replacing them without specific requests to the Council for replacement.

A Member of the Panel asked if people could change their minds, if they considered they needed a larger bin. In response the Portfolio Holder responded that they could change their minds, as it was critical that the Council supported residents.

A Member of the Panel commented that a local resident had been convinced that fly tipping would increase with the introduction of the waste collection changes. The resident had been forced to admit that he had been mistaken as he had not noticed any increase. The Panel Member congratulated the team on the transformation. The Head of Business Services commented that the Council had seized four vehicles involved in fly tipping in the last six weeks. There were a number of other cars which the Council were looking to seize in the near future.

## 6 **Active Travel Needs Assessment**

The Consultant in Public Health introduced the Active Travel Needs Assessment report. She defined active travel as the choice of travel modes requiring physical activity for all or part of a journey in preference to motor transport. Typically, these modes were walking, wheelchair use and cycling, whether as sole methods of transport or elements of a longer journey. Increasing physical activity was a key local priority. Healthy life expectancy in Wolverhampton was below the national average. Wolverhampton was one of the 20% most deprived districts/unitarities in England and approximately 1 in 3 children lived in low income families.

The Consultant in Public Health remarked that a lack of physical activity was a major contributor to a lower healthy life expectancy. Conditions linked to a lack of physical activity included cardiovascular disease and diabetes. A third of the population of Wolverhampton was physically inactive, this meant they were doing less than 30 minutes of physical activity per week. Active travel was one way for people to start building physical activity into their daily lives. Active travel could bring both physical

and mental health benefits. There were also the indirect benefits to improving air quality and reducing noise. It also reduced traffic and made more efficient use of road space.

The Professional Lead for Transport Strategy remarked that the Council had produced an Active Travel Strategy in 2016. He stated that the Active Travel Strategy had identified three target groups within the population. The first was those who undertook little or no physical activity and for whom there were considerable barriers to uptake of active travel and were generally resident in areas of high deprivation. The second was those who were disposed to an active lifestyle and might extend this into travel under the right circumstances and were generally resident in the more affluent west of the city. The third was vulnerable road users such as children and people with disabilities, located throughout the city.

The Professional Lead for Transport Strategy commented that the Council had conducted a survey on active travel. The answers that had been received about why people did not engage in active travel varied depending on if they were referring to walking or cycling. Common barriers to walking included, practical issues such as having to transport people to places, it being slower than other forms of transport, people having a limited range on how far they were prepared to walk, poor weather and safety concerns. There were also concerns over the common sight in Wolverhampton of footpaths being blocked by parked vehicles. This was particularly problematic for wheelchair users and people with push chairs.

The Professional Lead for Transport Strategy remarked that barriers to cycling were related to the safety of the infrastructure. People were afraid that they would not be able to travel safely in Wolverhampton whilst cycling. Close passing by motor cars, even if it did not result in injury was a clear deterrent. Some areas had implemented active travel solutions successfully, he cited the example of the Leeds to Bradford 14 mile cycle route. Leicester were also making great strides in their active travel infrastructure. Sheffield had a golden route which was a series of connected public spaces, with attractive walking and cycling routes. It was easy to conclude that some places were more predisposed to active travel solutions. To undermine this theory, he cited the example of Amsterdam in the 1970s, which was unrecognisable to its present-day haven for active travel. They were able to transform the city by taking three strategic steps, finding the capital to build the infrastructure, finding the space for the infrastructure and finding the will to change the city into one suitable for active travel.

The Professional Lead for Transport Strategy gave some examples of the work that had taken place in Wolverhampton to encourage active travel. There was now a towpath, with a good quality surface, which went from i54 to Bentley Bridge, down through the centre of Wolverhampton, onto Bilston and then joined the Birmingham network of towpaths. A route had been built at Bee Lane Playing fields from i54 down the east side of Stafford Road. A new route had been built to i54 on the Wobaston Road. There was also a new route to Compton Park and a route down to Springfield Campus from the City Centre. Whilst he was pleased with the work that had been completed so far, it was only a small amount and could certainly not be considered an active travel network.

The Professional Lead for Transport Strategy commented that since the production of the active travel strategy they had been working with the developers of the Metro

extension. They wanted to ensure there was proper provision for cyclists to be able to navigate safely around the metro infrastructure. They had procured the cycle hire scheme which had been launched and was intending to expand over the coming year. With Government grant support, the Council continued to train over 1,000 young cyclists every year to Bikeability level 2 standard and a growing number went onto achieve level 3 standard. They had been working with British Cycling to support community cycling clubs and had been working with Transport for West Midlands on their Cycling Charter.

The Professional Lead for Transport Strategy said that Public Health Wolverhampton had commissioned the Active Travel project Beat the Street, held in Wolverhampton over two 6-week periods. The project encouraged people to try walking and cycling by making it a game in which points could be collected and teams could compete to walk or cycle the farthest. Critically, a new plan had been launched recently for a multimillion pound cycling and walking network in the next ten years. It was a funding bid to Government for if and when funding became available in the future.

The Professional Lead for Transport Strategy stated that monitoring of active travel was important and to gather data to evidence the success of schemes. Wolverhampton Council had historically collected data on cycling rates through the biennial Cordon Survey and the deployment of automatic counters to key locations. The information had been used to contribute to both local and regional monitoring along with recording of the extent of new cycling infrastructure installed year on year. They were working with Transport for West Midlands on a review of data gathering across the West Midlands with the aim of developing a more effective and consistent system of regional monitoring. Living Streets were doing some surveys on the methods children used to travel to school. The Department for Transport conducted an annual survey on active travel. Transport for West Midlands were currently working with Sustrans to produce a BikeLife Report for the West Midlands.

The Strategic Health Lead stated that there were a number of questions which Officers wanted Members to consider, these were as follows: -

1. What were Scrutiny's aspirations and priorities on what the Council should aim to achieve through updating the Active Travel Strategy?
2. What measures were Scrutiny prepared to support in order to make available the space necessary for a full network of continuous unimpeded pedestrian and cycling routes to be implemented (e.g. greater enforcement against pavement parking)?
3. How could the various Council Leadership teams help embed active travel into their cultures and strategic priorities?

The Chair commented that it was important that active travel schemes were not perceived as punishing car drivers. It was about promoting walking and cycling and giving them parity with the car. The use of efficient road space was important. 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.

The Portfolio Holder complimented the Council Officers who were involved in active travel for their work. There were 24KM of cycles lanes within Wolverhampton. He suggested that the Scrutiny Panel should help promote the Bike Share scheme. The Chair confirmed that he had signed up to the scheme and had completed his first journey in the previous week. He praised Officers for always consulting with the cycling community when new infrastructure was being put in place. He stressed the importance of connectivity of cycling and walking paths within the City. The Mayor of the West Midlands in his election manifesto of 2017, had promised £10 per head across the West Midlands for cycling infrastructure. He did not believe Wolverhampton was receiving the investment funding that had been promised by The Mayor of the West Midlands and he wanted to ensure that steps were taken to ensure that the City did receive its fair share.

A Member commented that in order to implement cycling lanes, some of the work undertaken to the transport infrastructure had to be undone. He cited the example of a central reservation which took up the space for a cycling lane. The Portfolio Holder responded that they could work with the Highways team to improve cycling infrastructure but there would be some areas which would be difficult to remedy. They were always looking to improve the transport network over thousands of miles of roads within the City. Section 106 money had led to the implementation of many new walking routes. It was important to promote the good work that had taken place on active travel.

A Member of the Panel commented that the canal towpaths were not as well signed as they would like and people sometimes did not feel safe walking them. She asked where the Bike Share docking stations would be placed in the future. The Professional Lead for Transport Strategy responded that the Council was working on a list of sites within the whole of Wolverhampton and it was hoped there would be at least an additional 50 other sites.

A Member of the Panel commended the Park Safe Scheme and she hoped it would help improve active travel in the future. The Portfolio Holder commented that they had recently written to the Minister to ask for further legislation to enable the Council to take action for parking on grass verges and pavements.

**Resolved:** That the proposed approach for developing an updated framework for benchmarking and measuring progress, based on new data and emerging outcome metrics be noted.

## 7 **2018 Budget Funding - £60M to Plant Trees**

The Head of Environmental Services introduced a briefing note, entitled “£60 million to Plant Trees.” He stated that the Government had announced a budget of £60 million to plant more than 10 million trees across the country, in a drive to replace the country’s greenery. The £10m going towards planting urban trees was to be matched by contributions of funding and assistance from local authorities, community groups and charities. Details about bidding for the funding as part of the initiative were not currently available and were yet to be formulated by the relevant Government department.

A Member of the Panel commented that tree planting schemes in Wolverhampton in the past had been challenging due to them being damaged by people using motor vehicles or purposely pulling them out to make way for parking. The Head of

Environmental Services responded that using larger trees could help alleviate some of these problems. It was however important to address the root cause as to why trees were being damaged, which often centered on parking issues. The current legislation could also be restrictive for the circumstances which allowed the Council to put forward prosecutions.

8 **Work Plan**

Members agreed to add the plans for the Bike Sharing scheme project, to the Scrutiny Work Plan.

**Resolved:** That the Scrutiny Work Plan be agreed.

9 **Future Meeting Dates**

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

11 April 2019 at 6pm  
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

10 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**Resolved:** That in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the item on WV Active as it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. This is by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

11 **WV Active Presentation**

The WV Active Manager gave a confidential presentation on WV Active. At the conclusion of the presentation, Members thanked the WV Active Manager for his work in improving the service.