

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 17 February 2021

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

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

Portfolio Holders

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

Officers

Kieran Amos, Chief Fire Officer
David Ayton-Hill, Assistant Director - Communities
Mark Ryder, Strategic Director for Communities
Chris Egan, Lead Commissioner Strategic Growth and Infrastructure
Dr Nadia Inglis, Consultant in Public Health
Ian Marriott, Legal Service Manager
Isabelle Moorhouse, Trainee Democratic Services Officer
Graham Palmer, Infrastructure Strategy & Commissioning Lead
Alison Robinson, Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Economy & Skills)
Margaret Smith, Team Leader Transport Planning
Nichola Vine, Strategy and Commissioning Manager - Legal and Democratic

External Speakers

Dr Paul Coleman, Public Health Registrar and Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Warwick

1. General

(1) Apologies

Councillor Andy Wright who was substituted by Councillor Margaret Bell Scott Tompkins (Assistant Director – Environmental Services)

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

None.

(3) Chair's Announcements

The Chair informed the committee of a briefing note that provided an update for the Bermuda Connectivity project. This was virtually shared in the meeting and would be shared after the meeting as a correction was needed regarding the location of a pedestrian crossing.

(4) Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

2. Public Speaking

None.

3. Questions to Portfolio Holder

In response to Councillor Jenny Fradgley's questions about the Council's CO2 reduction efforts and where to find this information, Councillor Heather Timms (Portfolio Holder – Environment, Heritage & Culture) stated that the Council remained committed to being carbon neutral by 2030 (regarding scopes one (WCC estate) and two (WCC energy use). Between 2013 and 2018 it reduced its carbon emissions by over 50%, which was informed by information gathered using the Environmental Management System which is ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 14001 accredited. Improvements for gathering information for scope 3 (WCC services e.g. waste) was underway. In February 2021 the Council's £1m Green Shoots community climate action grant scheme was launched to fund local community projects aimed at mitigating climate change as well as the Solar Together initiative which helped Warwickshire homeowners buy solar panels to produce green energy. With central government funding, the Council will develop proposals to reduce the carbon impact of its corporate estate. The Council secured a Low Carbon Skills Fund grant to carry out building surveys to inform projects on decarbonising their buildings. Work was carried out with the District and Borough Councils in Warwickshire, such as a joint baseline for their carbon footprints, tree planting, linking biodiversity and joining up green corridors.

In response to Councillor Keith Kondakor, Councillor Jeff Clarke (Portfolio Holder – Transport & Planning) confirmed that it was agreed that a bid would be submitted to implement a cycle lane on the upcoming Bermuda Bridge project. The Chair added that because the briefing note was shared on screen in a public livestream, this meant the note was publicly published.

Following a question from Councillor Kondakor, Councillor Andy Crump (Portfolio Holder – Fire & Rescue and Community Safety) noted that the two new SAFER officers will focus on safe access to schools but the implementation of 20mph zones outside schools would need to be evidence based. Councillor Peter Butlin (Portfolio Holder – Finance & Property) added that the 20mph zones mentioned in the Council's budget were advisable as it would help implement them quicker.

David Ayton-Hill (Assistant Director – Communities) confirmed that the enforcement of 20mph zones outside schools could begin in the next financial year.

Councillor Dave Shilton praised the Jaguar/Landrover (JLR) factory in Baginton for making electric batteries for their cars. Councillor Isobel Seccombe OBE (Leader of the Council) concurred with this and added that the giga battery factory would cause a shift in the types of jobs and make them greener.

In response to Councillor Kondakor, Councillor Seccombe stated that it would be confidential at that stage if the batteries from the factory would be used in public modes of transport.

In response to Councillor John Holland, David Ayton-Hill clarified that there was a demand for battery giga factories in the Midlands so any bids should be successful with planning applications.

Councillor Shilton praised the work of the gritting teams for their success at vaccination centres.

(1) Economic Development Update

Councillors Kondakor and Andy Jenns praised the update.

In response to Councillor Kondakor, David Ayton-Hill stated that he was not sure if Norton had resolved their trade issues from Brexit.

Following a question from Councillor Jenns, David Ayton-Hill agreed to provide a breakdown of digital training provided to businesses and more details on the businesses who received this help.

(2) Warwickshire Towns Update

Councillor John Holland noted the economic hit that town centres took and that air quality in Warwick and Leamington needed improvement due to the slow progression in the programmes to improve it. David Ayton-Hill stated that a holistic approach was needed to improve all of Warwickshire's town centres so they are economic and green; congestion and traffic in town centres was also being reviewed but there was no simple option to resolve all the issues together. Councillor Clarke added that air quality and active travel, including cycle lanes, would be part of the LTP (local transport plan).

Councillor Kondakor queried about how cycling friendly the Vicarage Street development would be. David Ayton-Hill stated that the plan was subject to change and would include cycle lanes.

4. (External) Workplace travel planning intervention

Dr Paul Coleman (Public Health Registrar and Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Warwick) noted the work that was undertaken with Dr Nadia Ingles (Consultant in Public Health) and the air quality monitors as part of the project. Paul Coleman raised the following points:

- The scheme took place over a year with 30 employees from Warwickshire County Council and Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council
- Air pollution was linked to 28,000-36,000 deaths a year in the UK and was the leading cause of environmental deaths
- Air pollution was worse in town centres in Warwickshire, especially during commuting periods
- Air pollution in Warwickshire contributed to 1500 deaths in 10 years
- More people in Warwickshire travelled by car to work than the national average
- Over the last decade there was an increase in people using cars for short journeys

- 63% of people commuted to work by car in the UK, 67% of these journeys were under five miles
- Shorter journeys contributed most to air pollution
- The scheme was done with the Universities of Coventry and Birmingham
- A baseline questionnaire was done in May 2019, followed by air pollution monitors (which contained a GPS) being worn by participants for two weeks, then 1-1 planning assessments with all participants including journey plans and any cycling training needed
- After four months another questionnaire was done by participants which showed that participants were driving less, walking/cycling more and were less exposed to air pollution
- Reasons as to why the participants were not walking/cycling before included: childcare responsibilities, fixed working hours, transporting work equipment, safety concerns with walking/cycling and a lack of secure cycling storage facilities at the workplace
- Suggestions to make people want to walk/cycle to work included: a park and ride system (for people who wanted to walk to work but lived too far away), being able to leave equipment at work, flexible working hours, financial incentives e.g. council employees getting discounts at cycling shops so they can afford bikes, improved workplace facilities for active travel commuters e.g. showers/changing and clothes drying facilities
- The schemes recommendations were as follows:
 - All council staff are encouraged to plan alternative walking, cycling and public transport options for their commute to work before returning to work in central office locations following the COVID-19 pandemic. This can be done via WCC's Active Travel resource (<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/activetravel>), which needs to be reviewed regularly. It should also be considered how key elements identified in this study, such as role of air pollution monitors in educating employees about the impacts of air pollution and role of travel planning sessions in changing travel behaviour, can be integrated into future workplace travel interventions.
 - Steps should be taken to continue to address the barriers identified in this study that participants reported as reasons for being unable / unwilling to cycle or walk to work. These include safety concerns and lack of cycle infrastructure, financial incentives (such as discounts at local cycle stores) and improved workplace facilities such as showers, changing facilities and a drying room.

Councillor Holland praised presentation and stated that he asked for a travel plan for the MAS⁴ when it launched due to the amount of people who would be commuting to it. Paul Coleman concurred with Councillor Holland over the large amounts (29,000) people who commuted in, out and through Warwick district by car to get to work.

Councillor Andy Sargeant informed the committee of issues he experienced when he cycled to work with not being able to dry his clothes, the lack of bike secure storage and shelters at past workplaces. He added that things were easier to find when driving and there was a lack of bus services that went near or via large workplaces. Paul Coleman concurred with this and added that some participants stated that some bus routes finished before people finished work.

Councillor Kondakor agreed that there was a need for secure bike storage at workplaces and added that local cycling shops closing made things difficult for people who wanted to cycle, therefore infrastructure to support cyclists needed building. He added that the air quality monitors did not work as well for cyclists as they did for pedestrians. Paul Coleman agreed, stating that the portable monitors were not as accurate at the stationary ones.

Kieran Amos (Chief Fire Officer) informed the committee that Warwickshire County Council's cycling to work scheme was relaunched in November 2020 and included hiring a bike for 12 months tax free with an option to purchase at the end.

In response to Councillor Shilton, Paul Coleman confirmed that car sharing was not considered during the scheme. Councillor Margaret Bell expressed her concerns with particulate matter and its effects on environmental health and hoped the project would have a wider impact. The Chair informed the committee that as planning and development of new workplaces was administered by the districts and boroughs, secure bike storage could be implemented into their planning requirements.

5. Developer Contributions Reporting

Chris Egan (Lead Commissioner Strategic Growth and Infrastructure) stated that the report summarised the annual infrastructure statement (AIS) which must legally be provided by all local authorities and show all the developer contributions the local authority receives annually. The statement provided current CILs (community infrastructure levy) implemented. The 2019/20 AIS was approved by Cabinet on the 10th December 2020 and published on the 31st. The production of the 2020/2021 statement aimed to reduce the burden of producing the statement in the future through improved monitoring processes and provide greater transparency. The committee was asked to note the recommendations as printed.

Following several queries from Councillor Kondakor, Graham Palmer (Infrastructure Strategy & Commissioning Lead) stated that 'trigger points' were implemented with all developments so the money would be brought in at points when the infrastructure will be provided. Flexibility agreements were brought in around the times that the funding could be spent to ensure infrastructure is provided at the right time. Funding was often held by the council so it could be provided at the correct time.

Mark Ryder (Strategic Director – Communities) added that there were specific requirements on where and how developer contribution money can be spent, which stops the money being spent on other services. However, it can be added with other funding to link schemes together, for example the Europa Way scheme.

Councillor Holland praised the report and raised whether the NHS could receive contributor's money. Chris Egan noted that Section 38 funding was not covered by the AIS and requests for funding from developers for the NHS/CCGs needs to come from the organisations themselves.

In response to Councillor Shilton, Chris Egan noted that road agreements came under the section 38 agreements which is when the developer designs and implements a road with the permission of the local authority; as this process is done outside section 106, it makes it difficult for the road to be adopted. Graham Palmer clarified that unadopted roads do not stop section 106 contributions. Mark Ryder added that there was no legal requirement for developers to adopt roads, but this was encouraged by the Council.

Councillor Bell noted that developments felt 'ad hoc' so building conditions should be reviewed instead and a plan be formulated. Mark Ryder noted that as developer contributions were negotiated it was difficult to get them to pay more than compulsory; he agreed that there was a need to look at schemes interacting with each other. Graham Palmer noted that current legislation allowed multiple projects to be carried out from one contribution pool.

Resolved:

1. The committee note the production and publication of the Annual Infrastructure Statement 2019/20.
2. The committee note the approach to be taken to publish developer contribution data in future years.
3. The committee is asked to provide feedback on the statement and suggestions to improve future Annual Infrastructure Statements

6. 'Nuckle' Line Update (briefing note)

Margaret Smith (Lead Commissioner - Transport Planning) informed the committee that the Nuckle line would allow two hourly trains to run between Coventry and Nuneaton with a new bay platform at Coventry Station. The line and platform projects were run by Coventry City Council and Warwickshire County Council was a partner in the scheme, which was delayed in February 2020 due to the tender cost being higher than the budget. Work was undertaken with Coventry and Network Rail to reduce costs, but this was delayed due to disputes over where the funding sat and transferring it to Network Rail. Residual funding from an earlier stage was used to resolve the issue, a future meeting with Coventry and the Nuckle Board was soon due.

In response to Councillor Shilton, Margaret Smith clarified that the bay platform was not needed for the line to go through to Leamington. In response to Councillor Kondakor, Margaret Smith stated that National Rail frequently reviewed the freight train lines and timetables frequently to check where cross-savings could be made and worked around.

Following a question from Councillor Shilton, Nadia Ingles agreed to get information on the trainline between Kenilworth and Nuneaton from her health and transport colleagues. Margaret Smith added this suspended route was brought up with West Midlands Trains (WMT) to resolve. Councillor Secombe stated that WMT informed them that the line was suspended due to Covid-19 which stopped them from being able to train new drivers, however, the bus replacement service will continue. In response to Councillor Kondakor's points about these buses being empty, Margaret Smith agreed to bring it to the next meeting, but they likely had to run these services as they had a commitment to provide this service. The Chair informed the committee that WMT published online that their lines were constantly being reviewed.

In response to Councillor Sargeant's points on support being given to people who want to train up to be train and bus drivers, David Ayton-Hill agreed to bring this to the employability and localities team.

7. Update on Scrutiny Review

Nichola Vine (Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Legal and Democratic)) stated that Dr Jane Martin CBE was appointed to provide advice on scrutiny at Warwickshire County Council and how to move forward with its approach. The work started in February 2020 but was delayed due to Covid-19. The feedback was largely positive, especially with the Covid-19 recovery groups, TFG's and member training. Suggestions for improvement included greater alignment with corporate objectives, more utilisation of technology, a Chair's panel for the OSCs, a dedicated scrutiny team and getting more out of the committees, as stated in the report.

Councillor Kondakor raised that OSC meetings needed to be spread out more as this was his second OSC of the day and that they should be more cross-party. He disagreed with the Chair's

group as all OSC Chairs were from the ruling party as of February 2021. Councillor Holland agreed that members from other parties should be committee Chairs to create a cross-party balance. The Chair clarified that all committee Chairs being from the ruling party had not always been the case.

Councillor Jenns stated that Dr Martin's recommendations should be enforced post-election. The Chair concurred with this.

Resolved:

The Committee considers and comments upon the findings of the independent review into Overview and Scrutiny

8. Communities OSC Work Programme

In response to Councillor Kondakor, the Chair stated the briefing note will be discussed in April's chair and spokes meeting and June's OSC meeting as agreed in February's chair and spokes.

Councillor Shilton proposed that the work programme be taken as read. This was seconded by Councillor Seb Gran.


A debate followed regarding viewing the briefing note before June's meeting.

Councillor Kondakor proposed formally discussing the Bermuda Bridge briefing note as part of urgent items. This was not seconded.

9. Urgent Items

None.

The meeting rose at 16:13


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Chair