

AT A MEETING
- of the
**REGENERATION, HOUSING,
ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY
SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**
held at The Council House, Walsall on
Wednesday, 11 January 2006 at 6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor Shires
Councillor Anson
Councillor Harrison
Councillor Robinson
Councillor Rose
Councillor Micklewright

Glyn Oliver (Service Manager - Traffic & Transportation)
David Elsworthy (Service Manager - Planning, Building & Pollution Control)
Paul Simpson (Head of Finance-Regeneration and Built Environment)
Nozmul Hussain (Director Safer Walsall Borough Partnership)
Bryan Pell (Head of Physical Regeneration - Urban Regeneration Services)
Mark Clough (Strategic Transport Manager - Urban Regeneration)
Stuart Bentley (Scrutiny Officer)

Councillor Shires, on behalf of the Panel, expressed his thanks to Debbie Breedon for her work and support to Scrutiny and for her constant support to Members during her time at Walsall Council. He wished her all the best in her new role.

Agreed:

That a letter of thanks be drafted to Debbie Breedon.

CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Members noted the following change in membership for the duration of the meeting: -

Delete: Councillor Yasin
Substitute: Councillor Micklewright

APOLOGIES

Apologies for non attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor Arif, Councillor Aslam and Councillor Johnson.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

(annexed)

Resolved:

That the minutes of the previous meetings, 3 and 25 November 2005, copies having been previously circulated, be agreed, and signed, as a correct record.

CAR PARKS WORK GROUP

Stuart Bentley tabled the minutes of the Car parks work group for 9 January 2006 (item 5(a)(iii)) and the report of the Car Park Work Group (item 5(b)).

(annexed)

Resolved:

That the minutes of the previous meetings, 2 and 28 November 2005, copies having been previously circulated, and the minutes of 9 January 2006, copies having be tabled, be agreed as a correct record.

Councillor Robinson gave a brief overview of the remit of the Car Parks Work Group and an explained that the report was being tabled dues to unforeseen delays in finalising the staff survey. He further stated that the tabled report was intended to feed into the larger, consultant led, Car Parks strategy. He then asked Mark Clough to take Members through the report.

Councillor Shires thanked Mark Clough for his overview of the report and asked Members if they had any questions.

Councillor Anson asked if, as a short term measure, the Town Wharf site could be used as a Car Park.

Bryan Pell replied that there would be 2 major constraints. One being that planning applications for the area are due to be completed around March and, secondly, that the site was un-surfaced and would require a significant amount of capital in order to make the site usable.

Councillor Anson replied that the site had been used over the previous Christmas period.

Bryan Pell replied that the area had been surfaced at the time, but considerable reclamation work had been undertaken since then.

Councillor Robinson thanked officer for their hard work in drafting the report.

Councillor Shires stated that this review highlighted the benefits of Work Groups in undertaking Scrutiny. He invited all Members of the Panel along to the work groups as they input would be valued.

Councillor Robinson moved that the recommendations of the report be agreed. Councillor Shires seconded.

Resolved:

That the findings from this report are fed directly into the overall review of parking for Walsall, due to report in March 06.

That Members from the Car Park Working Group attend a proposed workshop session for the overall review planned in late January / early February 06 to provide early input into the overall process and to inform on the findings from the initial work into Council Staff Parking.

That the Scrutiny Car Park Working Group reconvene early in the new financial year 2006/07 to review the findings from the overall parking study and feed directly into the development of a new parking strategy for Walsall.

That specific recommendations and an action plan for improving the management of parking for Council Staff are made following the Working Groups review of the overall parking study and the development of a Parking Strategy for Walsall.

TELECOMUNICATIONS 3G WORK GROUP

(annexed)

Resolved:

That the minutes of the previous meetings, 21 November and 15 December 2005, copies having been previously circulated, be agreed as a correct record.

Councillor Shires highlighted that another meeting was being organised to consider legal and risk implications and that recommendations could be made following this meeting.

Councillors Harrison and Robinson asked if the reports could be forwarded to the Development Control Committee.

Councillor Shires stated that he had been disappointed by the how the initial Telecommunications report had be taken through Cabinet. He had raised the issue with the Leader of the Council as these reports were not simply for Cabinet to note but should be seen as a valid input into the debate. He further stated that he was concerned that, despite the amount of work and the perceived understanding between the mobile operators, the mobile operators were continuing to apply for planning permission irrespective of any possibility of collaboration.

David Elsworthy stated that Cabinet did pass the report presented to them on 21 December 2005.

Councillor Shires asked if all Members could receive a copy of the report.

Councillor Robinson stated that there was a need to push for a seminar, for the Development Control Committee, on telecommunications issues.

Councillor Shires stated that all Members should have an opportunity to see the report in advance of a seminar and that the mobile operators should be asked to participate, ideally in a question and answer session.

Councillor Micklewright asked if there had been any public consultation.

David Elsworthy replied that the Development Control Committee do seek to consult and operate a traffic light system which triggers degrees of consultation. He further stated that there was a Member development event scheduled for 16 February for the Development Control Committee and that it may be possible to organise another for August ./ September to address telecommunications issues. He did, however, state that the Committee had already moved to a more mature level of debate around these issues.

Councillors Shires stated that it was still the case that all applications were treated in isolation. A seminar might aid the mobile operators to move forward and begin to implement more collaborative working practices. This might also be an opportunity for a debate around more technical issues around masts and network hardware.

Resolved:

That all Elected Members receive a copy of the report entitled "Mobile telecommunication masts" presented to Cabinet on 21 December 2006.

That the Regeneration, Housing, Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny and Performance Panel recommend that a seminar on telecommunication issues be organised for the members of the Development Control Committee.

DARLASTON STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Mark Clough presented information relating to the transport issues relating to Darlaston Strategic Agency (SDA) project.

(annexed)

Councillor Shires was concerned about access to the site and sited junction 1 of the M5 as an example. He stated that there was a need to get it right. He noted that the presentation had focused on the road links but that was no mention of other transportation solutions, such as the Midlands Metro. This would be a good opportunity for a public transport solution.

Mark Clough replied that they had been working with Centro as the 5W's route cuts through the site. He had asked Centro for a stop on the Darlaston road. The Bus companies had also been approached and had stated that if there was a business case for a service they would certainly address it.

Councillor Anson asked confirmation that something would be heard by the end of January from Government on Regional Funding Priorities.

Mark Clough replied that the statement of interest was required by Government by the end of January and, therefore, it would be sometime after that before anything would be heard. However, out of the 5 schemes submitted through the Local Transport Plan, 3 had made it onto the program which was significantly better than other Councils in the area.

Councillor Shires expressed further concerns that public transport would be overlooked unless it was considered in advance. He cited how London dealt with public transport as a possible template for the development.

Mark Clough replied that London was a slightly different case as public transport within the Capital had not been deregulated. However, the Government had devised Quality Contracts as a method for regulating public transport, but these should be used as a last resort. However, the development of the road network in the area was essential and as the developers arrived they would have to work within the constraints of the Urban Development Plan which will require that they consider transport issues.

Councillor Robinson stated that the public transport operators also needed to improve their service delivery.

Councillor Shires asked if there was a rail line at Jane's Bridge and asked if anyone had flagged it as an opportunity.

Mark Clough replied that work was being progressed to make the Walsall to Wolverhampton line more attractive to users, in an attempt to improve patronage and maintain the longer term viability of the service. This involved investigations into the potential for new stations along the line.

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Members referred to the Beacon Index and Nozmul Hussain tabled data relating to reference number 2.3.1, 2.3.2 and 2.3.3.

(annexed)

Nozmul Hussain spoke to the information and stated that 2.3.1 had moved from Red in quarter one to Amber in Quarter 2 and is heading towards Green in quarter three and was now on track. Reference 2.3.2 was turning Red in quarter two and predicted same for quarter three due to increase in violent crime and criminal damage. . However, partners were working closely to address this issue and he highlighted that more active policing would result in inflated figures as more crime will be noted and recorded. 2.3.3 was currently Amber and the 10 pledged sites may not be completed by year end due to logistical reasons in planning & consultation, preparing, designing and installation. However, the scheme is now operational and around 17 sites have been selected for improvement. Most will have work ordered and some will have

actual improvements made such as installation of gates by the end of the financial year

Councillor Robinson asked what the impact of the Governments Regional Policing policy, as apposed to the Neighbourhood Policing agenda already agreed, and the new respect agenda was.

Nozmul Hussain replied that the Neighbourhood policing model would be implemented by beginning of next year and arrangements were already being rolled out. He then outlined the current programs being undertaken by Safer Walsall Borough Partnership and highlighted various programme under consideration to improve victim satisfaction and reassurance.

Councillor Shires thanked Nozmul Hussain for his input and asked if he could produce a brief report outlining the current programme of Safer Walsall Borough Partnership and asked that the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy be presented to Scrutiny before Cabinet in order to gain all party support. He further stated that there were obviously some long standing issues around civil liberties and that it would be useful for the Chief Superintendent to attend a future meeting.

Nozmul Hussain agreed and stated that he regularly meets with the Chief Superintendent and Jamie Morris to discuss council\police matters and would be more that happy to raise any issues the Panel have at these meetings.

Resolved:

That Nozmul Hussain prepare a brief report outlining the current programme for Safer Walsall Borough Partnership.

That the Anti-Social Strategy be presented to Scrutiny before Cabinet in order to gain full party support.

QUARTERLY MONITORING: ENVIRONMENT INSPECTION

Glyn Oliver was present to guide Members through the Improvement Plan.

(annexed)

Glyn Oliver stated that there were no Red indicators. With regards to the Amber indicators: the implementation outcomes of North East Walsall / Brownhills corridor study (PTC3) had been submitted to the Department for Transport and they were awaiting guidance; the preparation and completion of a street management strategy was delayed due staffing priorities; the implementation of TMA 2004 (TPC2) was delayed due to the Government delaying the Act; the implementation of TCTP (TPC2) was delayed as it was with Ministers awaiting a decision; the implementation of Bus Showcases and Red Routed (TPC2) was delayed due to staffing implications, although work was being undertaken through the prudential code; and the implementation of P&T Guidance and Strategies was delayed by staffing issues, but had been put forward for inclusion in one of the LAA pillars.

Councillor Shires asked that the concerns of Scrutiny be passed to the Leader of the Council over delays, and there implications on performance measures, caused by delays in Government, which were beyond the control of the Council.

Resolved:

That the concerns of Scrutiny be passed to the Leader of the Council over delays, and there implications on performance measures, caused by delays in Government, which were beyond the control of the Council.

FORWARD PLAN

Councillor Robinson asked what the position was with regards to Markets.

Bryan Pell replied that he already discussed the issue with the Chair and that it had been agreed to arrange a Markets Workshop in March / April 2006.

Glyn Oliver informed that Panel that the Darlaston Strategic Development Area – statutory procedures had been deferred until the March 1 meeting of Cabinet.

Members asked that the Darlaston Strategic Development Area – statutory procedures, the Highways maintenance procurement strategy, the Enterprising Walsall Strategy – strategic framework for the economic development of the borough to stimulate investment, job creation and enterprise and the open space and recreation supplementary planning document – the planning policy document that supplements the Unitary Development Plan be brought to a future meeting of the Panel.

Resolved:

That the Darlaston Strategic Development Area – statutory procedures, the Highways maintenance procurement strategy, the Enterprising Walsall Strategy – strategic framework for the economic development of the borough to stimulate investment, job creation and enterprise and the open space and recreation supplementary planning document – the planning policy document that supplements the Unitary Development Plan be brought to a future meeting of the Panel.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.00 p.m.