

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 21 September 2022

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Jeff Clarke (Chair)
Councillor Jonathan Chilvers (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Richard Baxter-Payne
Councillor Jackie D'Arcy
Councillor Jenny Fradgley
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher
Councillor Tim Sinclair
Councillor Mejar Singh
Councillor Andrew Wright

Portfolio Holders

Councillor Andy Crump, Portfolio Holder for Fire & Rescue and Community Safety
Councillor Wallace Redford, Portfolio Holder for Transport & Planning
Councillor Heather Timms, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate and Culture
Councillor Martin Watson, Portfolio Holder for Economy

Officers

David Ayton-Hill, Assistant Director - Communities
Emily Brough, Parking Project Engineer
Tristan Hall, Section Manager (Delivery Lead)
Isabelle Moorhouse, Democratic Services Officer
Mark Ryder, Strategic Director for Communities
Scott Tompkins, Assistant Director for Environment Services

1. General

(1) Apologies

Councillor Dave Humphreys was substituted by Councillor Marian Humphreys

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None

(3) Chair's Announcements

A minute's silence was held for the passing of Queen Elizabeth II.

(4) Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

2. Public Speaking

None

3. Questions to Portfolio Holder

None.

(1) Economic Development Update

David Ayton-Hill (Assistant Director – Communities) summarised that:

- The team were busy with supporting businesses with support grants, access to finance, employment skills, inward investment, sector development and advising on energy bills
- Work was done with the FSB, Chambers of Commerce and Growth Hub to understand what businesses faced in terms of energy bills
- Central Government recently announced that they would cap energy bills for businesses
- Businesses would only get a plan for six months and it was expected that Central Government would review this plan every three months
- In Warwickshire, it was the hospitality and leisure sectors that were struggling most with energy bills and the economic climate
- The LEP (local enterprise partnership) review was underway and WCC was taking part in with Coventry City Council for the Coventry and Warwickshire LEP. This will look at the transition of where for the end of LEPs following central government's announcements that they should end and be integrated into democratic institutions and combined authorities
- Coventry and Warwickshire's economic geography is linked by strong commuter flows and sector development flows. Therefore, it was important to maintain this link post CWLEP so businesses could retain that support
- The LEP Board will meet to agree plans going forward
- £2.5 million of funding had been secured via the Multiply Fund which is part of the government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This funding is for adult numeracy
- A review was done a review of Warwickshire' European funded business support programme which will end in 2023
- The IDF business support programme was evaluated and received positive feedback with 92% of businesses recommending the programme and 87% of businesses saying they achieved their goals
- There was a lot of inward investment from motoring and gaming companies

In response to Councillor Tim Sinclair, Mark Ryder (Strategic Director – Communities) said that they would know what the future will look like after the LEP board meets. WCC wants to hold onto several assets of the LEP, so nothing has to start from scratch. After the first meeting, this information will be shared. The Chair requested that this information be shared as soon as possible as by the next meeting everything may have changed.

In response to Councillor Jonathan Chilvers, Mark Ryder stated that they had no say in how central government distributed funding but the Shared Prosperity Fund will be less money than the previous EU one. David Ayton-Hill added that the CWLEP was the accountable body to receive this funding. Funding stream themselves then to go via local authorities individually then the combined one.

Following a supplementary from Councillor Chilvers, Mark Ryder confirmed that WCC will state that they want to retain what they had with the CWLEP. Over the last decade many LEPs nationwide invested heavily in staffing and did lots of the work in economic development; Coventry and Warwickshire did this outside the LEP. Therefore, there should not be too much change when the CWLEP dissolves.

Councillor Sinclair suggested that there be a table of the businesses helped and what was done instead of this being in writing.

In response to Councillor Jenny Fradgley, David Ayton-Hill said that most external funding used to support economic development and business support was revenue funding from the EU. The fund went into a national programme that was then split up regionally. This money could be spent on local issues and businesses could bid to get some funding from it. Central government ran this but the local authorities got a say in what should be allocated where. The Shared Prosperity Fund was less money but a broader range (place shaping and regeneration, business and the economy, and employment and skills). This funding has been given to the district and borough councils. Warwickshire received £12 million and the more densely populated areas got more. They must develop an investment plan that says how they will spend the money over the next three years against the funding topics. The districts and borough were worked with on their plans and what is suitable. They plan to focus on place-shaping but this means there will be less funding for business support, employment and skills, especially as some current activities would end next year.

In response to Councillor Sinclair, David Ayton-Hill confirmed that they wanted to continue investing in identified key strengths geographically cross-county. Councillor Sinclair suggested reporting on these for the next meeting and what was not going on.

Following a question from Councillor Richard Baxter-Payne, David Ayton-Hill stated that the Communities Enterprise Fund had been well received with three applications being granted funding and 20 were being worked on. Any businesses who got in contact would be referred to the appropriate fund.

In response to the Chair, Mark Ryder stated that the boroughs and districts were on the LEP board so they would get a say when the LEP dismantles. There will be a transition period where the accountable body (Coventry City Council) must report to the successor arrangements for the LEP.

David Ayton-Hill confirmed that all funding for already approved schemes had been given out and the Multiply Fund was for numeracy only because this was central government's priority.

(2) EDS Dashboard

Scott Tompkins (Assistant Director – Environmental Services) noted that this was a reoccurring report that showed the top ten schemes being developed in North and South of the county. This paper was received by the major schemes board too.

In response to Councillor Chilvers, Scott Tompkins agreed to get details on how the money was dealt up between schemes.

4. Bermuda Connectivity Update

Tristan Hall (Section Manager (Delivery Lead) Project & Programme Management) summarised that:

- The combined cycle/footway on St Georges Way was complete as well as some junction improvement works and carriageway resurfacing
- There had been issues around the Hello Fresh depot due to the unusual worker flows, but this was resolved
- The contractor experienced issues with the hard dig (encountering rock) whilst installing gabion walling near the rail station but this was resolved too
- Works to Bermuda Bridge itself had progressed following a single lane configuration being set out on the A44 which allowed the contractor to jack up the bridge deck and replace the bearings which is a key part of refurbishing the bridge to make it suitable for traffic
- There were significant earthworks that have taken place on the approaches to Bermuda Bridge and the contractor has carried out some surfacing work on eastern approach
- Works to the gas barrier have taken longer than planned caused by the need to carry out significant site investigation work to determine the exact alignment and construction make-up of the gas barrier
- The designer has committed to providing a revised design for the gas barrier extension works and the contractor will commence work in excavating the gas barrier and carrying out the remedial work required very soon.
- The delays mentioned in 1.7 had been agreed with the contractor, 1.8 covered issues that were ongoing and the impact of which still needed to be agreed
- Inflation was an issue with the project, work needed to be done to reduce costs and manage the budget within the allocated funds
- Due to the delays the expected completion date was now summer 2023 instead of the end of 2022 reported to OSC in September 2021.
- Work will continue with the designers to resolve site issues as they arise

In response to Councillor Baxter-Payne, Tristan Hall stated that whilst there were issues that have arisen that could not have been anticipated when development started, there were other issues that arose that need to be investigated further with the project team and the third-party designers so lessons can be learned.

Councillor Baxter-Payne asked a supplementary question related to why hard dig (rock) was not anticipated when excavating for the new gabion walling. Tristan Hall said that the third-party designers of the scheme determined what ground investigation would be needed and this was provided to the contractor. Tristan Hall stated he asked the third-party designers to provide a response as to why rock was not anticipated and will share this response with the committee when received.

Councillor Sinclair suggested a report on the lessons learnt from this scheme internally and externally and bringing this to the committee when available. Scott Tompkins said they had started this and were happy to share it after the scheme had been implemented long enough for them to do a traffic survey to show the benefits of the scheme. Mark Ryder said this could be two pieces of work as the early construction could be shared before the lessons learnt. Councillor Baxter-Payne

agreed to this because they needed to respond to questions from members of the public honestly.

Councillor Wallace Redford (Portfolio Holder – Transport & Planning) noted that this report showed progress was being made on site to deliver the Bermuda Connectivity project. The new project manager agreed to provide weekly updates on the progress and issues arising from the project. A site visit had also been offered to the local members.

The Chair requested that this weekly update be provided to all Nuneaton members instead of just the local ones.

Tristan Hall added that the website also being updated so all members could check the progress. Scott Tompkins added that the website was primarily for members of the public to keep them informed of progress.

In response to the Chair, Scott Tompkins said that the risk registers (historic and recent) would be shared with the local members after they had been screened due to ensure no commercially sensitive data was released.

The Chair requested this be shared with all Nuneaton members too.

5. School Keep Clear Enforcement Zone

Emily Brough (Parking Project Engineer) summarised that:

- The objective of the project was to undertake remedial works required to enable enforcement of all school keep clear zones around primary schools in Warwickshire
- The Parking Management team receive lots of complaints/concerns/requests for enforcement around schools from head teachers, the police, councillors, and local residents
- The project is to improve safety of the school commute and promote active travel
- The project sits within the initiatives of the School Parking Working Group. They created a priority list set to a criteria
- To get this list the School Education team were liaised with and the parking survey data from 2021 was looked through along with data of collisions from the last five years within 300 metres of the school entrance sites. Any repeated expressions of concern received from the public was considered too
- The list was only draft at the time of the meeting
- If approved the project will then undertake TROs (traffic regulation orders) for the list and then it will go out to contractors to get the projects enforced

In response to the Chair, Emily Brough confirmed she looked at all primary schools in Warwickshire to get the ones on the list. Collisions involving pedestrians were prioritised along with the more severe collisions. All primary schools will get this eventually, but the listed schools would be prioritised first. The Chair noted that TROs are done in batches.

In response to the Councillor Chilvers, Emily Brough stated that most the work for the TROs had been done as they needed to do mapping for enforcement.

Following a supplementary from Councillor Chilvers, Emily Brough clarified that primary schools were focused on first as more commuters came in care but secondary schools could be looked at in the future.

Following a question from Councillor Bhagwant Pandher, Emily Brough said there would first be one enforcement vehicle for the listed locations to make sure it works, if successful they would obtain several for four years. The TRO had scope to instal static cameras outside schools, but it

was unknown which schools would need these most. Therefore, the mobile vehicle would be installed first then static cameras could be investigated.

In response to Councillor Sinclair, Emily Brough said no timeframes were available yet as the TRO needed to be done first along with mapping for the contractors. She agreed to share details on the contractors timeframes when available.

In response to Councillor Mejar Singh, Emily Brough said that this scheme should lead to behavioural change and get parents to park further away from the school as the vehicles will be a physical presence. This will make the keep clear zone less congested.

Following a question from Councillor Baxter-Payne. Emily Brough confirmed that they were liaising with the School Education team and they were restarting the 'cars and kids don't mix' campaign on educating parents to not park on or blocking drives of residents near schools.

Councillor Andy Crump (Portfolio Holder – Fire & Rescue and Community Safety) noted that the Active Travel team got funding from the DfT to make bespoke schemes with primary and secondary schools. He installed a 20mph limit around one of his schools in his division and this improved parent and resident's behaviour.

The Chair suggested that the Active Travel team notify local members when they are at a school so the local member can engage with the team and school.

The Chair noted that the civil parking officers would be limited in their power with displaced vehicles because they only had power in specific areas. Emily Brough stated that parking was down to changing behaviour and the vehicle patrol would have a knock-on effect. The Education team were already doing a lot of other schemes to change behaviour too. The vehicles would cover all borough and districts.

David Ayton-Hill added that they would monitor displacement and if it caused problems in a specific areas then other restrictions could be brought in.

In response to Councillor Fradgley, Emily Brough said that most the maps for the keep clear zones were correct, but they lacked time plates.

Following a supplementary from Councillor Fradgley, Emily Brough said that they did surveys on site to make sure they do not add excessive 'street furniture' and enforcement could be personalised to schools.

In response to Councillor Sinclair, Emily Brough stated that school keep clear zones were historic and regulations changed with them so there had to be a specific distance.

Following a question from the Chair, Emily Brough said that one vehicle could monitor several schools in one area in a day. It stores that data and is sent back to base and a qualified parking officer will be able to look through it all and process any contraventions that occurred. This will double up the coverage for those schools. People patrols can also be done with a second person in the vehicle to monitor people parked on double yellow lines.

6. Council Plan 2022-2027 - Quarter 1 Performance Progress Report

Mark Ryder noted that waste had a positive performance this quarter. 85% of the Communities Action Points were on track and 15% were at risk or not started. There was a forecasted overspend of 2.485% and the issues with the capital programme were highlighted in the report.

It was noted that the links in the report were not working and needed resending and printed out for members who used paper copies.

7. Communities OSC Work Programme

The work programme was approved as written.

8. Urgent Items

None

The meeting rose at 15:32

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Chair