

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 July 2022 at 6.00pm held at Walsall Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall, WS1 1TW.

Committee Members	Councillor M. Follows (Chair) Councillor B. Allen (Vice-Chair) Councillor C. Creaney Councillor A. Garcha Councillor R. Larden Councillor A. Nazir Councillor J. Whitehouse Councillor R. Worrall Councillor B. Bains	
Portfolio Holders	Councillor M. Bird Councillor K. Murphy Councillor T. Wilson	Leader of the Council Clean and Green Children's (attending as Petitioner Support)
Officers Present:	Simon Neilson Kathryn Moreton Alana Barlow Sian Lloyd	Executive Director, Economy, Environment and Communities Head of Highways & Transport Road Safety Manager Democratic Services Officer
Invited Attendees:	Judith Butler	Lead Petitioner

01/22 Apologies

Councillors Kaur and I. Hussain submitted an apology for their absence.

02/22 Substitution

Councillor Bains substituted for Councillor Kaur.

03/22 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest or party whips.

04/22 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to consider in private session.

05/22 Minutes of the previous meeting

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2022, as amended, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

06/22 Response to petition: ‘Pedestrian Crossing for Birmingham Road, Aldridge, enabling the safety of school children’

The Committee considered a petition, submitted by local residents and handed in at Council by Councillor Murray, which requested the Council install a pedestrian crossing on Birmingham Road, Aldridge.

Judith Butler, the lead petitioner, introduced the petition and the reasons that she believed a crossing was important in this location, highlighting that local residents were increasingly concerned by the volume and speed of the traffic on this road. She expressed that parents often felt that they could not allow their children to cross the road alone due to the danger and it would be beneficial to them gaining independence if they could walk to school alone. It was also noted that there were several elderly people living in the area who would also benefit from having a safe crossing point as it currently took a very long time to be able to cross the road. She expressed that she believed these factors were actually encouraging more people to drive on this road and add to traffic.

Mrs Butler explained that children from 4 schools crossed this road on their way in and she had engaged with the schools who were all supportive of the petition. Aldridge School had advised that they would be keen to encourage students to walk or cycle to school if there was a safe crossing point for them. She acknowledged that the Council had committed to renewing efforts to recruit a school crossing patrol but added that several children at Aldridge School started as early as 7:30am and with after-school activities left after 4pm and so they would not benefit from the crossing patrol who would not be there at that time. She quoted recent traffic incidents on the road and the Council's responsibility to reduce collisions and make roads safer.

Councillor Wilson added his support for the petition, stating it was the only busy road in the Aldridge ward which did not currently have a dedicated crossing. He emphasised that he did not think it was acceptable to wait for a fatality to occur for action to be taken and that, should a crossing patrol be recruited, extending the hours of service should be considered. He asked whether S106 funding for Aldridge could be reviewed to see if the crossing could be funded through this means.

The Committee were informed that the requested pedestrian crossing was currently ranked 7th in the list of reserve schemes on the council's measures to encourage walking for 2022/23, and that the request would again be considered as part of the annual borough-wide road safety review for

2023/24. The Head of Highways & Transport stated that unfortunately the overall budget of £800,000 for works of this type was significantly smaller than the cost of all the works requested and advised that, because of this, priority had to be given to works on roads where there had been incidents in which a person had been killed or seriously injured, although acknowledging that this was not at all desirable. She reported that speed measurements had been conducted on Birmingham Road in 2021, in which the seven-day average speed recorded was 29.1 mph and the 85th percentile 36.1 mph, which was below the level at which the authority could request additional police enforcement.

Committee Members expressed their support for a pedestrian crossing on Birmingham Road and acknowledged that, were they to recommend that this be done immediately, this would be at the expense of other schemes higher on the list and thus would be unfair.

Following questions from Committee Members the Head of Highways & Transport stated that it was possible to consider the extension of operating hours of crossing patrols if they could be recruited and that speed data could be re-measured if needed to inform the programme. She also advised that community funding of crossings had not previously been considered as provision must be consistent across the network and this would put less affluent areas of the borough at a disadvantage.

Resolved:

That the Committee:

- 1. Notes that the requested pedestrian crossing is currently ranked 7th in the list of reserve schemes on the council's measures to encourage walking for 2022/23, and that the request will again be considered as part of the annual borough-wide road safety review for 2023/24;**
- 2. Notes that there will be a renewed effort to recruit to the vacant school crossing patrol post on Birmingham Road, Aldridge close to Tynings Lane as this would offer short term assistance at this location;**
- 3. Recommends that S106 funding schemes in Aldridge be reviewed to see if any funding could be secured for the crossing in this way.**

07/22 Areas of focus – 2021/22

The Committee received presentations from Cabinet Portfolio Holders and Officers on services within the remit of the Committee. It was noted that the two Deputy Leaders of the Council would provide their Portfolio Holder presentations at the next meeting of the Committee.

Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council advised the Committee of developments within his remit, in particular that some functions which were previously held by the Local Enterprise Partnership would be transferring to the Combined Authority. He discussed the work of the Association of Black Country Authorities concerning the Black Country Plan and praised the great reputation for delivery. The Leader highlighted the great measures of success enjoyed through the Future High Streets scheme which were hoped to be continued with the bidding for the Levelling Up Fund. He praised the quality of the delivery of the M6 Junction 10 works.

Portfolio Holder for Clean and Green

The Portfolio Holder for Clean and Green set out priorities within the Clean and Green portfolio, stating that she wanted to ensure that service levels are high and paid services are promoted. Key areas of focus named included fly-tipping enforcement, the new household waste recycling centre and transfer station and parking on grass verges. It was noted that there would be a pilot scheme on 3 streets within the borough to test a variety of interventions for fly-tipping as see which was the most effective.

Following questions from Members of the Committee the portfolio holder confirmed that there were no plans to close the recycling centre in Bloxwich but it would instead be updated. She also confirmed that any concerns regarding potentially dangerous trees and any plants blocking pavements could be reported to the Clean and Green team who would investigate and take appropriate action.

Executive Director for Economy, Environment and Communities

A high-level presentation of the Economy, Environment and Communities directorate was given by the Executive Director. He informed the Committee that roughly 680 people were employed within this directorate, which was amongst the most visible faces of the Council, dealing with issues such as planning, waste collection and tending to the environment. He advised Members of the senior management team within the directorate and gave an overview of their responsibilities, noting that some of the work conducted, such as that relating to the Community and Voluntary Sector, would fall under the remit of the Scrutiny Overview Committee. The Committee were informed that there would be various Meet the Teams events taking place throughout the year and they were invited to attend should they wish to.

The Democratic Services Officer then gave an overview of the Committee's remit and outstanding items from the previous year's work programme.

Members debated the issues and selected the following items for their work programme:

- Street Scene Strategy including tree planting and tree management

- Waste Strategy including information on the new Household Waste Recycling Centre and Transfer Station
- Derelict Properties
- Council Bonfire and Fireworks Update and Success Rates
- Town Deal
- Phoenix 10
- West Midlands Local Transport Plan
- District Town Centres
- Willenhall Framework Plan
- Partnership working with West Midlands Police regarding speed enforcement

Resolved:

1. That the areas of focus 2022/23 and forward plans be noted;
2. That the following items be added to the work programme:
 - a) Street Scene Strategy including tree planting and tree management
 - b) Waste Strategy including information on the new Household Waste Recycling Centre and Transfer Station
 - c) Derelict Properties
 - d) Council Bonfire and Fireworks Update and Success Rates
 - e) Town Deal
 - f) Phoenix 10
 - g) West Midlands Local Transport Plan
 - h) District Town Centres
 - i) Willenhall Framework Plan
 - j) Partnership working with West Midlands Police regarding speed enforcement

08/22 Recommendation Tracker

The Democratic Services Officer updated the Committee on the progress of the 3 ongoing recommendations from the last meeting of the previous municipal year. She advised that she had been in contact with all the lead officers concerned and requested updates on progress. The lead officer for bonfires had responded stating that they had considered the request for livestreaming of bonfire events but were of the opinion that the demand would not be sufficient to justify the cost of hiring a videographer to attend.

Resolved:

That the progress on recommendations from the previous meeting be noted.

09/22 Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on 13 September 2022.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated 7.10pm.

Signed:

Date: