

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 March 2022 at 6.00pm held at Walsall Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall, WS1 1TW.

Committee Members Present:	Councillor L. Harrison (Chair) Councillor B. Allen Councillor P. Bott Councillor L. Jeavons Councillor P. Kaur Councillor G. Singh Sohal Councillor J. Whitehouse Councillor R. Worrall Councillor S. Elson Councillor R. Martin	
Portfolio Holders:	Councillor C. Towe Councillor O. Butler	Education and Skills Clean and Green
Officers Present:	Simon Neilson Philippa Venables Matt Crowton Joel Maybury Craig Goodall Sian Lloyd	Executive Director of Economy, Environment and Communities Director of Regeneration and Economy Transportation Major Projects & Strategy Manager Team Leader – Borough Wide Development Principal Democratic Services Officer Democratic Services Officer
Invited Attendees:	David Harris	Transport Strategy and Place Manager, Transport for West Midlands

41/21 **Apologies**

There were apologies received from Councillors Follows and Lee.

42/21 **Substitution**

Councillor Elson substituted for Councillor Follows and Councillor Martin substituted for Councillor Lee.

43/21 **Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

There were no declarations of interest or party whips.

44/21 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**

There were no items to consider in private session.

45/21 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2022, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

46/21 **West Midlands Local Transport Plan Core Strategy Engagement**

The Committee received a presentation from the Transport Strategy and Place Manager at Transport for West Midlands regarding the West Midlands Local Transport Plan Core Strategy Engagement. It was highlighted that it was a legal duty for the Local Transport Authority (LTA) to produce and review a Local Transport Plan (LTP) which must set out policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport to, from and within the LTA area as well as proposals for the implementation of those policies.

The Transport Strategy and Place Manager explained that the West Midlands Combined Authority was the LTA for the seven constituent metropolitan districts/boroughs including Walsall and the engagement process was important as the LTP carries statutory weight in a range of decisions particularly in areas such as planning. He noted that the current plan was adopted in 2016 and included commitments such as becoming carbon zero by 2041. It was deemed important for the new LTP to be different than its predecessor so more engagement had been conducted than in any previous plan in various formats such as talking to Scrutiny Committees at constituent metropolitan districts/boroughs, online surveys and Leaders summits.

The Transport Strategy and Place Manager explained the aims of creating a fairer society, supporting local communities, tackling the climate emergency, having a more active population and sustaining economic success in the region. The importance of communication of the vision with residents to engage them in the core strategy was underlined and the three main tasks of improving accessibility, reducing traffic and electrifying transport to achieve the aims were discussed. He then advised that strategies and 'big moves' in development at that point were consulted on with local authorities. This was due to different areas of the West Midlands having different needs and plans needing to be appropriate for wider demand management. These strategies were to be taken back to the West Midlands Combined Authority in the summer. He also stated that plans for first five years included £100 million investment in Walsall and that the LTP would help make the case for future funding from central government.

Members of the Committee expressed their gratitude for the information presented and happiness at the potential for £100 million of investment in Walsall. Questions were asked regarding the number of responses to the survey and if any engagement had been undertaken to understand why people are using cars particularly at peak times such as school drop off. The Transport Strategy and

Place Manager responded that there were multi-faceted reasons that people chose the car and questions were being asked and pilots run to understand what incentives would encourage people to make different decisions. In response to the comment regarding schools he stated there was unfortunately no simple solution to this issue but that local authorities could put in restrictions around schools to make driving a less attractive alternative.

Members were pleased that the LTP recognised the importance of high speed broadband roll out and how this could assist residents in working from home to reduce commuting.

The Committee discussed how public transport could be more joined up and opportunities to add park and ride facilities near public transport access. It was noted that only 15% of public transport journeys originate in town centres so routes that served other areas had high value.

Following a further question from a Committee Member in relation to new housing estates being built but not yet being serviced by any bus routes he acknowledged that transport response could be more joined up than it was currently and work would have to be conducted with transport providers to make this a success.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. The report and progress so far be noted;**
- 2. A progress report on delivery be presented to the Committee next municipal year.**

47/21 Phoenix 10

The Team Leader for Borough Wide Development presented to the Committee a report regarding the key points of the Phoenix 10 project which was described as a very significant project for the Council on a high profile 44 acre site visible from the M6. He advised that the key priority of the project for both the Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership was to make a positive impact on land unused since 1999 which was contaminated by previous industrial use.

The timeline of events thus far was explained with the Council's involvement beginning in 2012 and Cabinet approval of the tender process in 2014, with Henry Boot selected by Cabinet as the successful bidder in December 2017. It was noted that Henry Boot had already been involved in several high profile and successful projects across the UK. The Team Leader for Borough Wide Development highlighted that remediation work was due to commence on the site in April 2022 and to last for approximately two years during which time the planning for the eventual structures on site and the search for occupiers for these buildings would begin. He described this as a success story for the borough with new investment and economic development being secured.

The Executive Director of Economy, Environment and Communities echoed these comments and highlighted the value of the site and the large amount of work and time that had been taken to get the scheme to the position it was currently in. He

thanked the Team Leader for Borough Wide Development and the wider team for their commitment.

Members of the Committee expressed their thanks for the work that had been put in, acknowledging that regeneration projects in particular take a significant amount of time to complete. They highlighted the potential that the site posed in terms of signalling that Walsall was open for business and commended that all parties had been involved in making the project a success.

A question was asked by a Member of the Committee regarding the former ABC Waste site in Cemetery Road. The Team Leader for Borough Wide Development responded that this site had been purchased by the West Midlands Combined Authority for use as part of the Darlaston Railway Station project. Further to an additional question he clarified that Henry Boot was working with the local authority to look at opportunities for apprenticeships, employment and skills opportunities for local residents. The Executive Director of Economy, Environment and Communities added that there were two stages to the project, remediation and building. He noted that companies using local staff had good retention rates.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. The progress on this project to date be noted.**
- 2. A further report be presented to the Committee upon completion of the site remediation phase.**

48/21 **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:

- Willenhall Masterplan
- Bonfires
- Electric Vehicle Charging Update
- Petition for Pedestrian Crossing for Birmingham Road as presented to Council by Councillor Murray

Resolved:

That the Areas of Focus and Forward Plans be noted.

49/21 **Recommendation Tracker**

The Committee reviewed the Recommendation Tracker which had been introduced as a standing item for all Scrutiny Committees by the Scrutiny Overview Committee at their last meeting. There were 5 actions on the tracker from the previous meeting, of which 3 had been completed and 2 were ongoing.

Resolved:

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

50/21 **Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on 14 April 2022.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 6.56pm.

Signed:

Date: