

Minutes of the Meeting of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 November 2010

Present:-

Members of the Committee

Councillor Sarah Boad
“ Richard Chattaway
“ Jim Foster
“ Barry Lobbett
“ Mike Gittus
“ Phillip Morris-Jones
“ Martin Shaw
“ Ray Sweet
“ John Whitehouse (Chair)
“ Chris Williams

Other County Councillors

Councillor Alan Cockburn (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Economy)
Councillor Colin Hayfield (Portfolio Holder for Customers, Workforce and Partnerships)
Councillor Richard Hobbs (Portfolio Holder for Community Safety)
Councillor Clare Hopkinson
Councillor Joan Lea
Councillor Barry Longden
Councillor Tilly May
Councillor Bob Stevens

Officers

Dave Abbot, Assistant to Political Group (Liberal Democrat)
Rachel Barnes, Programme Manager, Fire and Rescue Service
Dan Caldecote, Transport Planner
Christopher Cresswell, Communications Officer
Graeme Fitton, Head of Transport and Highways
Glenn Fleet, Manager, Environment and Resources
Tessa Fry-Smith, Admin Assistant, Sustainable Communities & Economic Development
Ann Mawdsley, Principal Committee Administrator
Richard Maybey, Assistant to Political Group (Labour)
Michelle McHugh, Overview and Scrutiny Manager
Lisa Mowe, Deputy News and PR Manager
Kate Nash, Head of Community Safety and Localities
Chris Nason, Group Manager, Transport for Warwickshire
Bryn Patefield, Area Manager, Transport for Warwickshire
Gary Phillips, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Louise Wall, Head of Sustainable Communities and Economic Development
Mandy Walker, Group Manager, Sustainable Communities and Economic Development
Sarah Walters, Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service
Paul Whittaker, Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service

**Also in
Attendance:**

Phil Bull, Warwickshire HS2 Action Groups
Peter Delow, Warwickshire HS2 Action Groups
Alice Dyer, Rugby Advertiser
Professor Mike Geddes, Warwickshire HS2 Action Groups
Nick Hillard, Crackley Residents' Association
John Lee, Southam Area Action Group
John Levett, Burton Green Action Group
Jerry Marshall, Warwickshire HS2 Action Groups
Mr Moreton, Warwickshire HS2 Action Groups
Martin Neal, Ladbroke Action Group
Joe Rukin, Kenilworth Stop HS2 Action Group
Alison Smith, Bath Place Community Venture/Resident
Ian Waddell, Middleton Action Group

Morning Session

1. General

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular Sarah Walters and Paul Whittaker, members of the Fire Leadership Programme of the Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service and who were attending the meeting as observers.

(1) Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Jeff Clarke (replaced by Councillor Jim Foster for this meeting).

(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None.

(3) Minutes of the meeting of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8 September 2010

The Minutes of the meeting of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8 September 2010 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

Page 4 – 5. Youth Justice Service Report on Reduction of Re-offending

The Chair drew the Committee's attention to the Briefing Note that had been e-mailed to them on 1 November on the "Reduction of Re-offending". This was accepted by the Committee.

(4) Chair's Announcements

The Chair reminded Members that the special meeting to consider the Rugby Western Relief Road would take place on 29 November, with a site visit and briefing from Ian Marriott beforehand. He added that final arrangements would be sent to Members in due course.

2. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

3. Questions to the Portfolio Holder

Councillor Richard Hobbs

1. Councillor Richard Chattaway stated that he had been contacted by a number of worried residents in sheltered housing who were concerned about the risks to residents on Saturdays and Sundays when wardens were only on call, and may live some distance away. Councillor Richard Hobbs, supported by Gary Phillips, noted that improving the steps in automatic fire alarms was an important element of the Improvement Plan. The Service worked closely with management of institutions such as sheltered housing to ensure the proper equipment and arrangements were in place to safeguard vulnerable people. The Chair added that it was important that these issues were addressed during the transition period, by both the Borough Council and the County Council. Gary Phillips invited Councillors to share any specific concerns to him.
2. Councillor Sarah Boad asked for an update on the Fire Control Board. Councillor Richard Hobbs reported that solutions were being sought to issues that had arisen between the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and Casidion. It was thought unlikely that the first roll-out would be possible in May 2011 as indicated, but an announcement from Government was expected before Christmas.
3. Councillor Richard Chattaway asked about the spending review proposal to reduce Trading Standards enforcement and intervention work. Councillor Richard Hobbs stated that the priority for the Council in the future was to protect the vulnerable and Trading Standards did a lot of valuable work which would not be considered to be protecting the vulnerable. He added that the Service was looking at different ways of working such as using intelligence to stop rogue traders earlier. Further information in this area would become available over the next months.

4. Councillor Richard Chattaway asked for details on how the reduction of funding to Police and PCSOs would affect this work. Councillor Richard Hobbs stated that Warwickshire County Council currently fund 5 PCSOs in the Safer Schools Programme and 5 PCSOs working on anti-social behaviour. There was a commitment to continuing the good work in schools and a presentation to the Governors' Forum had been suggested to look at the possibility of schools making a financial contribution. A consultation would have to take place before any cuts were made.
5. The Chair asked the Portfolio Holder what his response was to the recent advertising around Kenilworth by a private company offering private security warden services to households and businesses in Kenilworth. He added that the Police had issued a neutral statement about the service, which was felt could add to the issue of fear of crime. Councillor Richard Hobbs stated that this matter had only recently been brought to his attention and he would not comment until he had had an opportunity to discuss this with Kate Nash and the Police. He undertook to respond to the Chair once he was in a position to do so.
6. Councillor Phillip Morris-Jones asked what liaison or interface there was with private fire services operating in Warwickshire. Councillor Richard Hobbs stated that there were currently four in the county, two of which were at airports and restricted to those sites. All sites had been visited during the consultation and the Service working with the private companies in areas where this was possible such as procure. There was limited interoperability of equipment and the Service had not powers to make private companies conform to any particular training, equipment etc. This was, however, an area that would be reviewed in the Fire Future Reviews.

The Chair thanked Councillor Hobbs for his responses.

4. Implementing the Fire and Rescue Service Improvement Plan

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Fire Officer and Gary Phillips and Rachel Barnes gave a PowerPoint Presentation setting out progress on delivering the Improvement Plan.

The Chair reminded Members that the Committee would not be re-debating the Council decision made on 20 July. He added that this meeting was the start of a process to scrutinise the Improvement Plan, its robustness, assumptions and inter-dependencies.

Councillor Richard Hobbs (Portfolio Holder responsible for Fire and Rescue Services) stated that the Plan had been put in place to achieve fewer fires, less injuries from fires and less damage from fires. He was

keen for all Councillors to be involved with the Service and would ensure they had as much information as possible about Fire and Rescue and how the Improvement Plan was progressing. Following on from the visit arranged to Fire Headquarters on 22 October, a further visit to the Fire College was being arranged.

Gary Phillips stated that the Fire Service had an open door policy and would make every effort to de-mystify the Service for Members. He added that the implementation of the Improvement Plan was already starting to release capacity, which would allow for an increase in Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs) and greater engagement with the voluntary and community sectors as well as increased training for firefighters.

During the discussion that ensued the following points arose:

1. HFSCs would be carried out differently in the future using a range of options, with a focus on vulnerable people. Councillor Chattaway agreed to discuss specific concerns with Gary Phillips, outside the meeting. There was some support voiced over communities carrying out their own fire safety checks, where possible and with the assistance of partners such as Neighbourhood Watch, Community Officers and Residents' Associations.
2. The aim for the Fire Service was to have the right amount of firefighters at the right place with the right equipment at the right time. The Fire Brigades Union had been involved in shaping the future attendance management system and the philosophy of the Fire Service remained one of working closely with the people involved.
3. Hot Fire Training enabled firefighters to experience actual fires, to better prepare them to deal with actual incidents.
4. Members commended the Service for the reduction in sickness absence.
5. In response to a query regarding community engagement in local areas, Councillor Richard Hobbs stated that the consultation process had been invaluable, but the exercise being undertaken now was not a consultation, but an exercise to inform people and engage the public with what was being done.
6. It was suggested that Community Forums would be a good way of engaging with the public, as well as Parish and District/Borough Council meetings.
7. The Improvement Plan was a key element of the wider IRMP. The IRMP policy document included the proposal to build a new Fire Headquarters, but this was still dependent on a number of issues including the Fire Control outcomes and the County Council Property Review. The Fire Service had been mandated by the County Council to deliver the IRMP within its three year lifespan ending in 2013.
8. Warwickshire Fire Service was already proactively engaged with the media, but Gary Phillips undertook to look at Staffordshire's

approach to publishing the fire statistics/workload in the local newspaper on a weekly basis.

9. Councillor Richard Hobbs confirmed that at no stage had assurances been made that a new fire station would be built before Warwick Fire Station was closed.
10. In response to a query regarding the ability to deliver the Improvement Plan in light of references made within the Risk Register to the Comprehensive Spending Review and potential cuts, Gary Phillips stated that the Improvement Plan set out how resources could be better used to manage risk, and where appropriate resources were moved to areas of greater risk, resulting in a flattened-out structure with greater flexibility to deal with demand.
11. Gary Phillips noted that they were currently exploring dates for a visit by Councillors to the National Training Centre. These would be forwarded to Michelle McHugh.

The Chair agreed that Councillor Chattaway's questions should be forwarded to him, for onward transmission to the Committee and Councillor Hobbs and Gary Phillips. Their assessment would then be considered at the next Chair/Party Spokespersons meeting.

Councillor Richard Hobbs stated that an announcement was expected in December on Fire and Rescue Futures, which was expected to cover areas such as governance and working in partnership with public and private agencies, and that he would discuss the best way of taking these messages forward with the Chair.

The Chair thanked Councillor Hobbs, Gary Phillips and Rachel Barnes for their contributions.

5. Strategic Review of Domestic Abuse Support Services in Warwickshire

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Customers, Workforce and Governance outlining the key conclusions on the independent strategic review into domestic abuse support services in Warwickshire, commissioned by Community Safety, Supporting People and the district and borough councils.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

1. A request was made for further information on the proposals to decommission the Ashram Women's Refuge and how this gap would be filled. Kate Nash explained that the recommendation to decommission places at the Ashram did not automatically mean that it would close.
2. It was difficult to differentiate prevention services from the continuum of services that were offered. The revised model did not threaten preventative services directly.

3. It was felt that floating support services focussing on homelessness should be protected and potentially added greater value than refuges. Progress made in schools and with victims was another area that remained in the model.
4. Indications to date from the Police showed that they planned no reduction in specialist domestic violence services, despite the severe cuts the Police Service were facing.
5. There was broad agreement that a focus should be put on alcohol, which was a significant contributor of domestic violence.
6. Kate Nash agreed to provide for Members data on victim numbers and occupancy rates of refuges, to give a clearer picture of the loss of two refuge places. She added however that any client could be referred to any refuge, including out of county refuges, and this was not restricted to the number of places commissioned by the Council. Reciprocal arrangements were in place with neighbouring counties to ensure safety of victims.

The Committee agreed:

- to support the recommendations to the Portfolio Holder that a 3 month consultation be carried out in regard to the decommissioning of the Ashram refuge and the broad proposed service model
- that a strategy be put in place to manage the sensitivities around the consultation, particularly around the Ashram refuge
- that the issue of the impact of alcohol abuse throughout be stressed
- Options relating to in-house services needed to be fully explored.

The Chair thanked Kate Nash for her contribution.

6. Winter Service Review 2010

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy providing an update of the County Highway's Winter Service.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

1. Congratulations were given to the Directorate, and in particular Bryn Patefield and his officers and drivers, for the work carried out, particularly over what had been achieved over the last winter.
2. Members agreed that signs should be stencilled onto or attached to the gritting bins stating that the grit was for highway use only and providing a telephone number to arrange for refilling.
3. Bryn Patefield stated that Sandy Lane had been omitted by mistake and would be gritted.
4. Department for Transport guidance had been prepared which would clear myths around clearing pathways etc. A link would

be arranged on the County Council website to this guidance for ease of reference and it was agreed that this guidance needed to be promoted as much as possible to allay fears about the use of grit.

5. Officers would look at any anomalies in terms of bus routes, but the key issue was ensuring that drivers were aware of gritting routes.
6. The County Council was in contact with the Met Office and remote stations gathering information on temperatures, atmosphere etc to make decisions about gritting.
7. Formal agreements were entered into with all neighbouring authorities, who were also informed when gritting was carried out. Councillors experiencing problems in specific areas were invited to share these with the Department.
8. Gritting bins were highly valued and the current policy was to keep these filled, within available resources. Considerations such as access, slopes and junctions were taken into account when looking at requests for bins and it was noted that contaminated salt that could not be used by gritters was often used for bins, reducing waste.

Having considered the findings of the 2010 Winter Maintenance Service Review, and taking into account their comments above, Members supported the changes proposed.

The Chair thanked Bryn Patefield and Graeme Fitton for their contributions.

Afternoon Session

7. High Speed Rail 2

The Chair welcomed everyone to the afternoon session, and in particular Mandy Walker, Group Manager, Regeneration Projects & Funding and her team and the representatives from the HS2 Action Groups, including Peter Delow (Cublington Action Group), Mike Geddes (Offchurch Action Group) and Jerry Marshall (Keep Burton Green), who were making a presentation to the Committee. The Chair stated that an announcement had been made at full Council on 2 November that a HS2 debate would take place at full Council on 14 December. He added that the discussion today would provide a prelude to that meeting, with an opportunity to get the issues onto the table.

Mandy Walker, Group Manager, Sustainable Communities and Economic Development, introduced her team before presenting the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy outlining the status of the Government's proposals for HS2, confirming Warwickshire County Council's role to date and updating Members on the next steps. Key points were:

- i. The potential environmental impact of HS2 and other local impact information was a key issue for Warwickshire.
- ii. A key question for the Council was when relevant information would be forthcoming, as this would be necessary to scrutinise the proposal and respond to the consultation. If this information was not available the Council needed to decide whether to commission activity to seek this information independently or in partnership with other relevant local authorities.
- iii. Lessons needed to be learnt from HS1 and other major infrastructure projects.
- iv. The Coalition Government were committed to consulting on HS2, and the County Council was working with HS2 Ltd to influence that process.
- v. If the Government moved forward with HS2, Warwickshire needed to maximise any potential benefits.

Jerry Marshall (Keep Burton Green), Mike Geddes (Offchurch Action Group) and Peter Delow (Cublington Action Group) gave a PowerPoint presentation to the Committee on behalf of the 14 Action Groups in Warwickshire as part of a campaign against the principle of HS2 in its broad configuration.

Jerry Marshall, a businessman and regular commuter, presented the section on the business case for HS2. He made the following points on behalf of the Action Groups:

- I. The business case, which was relevant to Councillors and Warwickshire constituents, did not show HS2 as being in the national interest.
- II. The cost of HS2 in Warwickshire was estimated at £1,000 per household, and Councillors needed to ensure that this expenditure achieved good value.
- III. The Net Benefit Ratio (NBR) figure of 2.7 was believed to be misleading as it was set against a number of assumptions, including an unrealistic anticipated passenger demand increase of 267%, the assumption that time on trains was wasted, and leaving out finance costs and operator profits. A more realistic NBR was 0.28, based on realistic forecasts and Treasury methodology.
- IV. The expected benefits were set over a 60 year period, compared to more common seven-year benefit assessments for transport projects, and were unrealistic, particularly as 40% of benefits were expected to be achieved in the second 30 years.
- V. The optimism bias applied to costs by HS2 Ltd was lower than normal, and finance costs and operator profits had been ignored.
- VI. HS1 had not allowed for competition and the same mistake was being made with HS2. Both Chiltern and Virgin were investing heavily in their services and would certainly compete with HS2, as the airlines and ferry services were expected to.

- VII. Lessons needed to be learnt from previous projects and it was noted that HS1 currently ran at one third of the original forecast and the Eurostar at half of the original forecast.
- VIII. There were alternatives that could be put in place that were more viable and cheaper than HS2.

Professor Mike Geddes, an associate Professor at the Business School at Warwick University, gave a PowerPoint presentation considering the economic benefits of HS2. He made the following points on behalf of the Action Groups:

- a. There were many influential voices from the public and private sector, nationally and in Birmingham predicting that HS2 would create many jobs and improve the economy. These claims were based on projections over a very long period of time and were unreliable.
- b. Most wider projections depended on an increase to local services, which would require additional subsidies and were unlikely in the current economic climate.
- c. A key study of HS2 by Imperial College, London estimated the amount of new economic growth to be small, at approximately £8m a year over the full line.
- d. It was claimed that HS2 would redistribute existing economic activity from one place to another, but the largest beneficiary would be the largest economic activity, which was London, at the expense of other regions, towns and rural areas. This was also supported by the growth being limited largely to the service sector, as opposed to agriculture or manufacturing, which would again benefit London. There was no robust evidence that other cities or towns (such as Birmingham or Warwick) would benefit and HS2 Ltd had stated that this evidence would only be available after the consultation period. The Action Groups felt that this was a serious problem as the County Council would not be in a position to make an informed decision.
- e. The only Warwickshire residents expected to benefit would be those living close to the new station, and Warwickshire residents would be additionally disadvantaged by the reduced services on existing train routes, which would be a knock-on implication.
- f. One argument used to support HS2 was that it would free up capacity on existing routes, resulting in improved services. It was noted that at best HS2 was only expected to start running from 2026 and by this time it was anticipated that capacity problems on existing routes would have been addressed. There were better ways of freeing up the network were initiatives such as Rail Package 2 of the Chiltern upgrade.

Peter Delow, a retired Chartered Electrical Engineer, gave a PowerPoint presentation looking at the environmental issues around HS2. He made the following points on behalf of the Action Groups:

- A. A new transport corridor through Warwickshire, including Greenfield sites, was a threat to both the Warwickshire countryside and its communities.
- B. There was currently only one route being considered, which included 19 miles of track through South Warwickshire and 8 miles through North Warwickshire.
- C. The visual impact of HS2 would be appreciable, including:
 - Substantial security fencing
 - Overhead power lines, cables and support gantries
 - Embankments and cuttings
 - 17 viaducts
 - Noise barriers.
- D. The high speed train required a vegetation-free zone on either side of the track, requiring an overall width of 80 yards. This would equate to 556 acres of land in the south and 227 acres of land in the north and did not take into account roads, cuttings, embankments, barriers etc.
- E. No account had been given to damaging sensitive, special environments such as the area in South Warwickshire below Southam towards Northamptonshire.
- F. Two additional consequences to HS2 were the disruption that would occur during construction and the noise, both during the testing and operating phases. HS2 Ltd had been unhelpful in these areas and continued to underestimate the problems.
- G. Work undertaken by the Ladbroke Action Group stated that properties nearer than 200m to the track would suffer unacceptable noise levels, but it was expected to have an effect up to 1km from the track.
- H. In the south of the county the impact of the proposed route was high, with the track:
 - crossing 100 farm fields
 - passing within 500m of 25 farm buildings (mostly homes)
 - impacting on industrial properties and businesses including Code Masters Software Co Ltd, Lower Farm, Southam and Stoneleigh Show Ground
 - threatening the natural environment in many places such as Crackley Woods
 - impacting on sports venues such as Kenilworth Golf Course and RLS Polo Club, Southam
 - damaging many local footpaths
 - cutting through the green belt land between Coventry and Kenilworth.
- I. The assertions that HS2 would be “carbon neutral” and would contribute to Government’s ambitions to create low carbon emission were misleading and it was thought that the carbon generated by the construction of HS2 would emit in the region on 1.2 million tonnes of carbon, which was equivalent to the annual emission budgets of 100,000 people. Birmingham Airport has also stated that they saw HS2 as a stimulator of

business, which would increase air travel, further increasing carbon emissions.

- J. It was clear from the County Council report that there was a major lack of crucial information which HS2 Ltd was either unable or unwilling to make available. Warwickshire County Council needed to be made aware, before the consultation in early 2011 of all the facts, in order to make informed decisions and to ensure that the voice of Warwickshire residents was heard.

The Action Group representatives stated that HS2 Ltd had shown little interest in the impact of HS2 beyond the Chilterns and they thought Warwickshire County Council needed to make a decision and set their position out before the consultation took place and urged Councillors to oppose HS2.

The Chair, supported by Members of the Committee, thanked the speakers for their presentations, and stated that the issue was both complex and detailed. He noted that there had been interaction with the Action Groups over the last few months in the form of an information sharing forum, which had been and would continue to be very valuable to the Council. During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

1. In light of the support for the project from all major political parties and in the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Committee agreed that they needed to concentrate their efforts on looking at how HS2 would affect Warwickshire.
2. Government and HS2 Ltd had stated that a broad-brush sustainability appraisal and a local economic impact assessment may be available as part of the consultation, but detailed information on the environmental impact would only be available after the consultation. The Committee identified the gaps in the information provided, particularly in terms of environmental impact, as being essential to be able to make an informed decision and agreed that the County Council needed to decide whether to commission activities to obtain such information themselves, or to explore the opportunities of commissioning the work with partners in the region.
3. Members agreed that the Business Case put forward for HS2 was extraordinarily weak and open to challenge, an example of which was the figures requiring one third of Warwickshire residents having to travel to London daily to achieve the forecast numbers, and this was highly unlikely.
4. The financial implications of the project at a time when the region and the country were facing the severest cuts did not make economic sense.
5. The high speed specifications required by the EU could be achieved through the high speed Pendolino trains used on the Virgin network.

6. The benefits to Birmingham and other local economies were evidenced in favour of HS2, but without this information the consultation would be flawed.
7. A suggestion was made that a survey be conducted with all small and medium businesses in Warwickshire to gauge their need for this type of service.
8. The omission in the latest proposed route of the section in North Warwickshire along the M42, had been queried with the Minister, but to date no formal response had been received. Members noted their concern and the need for this information to be provided as a matter of urgency. There was also concern noted that the Y option spur to Leeds may cut across North Warwickshire.
9. Members agreed that pressure needed to be applied from all stakeholders, including all Warwickshire MPs, Local Authorities and the LGA to influence the decision to hold a consultation without making the relevant information available, which it was agreed would make a planning decision open to challenge locally. Pressure needed to be applied for a delay in the consultation until all information was available.
10. Members needed to understand clearly what information would be made available in the Appraisal of Sustainability.
11. In response to Members' disappointment that HS2 Ltd had not been present at the meeting, the Chair stated that an invitation had been sent to HS2 Ltd which had been declined. HS2 Ltd had pointed out other options such as the Technical Seminars they were holding, and had offered to attend a future meeting if required.
12. There was no Government funding available for opposition work, making the HS2 project a one-sided funding process.

Councillor Alan Cockburn, Portfolio Holder responsible for Environment and Economy, noted that he had attended a meeting with Sir Brian Briscoe, Non Executive Chairman of HS2, where he had stated that it could be years before the next section of HS2 north from Lichfield, was built. Councillor Cockburn agreed that the County Council needed to take a position on this issue before the consultation and in light of that the full Council would be debating the issue at their meeting on 14 December 2010, on information available at that time.

Mr Moreton, a member of the public, asked the Committee why they would consider supporting what was effectively another tax through ticket subsidies, in these financial times? He added that the Secretary of State had made it clear that the national principle of HS2 was sacrosanct and the consultation would be about alignment, and this was echoed by HS2's Ltd avoidance of attending any meetings where they may be faced with sensible, credible opposition.

Nick Hillard, Crackley Residents' Association noted that there was a sustainability report on the HS2 website, which was "broad brush" with

little information and that the anticipated Assessment of Sustainability Report would more than likely be a refresher of that. He added that this report had been procured by HS2 Ltd.

Members of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- (1) Thanked the representatives of the Action Groups for their contributions and asked that Graeme Long continue to provide Councillors with updates from the Action Groups
- (2) Asked Mandy Walker to provide an update on the outcomes of the meeting with the Minister scheduled for early December.
- (3) Agreed that the strongest representation possible needed to be made to HS2 Ltd and Government to ensure the gaps in information were filled before the consultation took place
- (4) Requested that every effort be made to:
 - encourage Government to set up some form of funding allocation for Action Groups
 - press for details regarding the route north of Birmingham.
- (5) Agreed that the Chair and Party Spokespersons should discuss the way forward, including a timetable of events, for the Committee to consider HS2 in the new year.

8. Questions to the Portfolio Holder

Councillor Colin Hayfield

Councillor Ray Sweet asked for an update on the Library Service. Councillor Colin Hayfield responded that the Service was facing savings of £2m, partly through management restructuring and the Library Strategy with an approximate £1m savings still to be found. Different ways of using library buildings needed to be considered as well as moving towards a service that would meet demands in the future. The Chair reminded Members that they would be receiving a report on the Library Service to their 22 December meeting.

Councillor Alan Cockburn

Councillor Ray Sweet asked Councillor Alan Cockburn what plans were for evening bus services. Councillor Cockburn responded that this would form part of the budget process.

9. Household Waste Recycling Centres

Councillor Richard Chattaway presented the report of the Chair of the Task and Finish Group outlining the recommendations from the Task and Finish Group established to scrutinise contract specification for the Household Waste Recycling Centres.

During the discussion that followed the following issues arose:

1. The process for the decision was outlined and it was confirmed that the call-in procedure also applied to officers making delegated key decisions.
2. Members and officers involved with the Task and Finish Group were congratulated.

The Committee agreed to forward the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group to Paul Galland, Strategic Director for Environment and Economy to be considered before making a final decision.

10. Committee Work Programme and suggested topics for Task and Finish Groups

The Committee agreed the Work Programme items.

Members requested that the Briefing Note from Graeme Fitton on On-street Parking, include an update on the actual income generated and the income position by district.

Michelle McHugh undertook to speak to Nick Gower-Johnson about the Community Empowerment Briefing Note, which was overdue.

11. Any Other Items

None.

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Chair

The Committee rose at 4:20 p.m.