

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 23 September 2020

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Clare Golby (Chair)
Councillor Dave Shilton (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Jenny Fradgley
Councillor Seb Gran
Councillor John Holland
Councillor Andy Jenns
Councillor Keith Kondakor
Councillor Andy Sargeant
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher
Councillor Andrew Wright

Portfolio Holders

Councillor Peter Butlin (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property)
Councillor Andy Crump (Portfolio Holder for Fire & Community Safety)
Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Leader of the Council)
Councillor Heather Timms (Portfolio Holder for Environment, Heritage & Culture)

Officers

Matthew Epps, Projects Programmes and Funding Team Leader
Monica Fogarty, Chief Executive
Isabelle Moorhouse, Trainee Democratic Services Officer
Mark Ryder, Strategic Director for Communities
Scott Tompkins, Assistant Director for Environment Services
Margaret Smith, Team Leader Transport Planning
Nigel Whyte, Principal Transport Planner

Others Present

Councillor Alan Cockburn (Chair of the Council)

External Speakers

Paula Dees, Deputy CEO of Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership
Phil Peak, Operations Director of the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Hub

1. General

(1) Apologies

David Ayton-Hill (Assistant Director-Communities)
Councillor Jeff Clarke (Portfolio Holder for Transport & Planning)

(2) Member's Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-pecuniary Interests

None.

(3) Chair's Announcements

The Chair noted that the recent member session on the upcoming changes for planning consultations was well attended and all issues raised should have been answered.

(4) Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the 17 June 2020 were approved as a correct record.
The minutes of the 23 July 2020 were approved as a correct record.

2. Public Speaking

None.

3. Questions to Portfolio Holder

In response to Councillor Keith Kondakor, Mark Ryder, Strategic Director for Communities, stated that the CIF (condition improvement fund) bid for highway improvements due at October's Cabinet meeting is yet to be finished and confirmed the financial contribution from the council has not been confirmed yet.

Following a query from Councillor Jenny Fradgley, Mark Ryder clarified that Nuneaton, Rugby and Bedworth were known regeneration schemes in the regeneration project. Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Leader of the Council) clarified that the regeneration schemes in these areas were already approved as part of the 'Transforming Nuneaton' programme.

In response to Councillor Dave Shilton, Councillor Seccombe agreed to forward his question regarding Covid-19 testing to Councillor Les Caborn (Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care & Health).

(1) Economic Development Update

Following Councillor Kondakor's points regarding merging the Art Challenge and Canal Network together and noted the lack of climate change actions, Matthew Epps, Projects Programmes and Funding Team Leader, agreed to pass on the canal query to the relevant officers. He also confirmed that the climate change agenda is a key part of the Covid-19 recovery plans, that the projects in the report are only the first projects to be supported, and that climate change projects will be brought including those which support the environmental technologies sector. Councillor Seccombe added that the art challenge was an initiative to incite the public to return to the high street and create safe spaces with social distancing. She continued that the county hopes to benefit from Coventry's City of Culture 2021.

4. Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

Paula Deas (Deputy CEO of the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership) and Phil Peak (Operations Director, CWLEP Growth Hub) presented a presentation to the committee.

Paula Deas introduced herself and stated that the CWLEP (Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership) started in 2012 and the CWLEP has succeeded due to its strong partnership between of the private and public sectors working collectively to insure economic growth. The board is representative of Coventry and Warwickshire's economic structure. The CWLEP secured an exemplar performance rating from central government for their governance, strategy and delivery. The CWLEP work is a national context and were formed to deliver the government's growth agenda, with working with stakeholders, spatial levels in the Midlands and combined authorities. The CWLEP obtained £43.5 million in funding for growth projects across Coventry and Warwickshire. This funding has been used to enhance and transform town centres whether traffic-wise or environmentally. Work had progressed to ensure this continued during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Warwick District Council was awarded £1.79 million for the 2022 Commonwealth Games as part of a blended scheme. This was primarily to improve Leamington Spa's railway station and tourist facilities.

Pre-Covid-19, Coventry and Warwickshire had good economies and low unemployment. Therefore, an over-lapping phase approach was undertaken with central government's context. The phases are crisis (immediate work), foundation (initial recovery), consolidation (start-up growth) and acceleration (long-term economic growth); a delicate balance of interventions for health and wealth reasons will remain. Economic reset objectives were set up to be green and sustainable and be a stable in government funding bids. These objectives focus on influencing businesses, industries and communities to reinvent themselves including using energy, fibre, 5G, modes of transport, whether electrification or cycling funds, differently for the future.

Paula Deas emphasised that the CWLEP are using every method possible to reflect Coventry and Warwickshire's needs. The 'Getting Building Fund' was a short-term fiscal intervention announced by government. Warwickshire was awarded £8.1 million through the CWLEP. A blended package of projects by the private and public sectors will benefit from this; the projects will be environment, recovery, cycling, electrification and skills focused. The projects also include repurposing town centres including Nuneaton and its office facilities, e-cars clubs and cycling. All the schemes were well received in the county and by central government.

Paula Deas continued that the CWLEP are private sector entities spending public sector money and they use their Champions Network to learn what businesses want and secure their support packages and create the skills interventions that businesses want. The network was reinvented during the Covid-19 pandemic to become virtual and the CWLEP Growth Hub deals directly with businesses on every aspect of a businesses needs.

Phil Peak stated that the CWLEP Growth Hub dealt with more businesses in 2019 than ever before, and since 1st March 2020 3000 businesses had been consulted with, including 700 new businesses, every inquiry was resolved, and 7000 businesses are communicated with on a weekly basis. The growth hub generates a 'sub-region' report with the county and councils which provides business information to central government's business department on a weekly basis. This was acknowledged as exemplar across the country and helped them shape policy in terms of the initial response around the survival of businesses and with shaping recovery policies for businesses.

Paula Deas continued that young people are put front and centre stage for the Career Enterprise Company and they have a work experience programme which 46 secondary schools in

Warwickshire take part in. Paula Deas and Councillor Seccombe noted the difficulty of new office job starters not being able to work in an office.

The UKBIC (UK Battery Industrialisation Centre) is in Coventry and was a successful bid for the area with £126 million invested and 100 new jobs. The UKBIC emphasised the strength of the areas research, development and capability sectors and that the Coventry and Warwickshire area is good for Gigafactory's. As the devolution of local government is yet to happen, the CWLEP must wait for ongoing national policies so secure a levelling up agenda. The CWLEP will focus on delivery during the last economic year of the local growth fund and maintain and preserve a strong economy.

The committee commended the presentation.

In response to the Chair's point on work being done for older people who are made redundant, Paula Deas stated the opportunity the reskill adults is 'up for grabs' as the projects which focused on reskilling adults before were European. She concluded that their schemes for this are under development and needs to be reviewed but added they will extend their job vacancy portal.

Following a query from Councillor Shilton, Paula Deas responded that the CWLEP have an architecture and tourism group who lobbied hard for targeted schemes for furloughed staff in these areas and opportunities will be offered through the growth hub.

In response to Councillor John Holland, Paula Deas confirmed that any schemes that can deliver will be invested into and agreed to get information regarding the Lord Leycester business plan. Following Councillor Fradgley's concerns regarding Stratford upon Avon's economic losses during the pandemic, it was agreed that new industries for tourist focused town like Stratford need to diversify and create 'micro-industries'. Paula Deas clarified the CWLEP are looking at this now.

Councillor Kondakor's points about the skills agenda, the Midland Academy Trust being a weaker area and the need to prepare for domestic tourism and looking at 'spin-offs' for the UKBIC factory like electric motorbikes. Paula Deas said that the CWLEP make strong representations with skills and contracts are due to be given out regarding cycling in the West Midlands.

In response to Councillor Andy Sergeant's points regarding support for smaller and self-employed courier companies, Paula Deas stated that this depended on the growth of the courier, but she will obtain information to see if the CWLEP are funding these businesses. Councillor Sergeant noted that several large international companies have moved to Nuneaton.

Matthew Epps added that the Council is rolling out a new business support programme to support businesses most impacted by Covid-19 with a focus on the retail, hospitality, leisure and tourism sectors in the county. He also added that a new tourism contract has just been awarded to develop and implement a new 'Visit Warwickshire' campaign which will promote the county as a safe and open destination with a focus on the domestic tourism market.

5. Warwickshire Bus Services Motion Report

Margaret Smith, Team Leader Transport Planning, introduced the report, stating that it was formulated following a passed motion at Full Council. A specialist transport consultancy was recruited for the report's findings and a presentation from leading consultants with expertise in public transport was received. The motion included five objectives, and which sought to review the

council's activity in relation to bus operations. Section 106 funding was reviewed in terms of developer contributions used to fund bus routes over the last 10 years. It scoped out the use of new powers set out in the Bus Services Act 2017, specifically around the use of advanced quality or enhanced partnership schemes. Highlights of the bus improvement schedule will include improved information on bus services including roadside information, guaranteed bus friendly developments, using new powers from the 2017 Act, more cooperation with bus companies including a say on logistics and an annual Warwickshire bus conference. Warwickshire County and Coventry City Councils submitted a joint bid to the Department for Transport for electric buses for all Warwickshire districts and boroughs and Coventry. Bus usage levels in Warwickshire were 20% of pre-Covid-19 levels and Margaret Smith concluded that the motion would help the council achieve carbon neutrality.

In response to Councillor Shilton, Margaret Smith confirmed that the number of university students travelling to university will be much lower than previous numbers and social distancing measures are implemented by the bus companies.

Following a query from Councillor Andy Jenns, it was noted that whoever owns a bus shelter must maintain it. Bus shelters are owned either by the County Council, Borough / District Council or Town / Parish Councils. Bus shelters provided within new development will be owned by the Developer until the highway is adopted by the County Council who would then assume responsibility for ownership. County Councillors may use their delegated budget to fund provision of a bus shelter in their Electoral Division. In these cases, WCC County Highways assume responsibility for the ownership of the bus shelter upon installation.

Councillor Kondakor praised the report and raised that S106 funding for bus services is weak and complicated and it must be clearer on where buses go and when, especially during the pandemic; Margaret Smith agreed with this. Margaret Smith stated that they created a schedule of desired improvements as part of the local transport plan review and they can now act on S106 issues immediately.

In response to Councillor Holland, Margaret Smith confirmed that if the electric bus bid is successful then they would be able to upgrade the electric power supplied needed.

In response to Councillor Fradgely, Margaret Smith stated that the bus corridor focuses on Coventry to Leamington Spa and this was a collaborative approach with operators. Work will be undertaken with bus operators regarding ticket types and branding, but the bus operators must be offered incentives from the highway authority for them to do this. Nigel Whyte, Principal Transport Planner, and Andrew Stokes, Network Planning Manager, added that a route is currently being planned for Stratford to Coventry via Warwick and Leamington and this should help with traffic congestion in these areas.

Following a query from Councillor Kondakor, it was clarified that it is easy to join bus companies' tickets together, but train tickets are more difficult to be added on and it cannot be forced legally.

Resolved:

That the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. Notes the key findings of the Bus Services Motion Report produced by The TAS Partnership Ltd investigating the items in the Bus Services Motion endorsed by full Council on 17 December 2020

2. Notes the proposed Bus Services Motion Enhancement Schedule consisting of measures aimed at delivering improvements to the bus services and supporting infrastructure, which The TAS Partnership Ltd has presented in the report following consultation with bus operators, County Council officers, Borough and District officers, Department for Transport and employers

6. One Organisational Plan Quarterly Progress Report

Scott Thompkins, Assistant Director – Environmental Services, praised the Power BI system as a method for monitoring progress reports. 11 key business measures are monitored by Communities OSC. A lot of the business measures were affected by Covid-19. The rate of recording crime last year was 73% which was 2% above target. 76 properties were protected from flooding between November 2019-February 2020 and these floods were very time consuming for the flood management team.

Councillor Kondakor noted that the Bermuda project was behind schedule and no bus operator will run a service on it. Scott Thompkins replied that the tender return date had been extended by three weeks and five contactors were due to submit tenders in October 2020 for a contract to be awarded before Christmas 2020. Nigel Whyte added that £500,000 of funding was received from the Department for Transport to boost bus partridge across the UK. Part of the funding was used to extend bus features for the Bermuda area.

Resolved:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers and comments on the progress of the delivery of the One Organisational Plan 2020 for the period as contained in the report.

7. Quarter 1 Performance Progress Report

Scott Thompkins presented the report, six of the 11 business measures were noted in the Q1 report; four were on track and two were not. KSI (killed or seriously injured) numbers had reduced from 103 to 66, reused, recycled and composted waste was at 52% which was on target. There was a reduction in burglary and violent crimes, but anti-social behaviour and fly tipping increased. The Home to School transport policy was not on track because of building provision within the county for the service to be local as children are currently transferred long distances. Scott Thompkins concluded that in March 2020, unemployment rates were on target with from 77% to 81% of people in Warwickshire being employed which was higher than the national average.

In response to Councillor Shilton's fly-tipping concerns, Scott Thompkins clarified that fly-tipping and littering increased before the recycling centres were reopened. Councillor Heather Timms (Portfolio Holder for Environment, Heritage & Culture) added that fly-tipping will be discussed at the Warwickshire Waste Partnership meeting in September as it is a district and borough responsibility. The booking system at recycling centres was not the reason for the fly-tipping increase as the booking system was commended when installed at recycling centres. Increasing fines for fly-tipping will be reviewed.

Following a query from the Chair, Councillor Timms stated that people are ticked off when they arrive in their booking slot so it is known when people booked in do not turn up but they will look at collating this in the Waste Partnership meeting. Councillor Timms confirmed that all partners must be worked with regarding fly-tipping including districts, boroughs and the police.

Resolved:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers and comments on the progress of the delivery of the Council Plan 2020 - 2025 for the period as contained in the report.

8. Communities OSC Work Programme

Councillor Shilton asked for the HS2 grants to be given a meeting date on the work programme.

9. Urgent Items

None.

The meeting rose at 16:17

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Chair