

Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Friday, 5 July 2019, County Hall, Worcester - 10.00 am

Minutes

Present:

Mr A A J Adams (Chairman), Mr G R Brookes,
Mr B Clayton, Mr M E Jenkins, Mr A D Kent and
Ms C M Stalker

Also attended:

Dr K A Pollock, Cabinet Member with responsibility for
Economy and Infrastructure
Ms P Agar
Mr P Grove
Mrs E B Tucker
Mr P A Tuthill
Rod Reynolds, Manager, Road Safety Team
Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police
David Perridge, Safer Roads Partnership / West Mercia
Police
Bob Haynes, Worcestershire Safer Roads Partnership /
West Mercia Police

John Hobbs (Director of Economy and Infrastructure),
Paul Smith (Transport Operations Manager),
Sally Everest (Network Control Manager), Lynsey Keir
(Transport Infrastructure Commissioning & Project Office
Manager), Sarah Gilmour (Intelligent Transport Systems
Manager, Economy and Infrastructure Directorate),
Michael Hudson (Chief Financial Officer),
Wendy Pickering (Finance Manager), Dave Corbett
(Management Information Analyst), Sandy Bannister
(Corporate Equality and Diversity Manager),
Sheena Jones (Democratic Governance and Scrutiny
Manager) and Emma James (Overview and Scrutiny
Officer)

Available Papers

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 May 2019
(previously circulated).

(A copy of document A will be attached to the signed
Minutes).

339 Apologies and Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.
Apologies had been received from Panel members Paul
Denham, James O'Donnell and Rebecca Vale. Apologies
had also been received from the Cabinet Member with
Responsibility for Highways (Cllr Alan Amos) and for

		Education and Skills (Cllr Marcus Hart)
340	Declarations of Interest and of any Party Whip	None.
341	Public Participation	None.
342	Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting	The Minutes of the meeting on 8 May 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
343	Worcestershire Passenger Transport Strategy Public Consultation	<p>The Chairman explained that this agenda item had been due for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) the previous week but had needed to be referred to this Panel. Members of the OSPB had been invited to the meeting.</p> <p>Paul Smith, the Council's Transport Operations Manager had been asked to provide an overview of the draft Worcestershire Passenger Transport Strategy, which was being consulted on, so that the Panel could provide feedback to the consultation.</p> <p>The Transport Operations Manager had prepared a presentation to summarise development of the draft Strategy, consultation on which had commenced on 6 June and would run until 13 September, thereby giving more time for schools to contribute. The consultation document was intended to set out and gain feedback on a wide range of themes which it was believed would inform the Strategy and the future for passenger transport. The draft Strategy was not at all set in stone.</p> <p>Members had been actively engaged and been sent a list of activities. So far, 98% of consultation responses were digital, however officers wanted to reach all groups of people and had liaised with the Council's Corporate Equality and Diversity Manager about this. Copies had been placed in locations such as libraries and tourist information centres and themes had been incorporated into the Summer roadshows.</p> <p>The key objectives were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to create an inclusive Passenger Transport Strategy • to provide a network which offers access to key

- services (rural and urban)
- to ensure a sustainable network
- assessment of the impact of the Bus Services Act 2017
- clarity about where, when and how the Local Authority would determine subsidising services

The consultation was going very well, with approximately 600 responses so far, and around 9000 anticipated.

Analysis of feedback would include themes from narrative comments; early insight pointed to the need to maximise assets for example use of school transport, the need to raise the profile of community transport, the latter of which was therefore being included in the Summer roadshows, along with carshare schemes.

The Chairman invited comments and the following main points were raised:

- Panel members reported positive feedback from residents that the consultation was clear and informative about the issues being considered.
- The Transport Operations Manager agreed with a point from a Panel member about the importance of linking bus and rail services, including with the Birmingham transport network. It would also be important that services were complimentary and avoided duplication.
- A Panel member reported feedback that buses of appropriate size for the route were important.
- A Panel member had found community transport leaflets helpful and the Transport Operations Manager agreed more work was needed to promote services as publicity tended to be promoted to the known market.
- In a response to a query about linking new and existing bus and cycle routes to business development sites, this was something the Officer hoped to discuss more with bus operators.
- A member from outside the Panel sought reassurance that affordable housing would not be held back by lack of bus services, since she was aware that a recent planning application had been turned down on these grounds. The Officer was not aware of particular issues and highlighted that S106 funds were there to be bid for – officers were trying to promote this, as well as working to make such services sustainable in the long-term.
- When asked about whether franchising may provide the Council with more control, the

Transport Operations Manager said that franchising was available in mayoral cities, but that a quality partnership was likely to be the best option for Worcestershire.

- A Panel member asked what could be done to convince new people to use buses, even as an alternative for example on wet weather days. The Officer agreed, hoped that the consultation would help and advised that technology (smartphone use) and increased marketing would be key, however it was important to get the basics right first such as a reliable service. The Panel welcomed the development of technology and marketing around bus use and asked to be kept informed, which the Officer hoped would be within 12 months.
- When asked what other opportunities were being considered, the Officer said there were a range of areas of generic benefit, such as branding and cross-operator tickets, however from a commercial perspective there were many things the Council could not do.
- A member from outside the Panel who was on the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) spoke about the cost effectiveness of the motability scheme and asked about schemes in Worcestershire. He was advised that the scheme was not available to those over 65 however the Council was absolutely encouraging carshare schemes, which may also pick up those with additional needs.
- The OSPB member also referred to his work alongside another local member following the loss of bus services in Malvern which it was hoped would lead to a community bus scheme and the Officer undertook to check progress.
- When asked what consideration had been given to other councils' work, the Panel was advised that desk top research had been done into best practice nationwide, and further research would be completed into community transport schemes.
- The Chairman referred to rural transport work by Lincoln University which had been circulated to the Panel and would be forwarded to the Officer.
- Regarding community transport, a Panel member suggested there would be merit in consolidating access to the various schemes, and the potential for electric vehicles to reduce costs, along with volunteer drivers.
- A member from outside the Panel suggested that the way forward may be tailored solutions for

those who needed it, since large parts of bus timetables had been lost.

Summing up, the Chairman was pleased that the Worcestershire Passenger Transport Strategy was being reviewed as a whole, and incorporated areas such as commerciality, community transport, an ageing population and rurality. He was pleased with the response to the consultation so far and was reassured that consideration would also be given to themes from narrative comments. He asked that officers ensure copies of the consultation be made available at locations like The Hive, and for the Panel to be kept updated.

Comments were invited from others present and from members these included a suggestion for regular press releases during the consultation, a note of caution about integrating transport to school with wider services because not everyone wanted to travel together, and also the need for consideration about the disparity between towns and rural areas, given the need for bus services in rural parts.

The Chairman agreed that regular press releases would be helpful.

344 Traffic Calming

In attendance for this item were:

Worcestershire County Council:

Sally Everest, Network Control Manager

Lynsey Keir, Transport Infrastructure Commissioning and Project Office Manager

Sarah Gilmour, Intelligent Transport Systems Manager

Cllr Ken Pollock, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Infrastructure and Environment

(Safer Roads Partnership / West Mercia)

Rod Reynolds, Safer Roads Partnership Manager

David Perridge, Operations Manager Safer Roads Partnership

Bob Haynes, Traffic Management Advisor

(Worcestershire) Safer Roads Partnership

The Chairman welcomed the guests for the discussion about traffic calming, which he was aware was a big issue for many parishes and therefore the Panel was keen to learn what work was being done in Worcestershire.

The Council's Network Control Manager explained that

the Council monitored all accidents. In appraising accidents there were many avenues which could be taken, one of which was traffic calming, and this could also be used to benefit the environment.

The Network Control Manager summarised the main points of the Agenda report, which included background around justification for implementing traffic calming, the process for road safety improvement schemes, examples, the community improvement scheme route, types of traffic calming features available, information on what other local authorities do, speed limit history, examples of speed limit use, and delivering improvements for walking and cycling.

The Chairman invited questions and the following main points were raised:

- Referring to the process for road safety and the five examples given of issues and resultant schemes, the Chairman asked how many schemes had been done over the last 12 months. The Transport Infrastructure Commissioning and Project Office Manager advised that three schemes were pending and two underway, and then clarified that the question was complex since smaller traffic calming measures formed part of a variety of different projects, not just specific traffic calming ones. She clarified that roughly 5 standalone traffic calming schemes would be done over 12 months, but as a team approximately 60 schemes.
- The Chairman suggested that Worcestershire did not favour road humps and the officers agreed that they were not popular and confirmed that none had been added in the past 5 years.
- A member reported problems in his division with vehicle access and parking around speed cushions and the officers suggested any such issues would probably relate to historical rather than current schemes, since parking was examined as part of considering a scheme.
- A member sought clarification about the sign-off process for progressing community improvement schemes, specifically if the scheme would be stopped if objections were expressed by one of the organisations consulted. The Transport Infrastructure Commissioning and Project Office Manager explained that potential schemes had to be advertised and local members would also receive a copy of the report. She pointed out that

lack of support, say from the Police would prompt the Council's officers to also question and review the scheme since objections did need to be taken into account. In such cases officers would contact those objecting to understand and discuss and that consensus was usually reached.

- When asked whether the local member would still have the final say in cases where the Police had raised objections, the Traffic Management Advisor from the Safer Roads Partnership (SRP) explained the role of the Police as a consultee; advice would be given on the occasions asked, which usually occurred for schemes combining speed bumps etc with a crossing. In response to further queries, he confirmed that the Police would give advice but that the final decision about the scheme was the Council's. The Network Control Manager pointed out that if feedback from consultees indicated a potential safety aspect had been overlooked, the officers would need to look at this and would liaise with the local member. When asked whether officers therefore had the final say rather than the local members, the Network Control Manager advised that in cases where the local member did not support the decision, the officers would discuss with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways (CMR). Further clarification was sought about the role of CMR at this stage and the officers reiterated the process, whereby a report was produced taking all information into account and indicating whether or not the proposals were supported for implementation – this was the extent of the officers' knowledge of the process.
- Another Panel member reported his experience of requests for traffic calming action not being addressed on roads where a number of pedestrians had been hit or where he was trying to encourage cycling and walking; this left him feeling helpless and frustrated.
- Acknowledging the contentiousness of the sign-off process for community improvement scheme routes, the Chairman invited comment from the CMR for Economy and Infrastructure who was present, and he suggested that the Council would be unwise to override Police advice. If a local member was concerned about objections to a scheme they were able to contact the CMR for Highways, who could look into the problem, however there were strict legal requirements which officers needed to adhere to.

- Panel members agreed that more clarity was needed on the process for approving community improvement schemes and the grounds for rejection so that they understood the reasons for schemes being turned down and who they could discuss this with. The Chairman pointed out that as a scrutiny panel there was the option to explore further these issues.
- A Panel member who had paid for a vehicle activated sign, asked about their effectiveness and both the Council officers and SRP representatives said that research indicated they were effective but worked best if moved around. The officers were aware of a report about this which could be circulated.
- The Chairman requested details of numbers of each traffic calming feature which had been installed over the past 12 months.
- The SRP representatives advised that there were various traffic calming measures which could be implemented, but that care and balance were needed in selecting the right option and taking account of consequences such as additional noise and pollution. They pointed out that if a road looked dangerous, in actual fact it was likely to be safer than one which looked safe.
- When asked about practices elsewhere, the Network Control Manager highlighted Gloucestershire's toolkit which encouraged communities to help themselves. She had discussed the benefits of the toolkit with the SRP representatives who were very receptive and had undertaken to do some work on it. The ideas in the toolkit worked better when promoted on an ongoing basis with community groups such as schools. The Panel supported this way forward and asked for the toolkit to be circulated.
- The officers also referred to Herefordshire's use of vehicle activated signs which were used in a more controlled and joined up way, which may increase effectiveness, although officers would not want to deter their use in Worcestershire.
- The SRP representatives displayed a road safety leaflet designed for foreign nationals, which would also be circulated. The SRP Manager spoke about the Police and Crime Commission road safety scheme, to which some councils had made applications.
- The SRP representatives highlighted Community Speed Watch as a fantastic way to engage the community, with 10 schemes in Worcestershire

and further expansion was encouraged, although recruiting and retaining volunteers was a problem. Community Speed Watch was controlled and funded by West Mercia at no cost to the Council.

- A member expressed the view that the main problem with community speed watch was getting agreement from West Mercia about where volunteers could stand and the SRP representatives agreed that safety was important and that some roads were not suitable. Nonetheless Panel members were very interested in learning more about the scheme and information would be circulated.
- Turning to speed reduction schemes, members asked for clarification on enforcement of 20 mph limits and the Operations Manager for the Safer Roads Partnership/West Mercia confirmed that 20 mph speed limits could be enforced by the Police but best practice guidance stated they should be self-regulated, and also recommended reducing speeds beforehand. Offenders could be written to or visited.
- A member reported the dramatic effect on driver behaviour of average speed cameras, which though prohibitively expensive may be more attractive if more revenue went back into the local area and this was something he had highlighted to the Home Secretary. The SRP Manager agreed that average speed cameras were very effective and advised that the SRP was bidding for a scheme at a cost of around £440,000 on the A449 which would be the first of its kind in Worcestershire, and everyone agreed this was a good news story if it helped to save a life. The timescale for this was 12 months.
- The Chairman asked about 'think!' signs and referred to a resident's suggestion for a local road which had seen three recent deaths. The SRP representatives said that there were different schools of thought, with some concern about adding distractions for drivers. He also pointed out that not all collisions were necessarily speed related, although there were areas where they were.
- Cllr Jenkins asked about 20mph speed limits outside schools and the Council officers pointed out the need to determine the benefit if existing speeds levels were close and would provide further information outside of the meeting.
- The Transport Infrastructure Commissioning and Project Office Manager spoke about the team's

focus of work which had to be evidence-led. All incidences were looked at and prioritized, however this only included reported accidents.

- When asked, the SRP representatives reiterated that only accidents where someone had been injured (including slightly injured) or killed were reviewed, since damage-only incidents were non reportable. However they also highlighted new technology which would enable the Police to use tablets to record accident data which would greatly speed up the process.
- The Chairman pointed out that the importance of 'near misses' in health and safety review and expressed concern that serious incidents were not factored in simply because no one had been hurt, giving the example of a junction in his division and concern from parishes who had tried to get measures taken. The SRP representatives acknowledged this point and said that a common complaint was people advising them about accidents which had not been reported, and not having detail about an accident made it difficult to review. The Council's Intelligent Transport Systems Manager explained that her team required an in-depth accident report in order to look into any measures; if the evidence was there then measures could be considered but it would be very tricky and resource intensive to review damage only incidents in the absence of this detail. This issue was also referred to by other Panel members, and therefore flagged up as a comment for the Police to consider.
- The Transport Infrastructure Commissioning and Project Office Manager displayed some photos to demonstrate examples of schemes where measures had been implemented to address residents' concerns about speed and improve access for walking and cycling and the overall the environment - including resurfacing a bridleway, highlighting cycle use at junctions, signage, widening paths, and linking new developments with town centres. Members present were aware of the success of schemes and praised their effectiveness.
- Much of the Transport Infrastructure Team's work was funded by money from local members and from S106, and often very simple, cost effective work could be very effective. When asked how the team's work compared with elsewhere, the Project Office Manager believed that work in Worcestershire was not far off at all and reported

the go ahead for a new project on the Alcester Road.

- In response to a question about use of 3/2/1 signs before road hazards, the Council's officers believed these had been removed from the regulations and therefore no longer permitted but would check.
- When asked about the use of coloured tarmac on the approach to villages, crossings etc, the Council's officers confirmed it was expensive and the application used initially for this wore out very quickly. Different colour tarmac was still used to highlight crossings but was now included within the structure of the highway itself.
- The Chairman spoke about the cyclist Chris Boardman's work to get more, cheaper crossings introduced, and would send photos to the Council officers.
- The chairman thanked the SRP for use of mobile speed cameras in his division, which were having a real effect.
- The SRP representatives pointed out the importance of educating drivers, since recent analysis showed that increased risk-taking and rushing were the overriding factors in road accidents, rather than just speed. Also, a common problem was increased traffic volumes on roads not designed for such use. The value of influencing younger drivers who were the next generation was stressed, and schemes delivered in liaison with the Council and Fire and Rescue Services, such as Green Light and Dying to Drive were referred to, about which further details would be provided.
- A member commented that while he was happy to fund traffic calming initiatives (through councillor divisional funding), he would like to understand the rationale for schemes being rejected.

The Panel requested the following information:

- recent data/reports on the effectiveness of vehicle activated signs
- numbers of each traffic calming feature implemented over the past 12 months (with the exception of vehicle activated signs, which were done by parishes)
- details of the grants available for traffic calming
- Gloucestershire County Council's toolkit on how communities can help themselves

345 Performance and In-year Budget Monitoring

- road safety leaflet for foreign nationals
- details of young driver campaigns (Green Light and Dying to Drive)
- community Speed Watch information

In attendance for this item were:

John Hobbs, Director of Environmental and Infrastructure
Michael Hudson, Chief Financial Officer
Wendy Pickering, Finance Manager for E&I
Dave Corbett, Management Information Analyst

Cllr Ken Pollock, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Infrastructure and Environment

Year-end Budget Monitoring

The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) introduced the Panel's consideration of year end budget information for 2018/19 for services relating to Economy and Environmental Services, and pointed out that from the start of the following year it was hoped to bring forward the timescale for publishing financial information, which in turn would provide the scrutiny panels with real time data.

Referring to the slides in the Agenda (pages 67 – 69), the CFO pointed out the good news about the Directorate underspend of £4.69m, and that this had helped to offset the Council's overall overspend for the year ending March 2019, which as reported to Cabinet in June was £2m.

There had been increased use of capitalisation, which was currently running at around £7.5m per year and when asked where this featured in the table, the CFO explained that £5m had already been taken off the base budget.

Regarding the reported variance of £2.8m for Business Administration and Systems, this would continue to be monitored although it was not felt to be an issue.

A lot of data had been used to set base budgets for 2019/20 and at the current position at the end of quarter one, there were no issues other than the deficit for waste services which was due to reduced waste tonnages, which would continue to be monitored. The Chairman's understanding of how the waste contract worked was confirmed; that the Council had to pay the contractor a fee for the difference between input and output (of the waste to energy plant) and since it was working more efficiently than anticipated, costs were higher. The Director of Economy and Environment (E&I) said that

another factor was the falling level of waste per household, although in the longer term this was balanced out by the number of new households.

Performance Monitoring

The Director of Economy and Infrastructure (E&I) highlighted the key points for performance relating to quarter four. In his view quarter four had been business as unusual, apart from the slight reduction in waste tonnages.

Figures for percentage of planned highways inspections completed on time were attributed to impact of the previous year's cold spells and hot summer, however he believed the Council had the most efficient repair approach. In his view the dip in performance was a temporary setback and the Corporate Plan ambition was to be in the upper quartile for performance by 2022.

A member reported residents' praise for pothole reporting.

Regarding trains, the Director projected improvements in routes to London.

Regarding condition of footways, the Chairman queried the impact of the additional £6m funding, and was advised that the funds had been directed to footways where people wanted it spent, generally closer to classified routes. Everyone agreed that public satisfaction with footways was an important and emotive topic especially for older people and the Director pointed out that online reporting was a useful tool in focusing attention.

Regarding public satisfaction levels with the condition of roads, the CMR referred to work on this topic during his chairmanship of the Scrutiny Panel, which had suggested disruption from roadworks to be a significant factor, also the public was largely unaware that works may be another agency's responsibility, and not the Council's. The Director's experience was that roads elsewhere in the country were inferior in terms of condition compared to Worcestershire, and he was therefore disappointed by the drop in public satisfaction, although positive feedback had been received from cycle groups.

Regarding waste disposal, a Panel member noted that although recycling levels were largely unchanged, this reflected the national trend and that the fall in amounts of waste produced by households was good news.

346 Work Plan

The Panel Chairman enquired about any issues for Environmental and Infrastructure services arising from the organisational redesign work, and the Director advised that the Directorate was doing quite well, therefore he was extremely cautious about changing things, in particular after previous bad experiences for example where services had been outsourced and staff expertise lost. These issues were subject to discussion and it was important that everyone including members identified where they saw value.

Members suggested there may be scope to ask contractors to find savings, however the Director was wary of the implications of contractors working at 'bare bones' level' or of cherry picking areas for savings, something which the Panel agreed on. However, members expressed the view that efficiencies could be made through encouraging contractors to work innovatively.

The Panel was praised the quality of the performance information now available to them.

The Chairman advised that all scrutiny work plans were being refreshed, therefore Panel members were asked to forward any suggestions to the Scrutiny officers.

The meeting ended at 1.13 pm

Chairman