

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 November 2018 at 6.00pm at the Council House, Walsall

Committee Members

Present:

Councillor I. Shires (Chair)
Councillor A. Hicken (Vice-Chair)
Councillor B. Allen
Councillor B. Chattha
Councillor S. Coughlan
Councillor S. Craddock
Councillor K. Chambers
Councillor L. Jeavons
Councillor C. Jones
Councillor W. Rasab
Councillor G. Singh Sohal

Portfolio Holders:

Councillor A. Andrew	Deputy Leader of the Council and Regeneration
Councillor L. Harrison	Clean and Green
Councillor G. Perry	Community, Leisure and Culture
Councillor C. Towe	Education and Skills

Officers Present:

Chris Holliday	Head of Leisure, Culture and Operations
Mark Holden	Head of Clean and Green
Kelly Valente	Lead Accountant for Economy and Environment
Matthew Powis	Democratic Services Officer

Other Attendees

Present:

Malcolm Holmes	Executive Director of Rail at West Midlands Rail Executive
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37/18 Apologies

An apology was received from Councillor Creaney.

38/18 Substitution

Councillor Chambers substituted on behalf of Councillor Creaney.

39/18 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest or party whip.

40/18 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to consider in private session.

41/18 Minutes of the Previous Meeting.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2018, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

42/18 Areas of focus – 2018/19.

The Committee considered its areas of focus and the forward plans of Walsall Council and the Black Country Joint Executive Committee.

The Chair confirmed that he had received requests to include a Knife Crime Working Group and a report on the Walsall Proud Programme onto the Committees area of focus. In addition, the Chair requested a presentation on modular homes at the next meeting of the Committee.

Resolved:

- 1. The areas of focus 2018/19 and forward plans be noted;**
- 2. That, a Knife Crime Working Group and Walsall Proud Programme be included on the areas of focus;**
- 3. That, the Committee receive a presentation on modular homes at the next meeting of the Committee.**

43/18 Presentation from West Midlands Rail Executive.

The Committee received a presentation from the Executive Director of Rail at West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) which outlined an overview of rail transportation in the West Midlands and role of the WMRE in the development of the rail network.

The Committee were informed that each Local Authority in the West Midlands and border Local Authorities nominated a Council Leader or Senior Cabinet Member to represent each authority at the board level. The WMRE's strategic focus outlined the drive towards a single network vision alongside retaining and developing relationships between franchisees and partner organisations such as Network Rail.

It was noted that the WMRE had limited powers of control in the industry as it was a limited company. However, relationships between Local Authorities,

Franchisees and Network Rail was based on a strong framework to drive forward change for rail transportation in the West Midlands which benefited people, communities and passengers. A discussion was held around the WMRE's Investment Strategy 2018 to 2047 which outlined developments of new train stations for Aldridge, Willenhall and Darlaston. In addition, the Executive Director gave an update on the electrification of the Rugeley to Walsall Chase Line and HS2.

A question and answer session took place and following on, the principal points from the ensuing discussion:-

- A Member sought clarification on whether Darlaston Train Station would have adequate car parking facilities. In response, the Executive Director confirmed that proposals for a large car park had been planned. However, it was noted that WMRE was also interested in developing a park and ride facility;
- Whilst progress had been made with driverless train services in the industry, obstacles remained. However, the implementation of driverless trains nationally remained a future concept;
- Re-establishment of the Walsall to Lichfield Line was not a priority line but had potential to be implemented in future;
- A Member enquired about peak time traffic at Tame Bridge Parkway and whether consideration had been given to expansion of facilities at two stations. In response, the Executive Director confirmed that the WMRE was exploring expansion plans for the car park in future. It was noted that the West Midlands Railway franchise required 30% additional capacity for the network to ease congestion into Birmingham City Centre and options appraisals for additional trains would be examined in future. In supporting proposals, the Department for Transport confirmed that a 30% increase in public transport capacity would be required for Birmingham City Centre to offset traffic from the implementation of Birmingham's Clean Air Zone;
- The Vice-Chair sought clarification on the integration of the bus and rail network. The Executive Director confirmed that Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) was creating an integrated transport system similar to Transport for London (TfL) which would incorporate the bus and rail networks. Furthermore, WMRE had been working closely with the franchisees and Bus Alliance to grow and support the public offer;
- WMRE anticipated community involvement with the development of new stations into mixed transportation, community and business use;
- It was noted that three new stations Moseley, Kings Heath and Hazelwell would be established in Birmingham to coincide with the Commonwealth Games. It was anticipated that the creation of Darlaston and Willenhall Stations would commence in 2022 with a programme of consultation with local communities and Councillors;
- The Chair requested that a copy of the presentation be circulated to Members of the Committee;
- WMRE recognised the opportunity for redevelopment of Walsall Train Station and the area around Station Street.

The Committee thanked the Executive Director of Rail for his attendance.

Resolved:

That, a copy of the presentation be circulated to Members of the Committee.

44/18 Draft Revenue Budget and Efficiency Plan 2018/19 – 2021/22.

The Committee considered the draft revenue budget and efficiency plan for 2018/19 and 2021/22.

The Chair invited each portfolio holder to present their savings to the Committee. The following summary of the discussion in regard to the savings were discussed by the Committee and broken down by portfolio.

Regeneration

Walsall Proud Programme

A Member sought clarification on savings highlighted with the implementation of the Walsall Proud Programme and whether jobs would be affected. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the programme implementation was ongoing and an update would be presented at the next meeting of the Committee.

Clean and Green

Street Cleansing

The Committee was informed that the Cabinet would be undertaking a review into District Centres which would take into account changes in street cleansing provision.

Healthy Lifestyle Services

In response to a question by the Chair on the reduced scope of healthy lifestyle services. The Head of Clean and Green confirmed that the restructure of services would promote harmonisation between Clean and Green and Public Health to promote the maximisation of green space provision whilst reducing duplication of services.

Domestic Waste Pressures

A Member sought clarification on whether there had been a significant impact on Council waste services due to China's reduction in imported plastic waste. The Committee were informed that a response would be provided in writing.

Community, Leisure and Culture

Active Living Centres

A Member sought clarification on when additional parking provision would be implemented at Oak Park Active Living Centre. The Head of Leisure, Culture and Operations confirmed that, subject to the final part of the funding package being confirmed, work would commence in spring 2019 and be complete by March. This would then help to ease pressure at the centre and improve customer satisfaction with parking. The Portfolio Holder highlighted that Oak Park had successfully maximised the use of artificial pitches at the centre and that both parks continued to remain popular attractions with the community.

A Member sought clarification on whether pricing had impacted on membership at the Active Living Centres. The Portfolio Holder highlighted that carrying out an impact study would be premature however, the Centres had recently made progress on implementing online membership options whilst remaining competitive with other leisure providers. He highlighted that challenges remained in encouraging better and increased use of Darlaston and Walsall Gala Active Living Centres due to their age and design.

Library Services

The Committee was informed that there was review into procuring the out-of-hours access control system for the five District Libraries and Streetly Community Library. Whilst the Council had already seen a reduction in the number of library sites and staff since the redesign in 2017 it was committed to maintaining opening hours within the service.

Resolved:

That;

- 1. The Committee draft revenue budget and capital programme 2018/19 to 2021/22 be noted;**
- 2. The consultation on all new 2019/20 policy savings be noted;**
- 3. Information on the impact of China's reduction in plastic waste be provided to Members of the Committee in writing.**

45/18 Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn for 2018/19 – Quarter 2

The Committee considered a report on the forecast revenue and capital outturn position for 2018/19 for services within the remit of the Committee.

It was reported that the forecast revenue for services under the remit of the Committee highlighted an overspend of £0.197m.

The capital forecast position highlighted a forecast variance of £6.446m, which comprised of a project under spend of £1.145m and overspend of £0.047m for awaiting budget virements.

It was noted that £5.347m had been requested to be carried forward for earmarked reserves and the implementation of action plans.

Resolved:

- 1. That, the revenue overspend of £197,000 and the use of and transfer to earmarked reserves and implementation of action plans be noted;**
- 2. That, the capital funding variance of £6.446m be noted;**

46/18 Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on 15 January 2019.

Termination of Meeting

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 7.28p.m.

Signed:

Date: