

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 October 2021 at 6.00pm held at Walsall Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall, WS1 1TW.

Committee Members Present:

Councillor L. Harrison (Chair)
Councillor M. Follows (Vice-Chair)
Councillor B. Allen
Councillor S. Coughlan
Councillor L. Jeavons
Councillor E. Lee
Councillor P. Kaur
Councillor G. Singh Sohal
Councillor J. Whitehouse
Councillor R. Worrall

Portfolio Holders

Councillor A. Andrew	Deputy Leader and Regeneration
Councillor G. Perry	Deputy Leader and Resilient Communities
Councillor C. Towe	Education and Skills

Officers Present:

Simon Neilson	Executive Director of Economy and Environment
Kathryn Moreton	Head of Highways and Transport
Steven Edwards	Principal Transport Planner
Craig Goodall	Principal Democratic Services Officer
Sian Lloyd	Assistant Democratic Services Officer

Invited Attendees:

Mrs Shirley Venables	Petitioner Support
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Other Members in attendance:

Councillor V. Waters	Lead Petitioner
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10/21 **Apologies**

None.

11/21 **Substitution**

There were no substitutions.

12/21 **Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

There were no declarations of interest or party whips.

13/21 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to consider in private session.

14/21 Minutes of the previous meeting

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2021, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

15/21 Petition: Traffic Calming Measures for Pelsall Lane

The Committee considered a petition, which requested the Council to implement traffic calming measures on Pelsall Lane. The Chair outlined the format for the item and confirmed that the petition received more than 500 signatures. The Chair invited the petition organiser to introduce their petition.

Councillor V. Waters introduced the petition and was supported by Mrs Shirley Venables, a local resident. The Committee were advised that there had been a number of accidents on this road in the past three years including three slight collisions and one fatality. There had also been multiple instances of damage to vehicles and property by speeding traffic.

The Committee was informed of the following points from the Lead and Supporting Petitioner:

- Cars frequently go onto the opposite side of the carriageway to avoid stopping for the lollipop lady during school hours.
- The police use two different systems to log any incidents. 999 calls were logged in Birmingham which affected the data that was recorded in Walsall.
- The cameras installed to assess average speed on this road were not installed in the location where vehicles tend to be travelling the fastest.
- A former bus stop which is no longer in use was being used as a cut-through to avoid having to stop at the traffic lights.
- When the fatality occurred in March 2021 the road markings were refreshed and bollards replaced.

The Head of Highways and Transport laid out the Council's response to the petition, highlighting that the Council as highway authority has a legal duty to keep its highways reasonably free of obstruction and in a condition that allows the safe passage of people and goods. It was noted that in the latest annual review, which was conducted in February 2021 prior to the fatality occurring, Pelsall Lane ranked 85th out of 102 proposed Local Safety Schemes and as such was not considered a priority for delivery in the current financial year.

The Head of Highways and Transport confirmed that in an average year the Council completes roughly 5% of the proposed schemes to be delivered and generally speaking 6 injuries or more on the road would make it a higher priority for delivery. She added that the speeds measured on Pelsall Lane in March 2021 were below the level where police enforcement would be considered.

Members of the Committee sympathised with the residents of Pelsall Lane and stated that it was unfortunate that the Council did not have the resources to provide road safety measures for all roads which had a proposed Local Safety Scheme. Members noted the long list of potential projects and expressed concern that more serious incidents would be required to take place to increase the ranking of Pelsall Lane on the Local Safety Scheme list.

The Deputy Leader (Regeneration) added that it was important for drivers to be more responsible and consider reducing their speeds. He reported that the fatality would be considered in the next annual review scheduled to take place in January/February 2022 and this might affect Pelsall Lane's position on the list.

Resolved:

That further engineering works on Pelsall Lane be considered as part of the annual borough wide road safety review.

16/21 Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure

The Principal Transport Planner presented the Committee with a report regarding the electric vehicle charging infrastructure in the borough, which had seen significant recent progress. He stated that to comply with national policy of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and due to the national ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030 it was expected that there would be an increase in the use of electric vehicles.

Whilst government grants were available for those with driveways and garages to install their own charge points on their property, there would be a need for on-street electric vehicle charging points for those residents that did not have a dedicated off-street parking facility to allow them to also switch to an electric vehicle. The Principal Transport Planner advised that the Council, along with the other Black Country authorities, had submitted individual but coordinated bids for funding from the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS). The Walsall bid would provide funding for the capital costs of installing 35 charge point sites across the borough. These charge points would be installed across the area but with a particular emphasis on areas with older housing stock in the west of the borough, which were more likely to not have off-street parking. Should the bid be successful this would provide 42.9% of chargers required in the borough by 2025. The costs for these charge points was £338,712. 75% of the costs would come from the ORCS fund with the remaining 25% match funded by the Council at a cost to the Council of £84,678.

The Members of the Committee were presented with a map showing the 35 sites identified as potential locations to install these charging points and were asked for their feedback on sites. It was noted that all installations would be subject to public consultation with local residents and businesses.

It was not proposed at present that the charging bays would be protected with a Traffic Regulation Order restricting their use to electric vehicles only so as not to limit parking availability for other types of vehicles.

Following questions from the Committee the Principal Transport Planner clarified that the Council was yet to go out to procurement for these charging points but that it would consider as part of the procurement exercise the need for the procured charging points to be universally compatible with all types of electric vehicles. He also advised that there are government grants available for local residents who wished to install charging points themselves.

A Member asked why the ORCs funding bid did not target areas in the east of the borough for charging points. The Principal Transport Planner explained that these areas typically had more housing stock with driveways where residents would be able to charge their own vehicles, however, he added that future funding bids would seek to address areas that required additional charging points.

Resolved:

That:

1. the report be noted.
2. A progress report on the delivery of electric vehicle changing points in the borough be received in 6 months to monitor progress.

17/21 **Areas of focus – 2021/22**

The Chair gave an overview of the work programme for 2021/22 and asked Members for their suggestions regarding items to be scheduled for the next meeting.

The following items were identified for the next meeting of the Committee:

- Quarter 2 Financial Report 2021/22
- Budget Setting

Resolved:

That the Areas of Focus and Forward Plans be noted.

18/21 **Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on 18 November 2021.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 7.00pm.

Signed:
Date: