

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 8 MAY 2019

PROGRESS WITH REDUCING CONGESTION AND HOW TO IMPROVE GETTING AROUND WORCESTERSHIRE

Summary

1. The Panel will receive an update on progress with reducing congestion and how to improve getting around Worcestershire, including updates on main schemes and priority areas.
2. The Panel is also keen to hear examples of national good practice, therefore the Directorate has arranged for an external expert to attend the meeting, to provide an external perspective on tackling congestion and what is working and where.
3. The Cabinet Member and Officers from the Economy and Infrastructure Directorate have also been invited to attend.

Background

4. Reducing congestion across the County is one of the Council's key priorities.
5. Under the previous term of Council, the Panel looked at congestion as part of a broader overview of the Local Transport Plan 2017-2030 (LTP4).
6. Whilst broadly supportive of the refreshed LTP, Panel Members have been keen to maintain oversight of the Council's progress with reducing congestion and improving how to get around Worcestershire. Recent relevant Scrutiny meetings have included discussions on cycling, footways, the role of Highways England and streetworks.
7. The LTP is a high-level statutory document which sets the strategic vision and direction of highways and transportation services. LTP4 sets out the issues and the Council's priorities for investment in transport infrastructure technology and services to support travel by all relevant modes of transport, including walking, cycling, rail, highways (car, van, freight and motorcycles), bus and community transport. The approach recognises that transport networks have a finite capacity and that planned development growth not only brings challenges for this but also for air quality and road safety.
8. Worcestershire's Local Transport Plan is available on the Council's website at: http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/9024/worcestershire_s_local_transport_plan_ltp_2018_-_2030

Equality and Diversity Implications

9. The latest Census data (2011) and subsequent Annual Travel Survey identifies that approximately **17%** of households in Worcestershire do not have access to a motorised form of transport. This figure has remained relatively static since around 2008, and is now starting to increase slightly, which suggests that Worcestershire has experienced 'peak' levels of car ownership. These households will continue to be reliant on alternative modes of transport to enable them to enjoy a good quality of life.

10. Unfortunately, growing levels of congestion, particularly in urban areas is contributing towards an increasingly challenging operational environment for commercial bus services in Worcestershire, resulting in sharp network decline. Similarly, heavily congested streets present an unattractive and unhealthy environment for pedestrians and cyclists, so continued failure to tackle over reliance on the private car as the main provider of access in Worcestershire will cause increasing disadvantage to these groups, marginalising access to society from those that do not have access to a car.

Purpose of the Meeting

11. The Panel has the opportunity to find out about progress with reducing congestion, improving how to get around the County, and receive an update on main schemes and priority areas.

12. During the discussion the Panel may want to refer to the following queries referred to during the previous discussion:

- Better and more comprehensive parking management
- how to maximise Worcestershire's rail capacity
- how to reverse decline of Worcestershire's commercial bus networks
- Improvement of walking and cycling infrastructure, to provide viable alternatives to driving
- the importance of infrastructure capacity keeping pace with housing developments
- consideration of creative solutions in reducing congestion for example, streamlining strategic roads away from congested urban areas
- safety concerns about some routes, especially in view of new housing developments, for example the A46 Stratford to Evesham.

13. The Panel is asked to:

- determine whether any further information or scrutiny is required at this stage
- agree any comments to highlight to the Cabinet Member.

Supporting Information

Appendix – Additional Information on Congestion

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal and Democratic Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- Agenda and Minutes of Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 9 May and 7 March 2018, 3 October and 20 January 2017, - available on the Council's website at:
<http://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeed=388>