

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
20 October 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 P. Bott
Councillor C. Creaney
Councillor A. Garcha
Councillor I. Hussain
Councillor P. Kaur
Councillor R. Larden
Councillor A. Nazir
Councillor J. Whitehouse
Councillor R. Worrall

Portfolio Holders

Councillor M. Bird	Leader of the Council
Councillor G. Perry	Deputy Leader and Resilient Communities
Councillor K. Murphy	Clean and Green

Officers Present:

Simon Neilson	Executive Director, Economy, Environment and Communities
Dave Brown	Director, Place and Environment
Kathryn Moreton	Head of Highways, Transport and Operations
David Elrington	Head of Community Safety and Enforcement
Matt Crowton	Transportation Major Projects and Strategy Manager
Sian Lloyd	Democratic Services Officer

Invited Attendees:

Jon Hayes	Head of Bus, Transport for West Midlands
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20/22 Apologies

There were no apologies received from Committee Members. Councillor Andrew as Portfolio Holder for Regeneration submitted apologies for his absence.

21/22 Substitution

There were no substitutions.

22/22 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Councillor Worrall declared an other disclosable interest in the item 'Bus Network Update' in his capacity as the Chair of the Transport Delivery Committee at the West Midlands Combined Authority.

23/22 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to consider in private session.

24/22 Minutes of the previous meeting

A Member of the Committee raised further questions in relation to the Cemetery Maintenance report discussed at the previous meeting. These queries were to be picked up outside of the meeting.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2022, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

25/22 Street Scene Strategy

The Portfolio Holder for Clean and Green introduced the Street Scene Strategy to the Committee, which she advised was to bring together the three portfolios of Clean and Green, Regeneration and Resilient Communities to focus on having cleaner, greener, safer and stronger streets which had been identified as a priority for elected members and the public.

The Director of Place and Environment noted that it was currently an early stage of the process with the final report being considered by Cabinet in 2023. He highlighted that this would give the opportunity to take any feedback from the Committee into consideration.

Following questions from the Committee the Head of Community Safety and Enforcement explained that council officers had some enforcement powers through the use of Public Space Protection Orders and the council had seen some successes with combatting street drinking through this method. The Head of Highways, Transport and Operations responded to a query in relation to use of grass verges for parking and advised that there was no budget allocated to this at present and also it was important to balance the need for parking with the desire for greener streets. She also advised that roads have scheduled maintenance plans and the frequency of these would vary depending on the road concerned. Members with specific concerns were invited to send details of these to the Highways team so they could be picked up. The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Resilient Communities

emphasised that residents also had a personal responsibility in relation to areas such as speeding, recycling and fly-tipping.

The Committee also discussed the upcoming waste strategy and the need for recycling rates to be increased across the borough. It was proposed that Members would be invited to visit the new waste facility to see how it operates.

Resolved:

That the Committee notes the report and its contents.

26/22 **Urgent Item: Bus Matters – Bus Network Update**

For this item Councillor Worrall had declared an ‘other disclosable interest’ as he held a position of management or control at an external organisation as a representative of Walsall Council. For the duration of the discussion of this item Councillor Worrall made use of the provision in the Code of Conduct allowing him to remain in the room to speak as a witness and answer questions from the Committee. Due to his interest in the item he was not allowed to make any recommendations or vote.

The Head of Bus for Transport for West Midlands gave a presentation in relation to discussions surrounding the region’s bus network which had taken place at the Transport Delivery Committee on 10th October 2022. He emphasised that bus operations were significantly impacted by Covid19 and whilst there had been some recovery current rates of travel were about 87% of those pre-pandemic and 5 bus operators had been lost across the region which had presented challenges. It was noted that government funding to support bus operators was due to come to an end and therefore it had been confirmed that only around 90% of the network would continue to operate in 2023. The Head of Bus confirmed that several routes had been identified as at risk due to this but no concrete decisions had yet been taken by the bus operators. Members were advised of the value for money criteria that had been applied to assess contracts and proposals for mitigations and other sources of funding. Councillor Worrall added that the decision taken by the Transport Delivery Committee was a cross-party one and that it had been agreed that it was important to lobby for further government funding in this area.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. The Committee notes the report and its contents.**
- 2. The presentation and report be circulated to all Members of the Council.**

27/22 **Areas of focus – 2022/23**

Resolved:

That the areas of focus 2022/23 and forward plans be noted.

28/22 **Recommendation Tracker**

The Democratic Services Officer updated the Committee on the one outstanding recommendation from a previous meeting of the Committee. She advised that she had been in contact with all the lead officers concerned and requested updates on progress.

Resolved:

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

29/22 **Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on 24 November 2022.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated 8.00pm.

Signed:

Date: