

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 October 2020 at 6.00pm held virtually via Microsoft Teams

Committee Members

Present:

Councillor L. Harrison (Chair)
Councillor A. Hicken (Vice-Chair)
Councillor M. Follow
Councillor S. Johal
Councillor P. Kaur
Councillor I. Shires
Councillor M. Ward

Portfolio Holders

Present:

Councillor A. Andrew Deputy Leader and Regeneration
Councillor O. Butler Clean and Green

Officers Present:

Neil Taylor Interim Director of Regeneration & Economy
Matt Crowton Transportation Major Projects & Strategy Manager
Matt Powis Democratic Services Officer

Other Attendees

Present:

David Reed Highways England
James Keogh John SISK and Sons Ltd

01/20 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Simon Neilson, Executive Director of Economy and Environment and Councillor Perry, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Resilient Communities.

02/20 Substitution

There were no substitutions.

03/20 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest or party whips.

04/20 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to consider in private session.

05/20 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

In reference to Minute No. 50/19 SPRINT – A34 Walsall to Birmingham Presentation ‘existing X57 buses’ be amended to ‘existing X51 buses’.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2020, as amended, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

06/20 **M6 Junction 10 Update**

Following an initial presentation about upgrade works on M6 Junction 10 at the Committee meeting held on 20 February 2020. The Committee received a progress update from David Reed, Project Manager at Highways England and James Keogh, Senior Project Manager at SISK.

The Committee received updated aerial shots of the upgrade works which was progressing on schedule and due to be completed before the Birmingham Commonwealth Games in 2022.

Due to the pandemic, SISK had carried out necessary risk assessments to minimise and mitigate risk associated with COVID-19 with all employees attending the site and other office staff. SISK and Highways England continue to work with the Council and Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) to promote alternative modes of transportation and encourage people to work from home if possible.

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

- SISK was on target to complete the upgrade works without any disturbance to existing traffic flows.
- A Member sought clarification on potential future disruption around Junction 10 and how this would be communicated to local residents and businesses. In response, the James Keogh confirmed that a stakeholder manager had been assigned to the project to oversee engagement with the public, surrounding neighbourhoods and partners. In addition, SISK carries out regular meetings with the Council, Highways England and TfWM to ensure minimal impact and disruption in the area.
- The Vice-Chair sought clarification on how the project would reduce local air pollution and improve local green space. In response, James Keogh confirmed that landscaping in the area was being carried to minimise the impact of the local biodiversity and replace trees like-for-like. In regard to air pollution, added traffic capacity would allow vehicles to flow easier across the junction and reduce incidences of congested traffic.
- A Member sought clarification regarding noise pollution in the area due to ongoing works. In response, it was noted that pile driving and rotary pile

works were only being carried out during the daytime. However, most of this work had already concluded.

- The Portfolio Holder for Clean and Green highlighted that there were ongoing discussions regarding speed reductions across the motorway network to assist in the reduction of pollution.
- The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration highlighted that the upgrade works were essential and would bring long-term economic for the Borough.

The Committee thanked David Reed, Highways England and James Keogh, SISK for their attendance.

Resolved:

- 1. That, the presentation be noted.**

07/20 Economy and Environment Financial Performance - Quarter 1 Financial Monitoring Position for 2020/21

The Committee considered a report on revenue and capital outturn for 2020/21 for services within the remit of the Committee.

This position highlighted a revenue overspend of £802,000 as a result of delayed savings, unachieved income and necessary spending increases across the directorate. However, a result of mitigating actions this figure had reduced to an overspend of £562,000.

It was noted that forecast use of reserves were £9.362m including a one-off expenditure of £5.784m relating directly to implications of COVID-19 restrictions.

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

- A Member sought clarification on how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted action plans within the Council's directorates. Interim Director of Regeneration & Economy confirmed that the Council's Budget report was scheduled for the next meeting of the Committee on 19 November 2020 which would connect both the budget and action plans in relation to Economy and Environment.
- A Member suggested that the Committee schedule a standing item on each Committee agenda to track the recovery of the budget.
- The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration highlighted that the Council was awaiting a further funding announcement from Government regarding COVID-19 funding shortfalls. However, the Government had announced the Towns Fund and High Street Fund which would be beneficial for the economic recovery of the Borough.
- The Portfolio Holder for Clean and Green highlighted that due to pandemic, the Council had seen an increase of online shopping which had thus increased amount of household waste being produced. In addition, it was

noted that due to a number of businesses that were forced to close, there had been a reduction in the Council's income from business waste permits causing further financial pressures.

Resolved:

1. **That the forecast 2020/21 year end financial position be noted.**

08/20 Areas of focus – 2020/21

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

Members debated and suggested the following items to be considered at a future meeting of the Committee:

1. A34 Walsall to Birmingham SPRINT
2. Black Country Transport Team Collaboration
3. West Midlands Enhanced Partnership Scheme
4. Presentation from bus operators in Walsall
5. Carbon Neutral Council – Update on proposals
6. Town Deals Boards

Resolved:

1. **That, areas of focus 2020/21 and forward plans be noted.**
2. **That, the following items be considered at a future meeting of the Committee:**
 - a. **A34 Walsall to Birmingham SPRINT**
 - b. **Black Country Transport Team Collaboration**
 - c. **West Midlands Enhanced Partnership Scheme**
 - d. **Presentation from bus operators in Walsall**
 - e. **Carbon Neutral Council – Update on proposals**
 - f. **Town Deals Boards**

09/20 Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on 19 November 2020.

Termination of Meeting

There being no further business, the meeting terminated 7.16p.m.

Signed:
Date: