

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 September 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 C. Creaney
Councillor L. Jeavons
Councillor C. Jones
Councillor W. Rasab
Councillor G. Singh Sohal

Other Member Present

Councillor Robertson

Officers Present

Chris Holliday	Head of Leisure, Culture and Operation
Steve Pretty	Head of Planning, Engineering and Transportation
Wesley Palmer	Building Control Team Manager
Kelly Valente	Economy and Environment Lead Accountant
Matthew Powis	Democratic Services Officer

10/18 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Andrew and Towe.

11/18 Substitution

There were no substitutions.

12/18 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest or party whip

13/18 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to consider in private session.

14/18 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2018 copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

15/18 Presentation from West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)

The Chair informed the Committee that Gareth Bradford had been invited to present an overview of his work with the WMCA on the Strategic Economic Plan and partnership working with the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) on housing and land remediation.

The Chair informed the Committee that the presentation would be deferred to a future meeting of the Committee.

Resolved:

That, the presentation from West Midlands Combined Authority be deferred to a future meeting of the Committee.

16/18 Walsall Council Building Control and Local Authority Building Control

Following a request from the Chair, the Committee received a presentation from the Building Control Team Manager on the Council's Building Control Service and Local Authority Building Control.

The Building Control Team Manager informed the Committee that building control ensured that any new or existing building complied with building regulations to ensure standards of safety and durability. He highlighted that the Council was a member of the Local Authority Building Control (LABC) which aimed to provide not-for-profit advice and services to the public and professionals in meeting building regulations.

The Council's Building Control Team had enforcement powers to ensure compliance with Building Regulations. However, Approved Inspectors (AI) had no enforcement powers and responsibility of the standards of works carried out remained with the land owner.

A question and answer session took place, the principal points from the ensuing discussion were as follows:-

- It was anticipated that there could be changes to Building Regulations following the conclusion of the inquest into the incident at Grenfell Tower, London. The changes would be in addition to issues identified around building cladding and fire management.

- A Member requested that information on the Council's Building Control be circulated to all Members of the Council for information;
- Discussions were ongoing with the Council's Communication Team to promote the service by utilising social media;
- The Chair highlighted that proactive communication pre planning stage would allow members of the public and professionals to be aware of the Council's services.

Resolved:

That, the Walsall Council Building Control report be noted and circulated to all Members of the Council for information.

17/18 Private Rented Housing Sector and Selective Licensing Working Group – Terms of Reference

Members considered the draft Private Rented Sector Housing and Selective Licensing Working Group Terms of Reference following a recommendation from the Committee to establish a working group on issues surrounding the private rented sector housing standards.

The Chair requested that Trafford Council Selective Licensing Scheme be incorporated into the Terms of Reference for further investigation.

Resolved:

- 1. That, the terms of reference for the Private Rented Housing Sector and Selective Licensing Working Group be approved;**
- 2. That, subject to (1) above, Trafford Council Selective Licensing Scheme be incorporated into the Terms of Reference.**

18/18 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.

A Member requested that an update on the Walsall's Market Plan be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Chair requested that an update on all Clean and Green Cabinet decisions outlined within the Forward Plan for the period September to December 2018 by the Portfolio Holder at the next meeting of the Committee.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. The areas of focus 2017/18 and forward plans be noted;**

2. That, an update on Walsall's Market Plan be presented to the next meeting of the Committee;
3. That, an update on all Clean and Green Cabinet decisions for the Period September to December 2018 be presented at the next meeting of the Committee.

19/18 Economy and Environment Financial Performance – Quarter 1 Financial Outturn 2018/19

The Committee considered a report on revenue and capital outturn for 2018/19 for services within the remit of the Committee. The position highlighted a revenue overspend of £890,000 and that the capital variances of £2.365m which included an underspend of £794k, carry forward request of £1.725m and an overspend of £153k. However, it was noted that an update with revenue variations within the Economy and Environment Directorate had reduced from £890,000 to £93,000.

Resolved:

1. That the Committee noted the forecast 2018/19 year end financial position for services as follows:-
 - a) A revenue overspend of £93k net of the use of and transfer to earmarked reserves and implication of action plans;
 - b) A capital underspend of £794k, carry forward request of £1.725m and overspends of £153k.

20/18 Air Pollution and Air Quality in Walsall

The Committee considered a report on the impact of air pollution and current challenges in improving quality in Walsall.

The Head of Planning, Engineering and Transportation informed the Committee that Nitrogen Dioxide (NO²) and fine particles (PM^{2.5}) presented a significant environmental risk to public health. Compliance limits only applied to Nitrogen Dioxide in England with no limits for (PM^{2.5}).

In accordance with a ministerial direction, the Council had prepared a Targeted Feasibility Study (TFS) to investigate proposals to reduce levels NO². The Black Country Authorities developed a joint submission to Department for Environment, Food and Rural (DEFRA) on recommendations and ministerial recommendations would be publish by 5 October 2018.

In addition to working with DEFRA, the Council through the West Midlands Low Emissions Towns and Cities Programme (WMLTCP) had progressed with partnership working to reduce road transportation emissions regionally by the promotion of alternative low emission transportation options. DEFRA produced and arranged Air Quality Grant Schemes study zones analysing major roads across the Black Country, with the Council awarded a specific grant to develop a Low Emissions Strategy.

Members noted that work on Junction 10 of the M6 Motorway had progressed with work due to be commenced in the summer 2019. Highways England and the Council had coordinated a timetable to limit disruption in the region specially with work carried out on the M5 Oldbury Viaduct.

The Head of Planning, Engineering and Transportation informed the Committee about sustainable transportation options which encouraged the promotion and uptake of public transportation, walking and cycling in Walsall. He informed the Committee that the following projects had been scheduled for implementation with Transport for West Midlands (TfWM):-

- A34 SPRINT (Bus Rapid Transit) between Walsall Town Centre and Birmingham City Centre;
- New rail station at Willenhall, Darlaston and Aldridge with associated train services;
- Higher- frequency train services between Walsall Station and Birmingham New Street Station post – delivery of High Speed Rail 2 Phase 1 in 2026;
- Town Centre Interchange to replace on-street bus interchange at Bradford Place;
- Longer – term option to re-open other disused rail lines in the Borough to Heavy Rail, Tram-Train or Metro.

In addition, joint work with the Council, partner organisations and Public Health had identified the following projects to improve air quality:-

- A review of Taxi Licensing conditions had commenced to reduce the age of vehicles;
- Increase the number of electric vehicle charging points with the Borough;
- Action to increase active and sustainable travel with compliance to the West Midlands Cycle Charter and promotion of cycling in Walsall.

A discussion was held around transportation options in Walsall and the Black Country. At this point, Councillor Robertson was invited to take part in discussions as a Member of Health and Wellbeing Board. A question and answer session took place and outlined as follows:

- Concerns were raised by the Committee about the displacement of polluting vehicles from Birmingham into the Black Country upon the introduction of a Clean Air Zone;
- A Member expressed concern about the implementation of SPRINT and the potential disruption to residents and businesses in the local area;
- The Chair highlighted that further work was required by WMCA and TfWM to provide alternative transportation options in preparation for the Clean Air Zone in Birmingham;
- The Chair raised concerns about the disparity with transportation investment between the West Midlands and City of London. He requested that funding for public transportation in the West Midlands needed to be increased to present a better public offer for the region;

- A Member requested further information on cycling improvement in the Borough. The Head of Planning ,Transportation and Engineering advised that a response would be provided to Members in writing;
- The Chair recommended that a Working Group be established to investigate poor air quality across the Borough and encourage alternative transportation to Schools;
- A Member sought clarification on the pollution radius around the M6 Motorway corridor through the Borough. The Head of Planning, Transportation and Engineering advised that a map outlining this would be circulated to Members of the Committee;
- The Committee noted the concerns around air pollution hotspots around Schools in the Borough and work was required to encourage other transportation options;
- The Committee asked for further clarification on the legal status of car idling. The Head of Planning, Transportation and Engineering advised that a response would be provided in writing;
- A Member requested that town centre traffic and moving traffic offences powers be a topic for discussion for the Air Quality Working Group.

The Chair thanked the Head of Planning, Engineering and Transportation for presenting the report.

Resolved:-

- 1. That, the Air Pollution and Air Quality report be noted;**
- 2. That, an Air Quality Working Group be established and nominations be sought from Members of the Committee;**
- 3. That, responses to the following questions raised by Members of the Committee be circulated in writing:-**
 - a) Information on the Cycling Improvement Programme in the Borough;**
 - b) Clarification on the pollution radius around the M6 Motorway corridor through the Borough;**
 - c) Clarification on the legal status of car idling.**

21/18 Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on 18 October 2018.

Termination of Meeting

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 7.46p.m.

Signed:

Date: