

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

held on Monday, 19th October, 2020 Virtually.

PRESENT

Councillor JP Findlow (Chairman)
Councillor Q Abel (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors L Braithwaite, S Brookfield, J Buckley, A Farrall, P Groves, M Hunter, D Jefferay, C Leach and K Parkinson

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Nick Mannion- Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration
Councillor James Nicholas- Deputy Portfolio Holder for Transport and Highways

Frank Jordan, Executive Director of Place
Chris Hindle, Head of Strategic Infrastructure
Andrew Ross, Director of Infrastructure & Highways
Peter Skates, Director of Growth & Enterprise
Paul Bayley, Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services
Nick Kelly, Environmental Protection Team Leader
Richard Hibbert, Head of Strategic Transport and Parking

22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor Tony Dean.

The Committee noted the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste was unable to attend the meeting and so the Deputy Portfolio Holder for Transport and Waste, Councillor James Nicholas attended the meeting to update the Committee on her behalf.

23 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED-

That the minutes of the meeting 21 September 2020 be approved as a correct and accurate record.

24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

25 WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations of the existence of a party whip.

26 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

Local Resident Richard Hamilton attended the meeting and made a statement relating to Air Quality Monitoring.

Richard noted that Cheshire East had introduced a horizontal distance adjustment to the air quality monitoring results for Nitrogen Dioxide to allow for the distance between the receptors and the face of buildings.

Richard requested assurance that the current air quality monitoring results and the reports to the Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (Defra), including the one to be approved today, include adjustments for both vertical displacements and density as well as horizontal displacements in order to provide a more accurate presentation of nitrogen dioxide pollution in the borough.

Paul Bayley, Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services addressed the immediate concerns within the statement and advised that any further Air Quality matters would be addressed during the Air Quality item on the agenda.

RESOLVED-

That Richard be thanked for his attendance and statement at the meeting.

27 CREWE CENTRE REGENERATION

Frank Jordan, the Executive Director of Place introduced this item to the Committee.

The Committee heard that this paper outlined both the importance of Crewe at a national level, and what could be done to tackle longstanding issues related to health and economic outcomes for local population. The key measure of success for residents was to get the benefit of that.

Whilst the focus was on Crewe, there was emphasis on supporting the regeneration of the town centre to provide a package of intervention, ensuring strategic links, and support of other towns both for now and for the next 4-5 years.

Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise gave a presentation to the Committee.

Since the last update to this committee in February, a full business case had been submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) an announcement was expected in November and if successful, a paper would be submitted to Cabinet to recommend accepting the grant.

The aspiration was to bring back in town living, to use car park sites for potential developments for living.

£760k accelerated funding was available provided it is invested by March 2021. That had been taken forward with the Ly2 Development and included physical enhancements to the square.

Peter explained the purpose of the report to this Committee was to note the Council was the accountable body to the Crewe Town Board and had delegated authority to the Portfolio Holder. Crewe Town Board was not a legal entity but

informally constituted. The Portfolio Holder, in consultation with the Executive Director of Place and approval of the Board would submit a Town Investment Plan to Government and submit a bid to the Towns Fund to Government.

Andrew Ross, Director of Infrastructure & Highways brought a presentation to update the Committee on connectivity into Crewe via HS2 and station regeneration.

The Committee was advised that Network Rail led a project to make Crewe station sufficient capacity to serve seven high speed trains per hour, increasing both size and scale of the station.

Government have commenced design refinement consultation.

In order to accommodate the size of the high speed trains coming to Crewe, there would need to be expanded platforms and a new access point on Weston Road. The Council had worked closely with Government and Network Rail on this aspect of the project.

There were plans to make enhancements to Nantwich Road that would provide a stronger link to Crewe Town Centre and access for all modes of transport- bus, taxi, pick up and drop off.

The Committee was advised of three imminent road junction improvements:

- 1) To the west of station (mill street, gresty road area) to improve area for pedestrians and cyclist;
- 2) The Weston road roundabout, to upgrade and make improvements to widen Weston road to 4 lanes; and
- 3) The Station access, Crewe arms roundabout and station access. A new road bridge link to south of station, would improve links for all modes.

A business case was submitted to Government at the end of February and the Council received correspondence from Government in May in favour of the project but the global pandemic had caused the need to reflect and review the basis of the business case.

The plan covered Local Plan strategic employment sites and extended into Cheshire West and Warrington. Further meetings had been arranged to review the revised proposition with indicative approval by November 2020.

The Committee was invited to ask any questions. There was some discussion on:

- The expectation of patronage on trains post-pandemic and how the business case is being driven on the delivery of the Local Plan;
- The acknowledgement of risk management and the expectation of 5-7 high speed trains an hour to serve Crewe, but until contracts had been signed, nothing was certain;
- The infrastructure Northern Rail were upgrading would facilitate 2 trains an hour to London in 55 mins. 20 mins to Manchester and less than 30 mins to centre of Birmingham;
- Acknowledgment that the Council would not want to miss an opportunity to support local growth;

- The recognition that the Bus Station in Crewe is deteriorating rapidly, and that there were conversations between the Bus Station and Arriva about the terms of their lease and looking at improvements. The new development included a Bus Station.
- A planning application would be submitted in spring for a multi storey and bus station as part of the leisure led retail scheme. The market at the moment is for leisure, for Crewe to become a desirable place in which to visit, thereby unlocking the visitor economy to the town;
- The paper did not commit to the Council to making significant investment or resources if Government don't approve business rate retention then the Council can adjust the scheme commensurate with the response given by Government;
- In terms of wider connectivity to the west of the County, Crewe North connection would enable the Liverpool services to come via Crewe. West Coast services, the 2 London fast services are to Liverpool, Transport for the North were working on the East-West Link from West Leg of Manchester to take a spur to Liverpool. There would be a high speed to Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds. In terms of Chester- there was some discussion about electrification from Crewe to Chester. The benefit of the longer platforms at Crewe station was the ability to split them and serve more destinations;
- There was some work ongoing with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to potentially reopen the Middlewich train line for local services. Working sub-regionally and locally on revised bus strategy for the borough to improve bus connectivity.

RESOLVED- That:

- a) Frank, Peter and Andrew be thanked for their attendance and presentations to the Committee;
- b) The recommendations within the report be noted and endorsed to Cabinet by this Committee.

28 TOWN DELIVERY PLANS AND RECOVERY PLAN / CAR PARKING PROPOSALS

Richard Hibbert, Team Manager for Strategic Infrastructure introduced this item to the Committee.

The Committee heard some background to the proposed consultations that had arisen from the adoption of the Local Transport Plan Strategy (in October 2019) which included a High Level Parking Strategy. The aim of the consultations was to engage with town, communities, Members and stakeholders to inform future direction. The aim of the consultations was to inform 11 delivery plans that flow from that strategy so local stakeholders can then shape that plan.

Richard acknowledged that the consultations were in progress during a time when there is a challenge to individuals however the mechanisms that would be used would take full account of the challenges of the pandemic.

There was a need to renew the parking strategy across the borough. The 11 delivery plans would have a broad geography with a focus on town centres and access to them with key connections to wider economic areas.

The consultation was being viewed as a chance to get right blend of transport in the right places with integrated transport programmes. Not all would be funded but there was an opportunity to inform future funding bids and bidding opportunities.

Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise addressed the Committee and advised that given the effects of the pandemic this year, the intention was to approach 9 of the 11 towns at the same time in Phase 1. Focus would be on infrastructure, pedestrian links and if more people are now working from home, this would mean less commuting traffic to conurbations such as Stoke and Manchester.

Wellbeing, lifestyle and mental health would be considered, plus how the public sector could bring in additional funding and encourage private sector funding.

Richard advised the Committee that Car Parking was a fundamental part of any transport plan for any borough.

At Cheshire East, the borough still operated public pay and display car parks that were a legacy from the 3 former councils with little change over last 10 years. This consultation looked to establish an appropriate Cheshire East approach.

Key themes would include:

- The role of car parking and access in town centres;
- The Level of charges across borough and harmonisation;
- Street parking; and
- How the Council Parking service might be further developed.

The Committee saw a range of car parking charges for the first hour of parking from neighbouring authorities, generally it was cheaper in the west, more expensive to the south.

The Committee were then shown a series of key questions that would be integrated as part of the consultation.

The Committee were advised that parking in residential areas as this was a nuisance problem in many areas and this would be something the consultation would address along with the opportunity to comment on provision of electric charging point and cycle parking, and contactless payments.

In terms of communication, this would include:

- hard copy plans in local libraries, and be geographically relevant to the area;
- A series of Microsoft Teams calls with stakeholder groups;

- A web-hosted consultation for each Town Plan with a set of objectives for each town that met all requirements as a means of consultation for diversity; and
- An 11 week consultation period starting early Nov 2020- finish mid Jan 2021. (Not including Christmas period).

The Committee were given the opportunity to ask questions and there was some discussion that included:

- The acknowledgement that those living in towns would have a different experience of consultation and driving into towns than those in rural areas, and therefore parity was needed;
- Promotion of the survey on car parks;
- The possibility of engaging Members with the steering groups for consultation;
- The possibility of an emissions based charging scale to acknowledge bigger vehicles are higher consuming in terms of emissions and promote cleaner vehicles or better choices about when and where to use a vehicle;
- The consultation was not about the proposals, but on the principles at present; and
- The importance of noting that harmonisation did not equate to standardisation.

RESOLVED- That:

- a) Richard and Peter be thanked for their attendance and presentation to the Committee;
- b) That the presentation be received and noted.

29 AIR QUALITY ANNUAL STATUS REPORT

Paul Bayley, Director for Environment and Neighbourhoods introduced this item to the Committee and Nick Kelly, Environmental Protection Team Leader, attended the meeting to provide the Committee with any further detail as required.

The Annual Status Report reported trends and potential strategies for improvement.

The Committee was advised that monitoring data showed that the air quality for Cheshire East continued to improve and that there were no recommendations for any new areas for control but does propose revocation of 3.

The Committee was invited to ask questions and there was some conversation that covered:

- Major causes of air pollution are caused by a number of contributing factors one of which was engine idling and slow moving hot engines;
- The Council were looking to reduce the environmental impact of its vehicle fleet;
- The impact of the global pandemic did not feature in the report, but data during the pandemic showed a drop in pollution;
- Diffusion tubes that measured the air quality needed to be out of reach of people;
- The report made reference to recent monitored traffic data not being available, Nick advised that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

(Defra) release traffic levels and the Council did not want to guess. However levels had been significantly below on this occasion;

- There was a query about why the Wilmslow/Altrincham scheme had been removed in February 2020;
- There had been a national trend that had shown air quality to drop.

RESOLVED- That:

- a) Paul be thanked for his attendance and presentation to the Committee;
- b) The contents of the report and presentation be received and noted;
- c) Nick Kelly provide feedback directly in respect of the Wilmslow/Altrincham scheme.

30 UNITED UTILITIES UPDATE

The Chairman advised the Committee that due to a late submission of their presentation, this had left no time for review or to establish factual accuracy, on this basis the item had been deferred.

RESOLVED-

That the item for United Utilities be brought as part of the evidence before the Task and Finish Group appointed to look at flooding, where this matter can be discussed in more detail.

31 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED-

That the Forward Plan be received and noted.

32 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered it's Work Programme.

The Chairman advised of two points of business:

- 1) On the basis that there had been a close succession of meetings recently where a number of Work Programme items had been covered, the Chairman proposed that the meeting for the 14th December should be cancelled; and
- 2) During the last Committee meeting of the 21 September, it was agreed that a Task and Finish Group would be formed from Members of this Committee to undertake an in-depth review of flooding and flood-risk management in Cheshire East. The following Members had volunteered to be part of the membership of this group:

Councillor Quentin Abel;

Councillor June Buckley;

Councillor Tony Dean;

Councillor Paul Findlow;
Councillor Peter Groves; and
Councillor Kate Parkinson.

RESOLVED-

That the meeting on the 14th December be cancelled; and that the Membership for the newly formed Task and Finish Group be endorsed by this Committee.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.55 pm

Councillor JP Findlow (Chairman)