

## **CORPORATE AND PUBLIC SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Thursday 8 September 2016 at 6.00pm at the Council House, Walsall**

**Panel Members Present**      Councillor A. Andrew (Chair)  
Councillor C. Creaney  
Councillor D. Barker  
Councillor M. Bird  
Councillor S. Craddock  
Councillor A. Nazir  
Councillor L. Rattigan  
Councillor G. Sohal  
Councillor M. Ward  
Councillor R. Worrall

**Portfolio Holder**              Councillor S. Coughlan – Leader  
Councillor L. Jeavons – Deputy Leader and  
Regeneration  
Councillor J. Fitzpatrick – Community, Leisure and  
Culture  
Councillor C. Jones – Clean and Green  
Councillor I. Shires – Agenda for change  
Councillor R. Burley – Children’s Services and Education

**Officers Present**              Simon Neilson –      Executive Director (Economy and  
Environment)  
Steve Pretty –        Head of Planning, Transport and  
Engineering  
Chris Knowles –      Services Finance Manager  
Neil Picken –         Senior Democratic Services Officer

**In attendance**                Richard Hall – Royal Mail  
David Reed – Highways England  
Martin Tiller - Network Rail  
Superintendent Lee Kendrick – West Midlands Police

### **113/15 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M. Nazir.

### **114/15 Substitutions**

None

#### **115/15 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

There were no declarations of interest or party whip.

#### **116/15 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**

There were no items to be considered in private session.

#### **117/15 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Members considered the Minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2016. In relation to Minute 108/15 it was requested that the word 'clarified' in sentence one of paragraph 4 be replaced with the word 'asked'.

#### **Resolved**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2016 copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record subject to the word 'clarified' in sentence one of paragraph 4 of Minute 108/15 be replaced with the word 'asked'.**

#### **118/15 M6 Junction 10 Major Highways Improvements**

The Committee considered a report [annexed] which provided opportunity for the Committee to scrutinise the progress of the road improvement scheme.

Members were advised that key milestones were approaching between September, 2016 and early 2017, one of the most significant being a submission of a planning application.

Debate focussed on whether discussions had been held with the M6 Toll owners to establish whether discounted (or free) access could be granted in the event of an accident during the works which would have a major impact on traffic flow. Mr Reed advised that such discussions had not occurred. However, it was advised that emergency powers are available and the scheme would consider all possible situations.

The Committee urged Mr Reed to open negotiations with the owners of the M6 Toll as they had concern that in the event of an accident the delays and impact on the public could be considerable. Further the impact on businesses which use the network for haulage could be impacted on severely. It was suggested that the matter also be raised at the Combined Authority. Mr Reed agreed to explore the matter advising that the Scheme was expected to take 2 years to deliver.

Mr Reed was asked whether the project was remedial work or improvements. Mr Reed advised that it was improvement work to free up the grid and ensure

the safety of all road users. He confirmed that access for public transport and bikes would be considered during the diversions.

The Executive Director (Economy and Environment) emphasised that this project was the number 1 project for transport and that Walsall had attracted the most amount of money in the Black Country which was matched by Highways England. The Partnership arrangement was the key to making an enhanced package of works a reality.

Mr Reed was asked to clarify the mitigating action that would be undertaken during works to alleviate traffic congestion, particularly around areas such as Pleck. Mr Reed advised that there was a package of measures to reduce the impact of the works on traffic flow. These would be in place prior to works commencing.

### **Resolved**

- 1. That the progress made to date in the 12 months since the last scrutiny report on this scheme, held on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2015 be noted.**
- 2. That it be noted that Walsall Council and Highways England currently intend to enter into a legally binding partnership for the duration of the scheme by the end of calendar year 2016.**
- 3. That it be noted that Walsall Council and Highways England will select the preferred design for the scheme during September 2016.**
- 4. That it be noted that Walsall Council and Highways England expect to apply for planning permission to the Local Planning Authority early in 2017, with the exact date still to be confirmed.**

### **119/15 Network Rail Activity in Walsall**

The Committee considered a report [annexed] which provided an update on Network Rail's progress in electrifying the Chase Line Railway (Rugeley Trent Valley).

The Committee asked why there was a delay in opening Central Drive Road bridge at Bloxwich, to which Mr Tiller advised that the initial delay had been due to a gas main. Subsequently, a road safety audit had been undertaken which added to delays. Both matters were resolved and the project was moving forward.

Engagement with residents and Councillors was highlighted as being an area which could be improved. Mr Tiller assured Committee that a communication strategy was in place to ensure that it was thorough. In addition, monthly meetings between NR and council officers are ongoing.

**Resolved**

**That the update be noted.**

**120/15 Willenhall Post Office**

The Chair welcomed Mr Hall to the meeting advising that there was concern that the Post Office at Willenhall may be closed.

Mr Hall explained that a decision had been taken to franchise 70 branches within the Crown Network. It was stated that many premises within the crown network were loss making with large overheads and with little room for growth. Government support was being reduced which puts increasing pressure on the Post Office to revisit models of cost saving.

A great deal of efficiency had been made by automating services but there was still a need to franchise services, including Willenhall to secure their long term viability.

Members asked where the new post office may be located stating that Willenhall Town Centre would be the preferred location. Mr Hall confirmed that it was the intention to retain a Post Office via a franchise arrangement in the heart of the centre

Mr Hall requested that Members contact him directly should they have any information regarding possible locations for the service and assured Members that a full communication strategy would be implemented in the event of any change affecting Post Offices within Walsall.

**Resolved:**

**That the update be noted.**

**121/15 Final report of the Remembrance Day Working Group**

The Chair of the Working Group referred Members to the interim report which had been circulated [annexed].

The Committee were advised that the Group had met with Deputy Chief Constable Louisa Rolfe and also referred to the fact that a draft working group interim report had been leaked by an unknown source to the press which had not been helpful.

At the time that the Working Group was established, it was made clear that funding was not available from the Council or the Police. It was now the case that the Council together with the Police and Crime Commissioner would jointly fund the 2016 Parade road closures. He also confirmed that the matter

had come to light following a Policy change at a National level which meant local police had to adhere to the changes.

There was still much to do to ensure that organisers were able to appoint traffic management companies and so further work was required. Clarity was also needed to make it clear how the funding could be accessed. In closing, the committee were advised that this funding was for one year only and so the Working Group would continue its work to ensure that Remembrance Day Parades have a secure future in years to come.

Superintendent Lee Kendrick advised that there was a clear distinction between the Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner as the Commissioner did not have operational responsibility. He confirmed that organisers would be required to appoint traffic management companies to ensure that there was a safe environment for those taking part in Parades.

The Chair sought reassurance that plans could be in place in light of the short timescales to deliver Remembrance Day Parades. He was advised that the Council would meet with all organisers and discuss the arrangements at a Special Safety Advisory (SAG) Group. Once agreed the Council would assist with Traffic Regulation Orders, where required. With regard to funding, this would be debated at the SAG.

It was suggested that the Council could contact its large contractors such as Lafarge, Tarmac to establish whether they would be able to assist organisers and provide the work and invoice the Council as this would prevent organisers having to pay up front, as for some this could be difficult. It was agreed that Officers would make enquiries.

**Resolved:**

- 1. That the Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee note that the working group will continue to meet to develop a long term sustainable solution in consultation with event organisers and all Partners for future Parades;**
- 2. That the Final report and recommendations of the working group be considered at a future meeting of the Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**
- 3. That Officers contact the Councils Contractors to establish whether they would be able to assist organisers with Parade Events.**

**122/15 Quarter 1 Revenue and Capital Outturn 2015-16**

The Committee considered the financial performance – forecast revenue and capital outturn for 2016/17 [annexed].

**Resolved:**

**That the report be noted.**

**123/15 Areas of focus 2015/16**

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

**Resolved:**

That the Areas of Focus be noted.

**124/15 Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be 13 October 2016.

**Termination of Meeting**

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 7.50 pm.

Signed: .....

Date: .....