

**Minutes of the meeting of General scrutiny committee held at
The Council Chamber - The Shire Hall, St. Peter's Square,
Hereford, HR1 2HX on Tuesday 11 July 2017 at 10.30 am**

Present: Councillor WLS Bowen (Chairman)
Councillor EJ Swinglehurst (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: BA Baker, JM Bartlett, EPJ Harvey and JF Johnson

In attendance: Councillors PM Morgan (Cabinet Member), PD Price (Cabinet Member) and P Rone (Cabinet Member)

Officers: A Blackman, (Admissions and Transport Policy Manager) S Burgess (Head of Transport and Access Services), J Callard (Transportation Strategy Manager), S Hodges (Directorate Services Team Leader), X Middleton (Emergency and Resilience Officer); and Richard Perkins (Asset Management Team Leader, Balfour Beatty Living Places), J Coleman (Democratic Services Manager/Statutory Scrutiny Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor A Warmington.

2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor EPJ Harvey substituted for Councillor A Warmington.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Agenda item 7: Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

Councillors BA Baker and WLS Bowen declared non-pecuniary interests as Council appointees to the River Lugg Internal Drainage Board.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2017 be approved as a correct record.

5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None.

6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

None.

7. SUSTAINABLE MODES OF TRAVEL TO SCHOOL STRATEGY

The Committee's views were sought on the council's draft Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy (SMOTS) to inform cabinet's consideration of the strategy.

The Transportation Strategy Manager (TSM) gave a presentation. A copy of the presentation slides had been previously circulated.

In the course of discussion the following principal points were made. (References in brackets are to the page number in the published agenda papers.

- (p30) It was suggested that there was some ambiguity in figure 4, travel choices by settlement.
- (p28) The reference to the possibility of the vacant seat payment scheme being withdrawn at any time was questioned. The Admissions and Transport Policy Manager (ATPM) clarified the operation of the scheme. The Head of Transport and Access Services (HTAS) suggested that whilst factually correct the rather technical wording in the SMOTS needed to be refined.
- It was asked whether journey times and air quality should form part of the targets in the strategy.
- It was asked what the cost of undertaking the work on the strategy was. The TSM and HTAS replied that it was not costed as such and commented on the amount of officer time involved and various funding sources that were available.
- The response rate to the questionnaire issued to parents was extremely low making it difficult to have confidence in the robustness of the conclusions being drawn from the data. Councillors could not support and defend policies based on such poor data. It was questioned whether a more focused approach to securing data would be more cost effective and more beneficial.

The HTAS commented that prior to the requirement to produce SMOTS schools had been required by Government to complete the pupil level annual school census (plasc). There had been a move away from this top down approach.

- The cabinet member – health and wellbeing commented on the public health benefits that could be gained from behavioural change and encouraging healthier modes of travel to school and the importance of securing the input of the public health team. A Member suggested that it was important that schools were made aware of the public health data.
- It was asked whether there was any correlation between accidents and where travel plans were not in place. The HTAS agreed to seek clarification.
- (p38) The HTAS agreed to clarify why the bikeability scheme was delivered to level 2 and not to level 3.
- (p15) The TSM clarified that the reference to the Hereford Transport packages being **likely** to include cycling and walking measures simply reflected the fact that the transport packages were evolving. There was a wide range of proposals. These would be subject to public consultation.
- In relation to a concern questioning the way in which updating of the strategy had been undertaken the HTAS explained that the original strategy had been produced in 2009. Guidance did not specify review dates but required the strategy to be published every year. There had been updates to elements of the strategy but these had not been co-ordinated. The refreshed strategy aimed to consolidate the position.
- It was suggested that the strategy was not just a schools issue. Unless up to date and supported by reliable data there was not a firm basis to make sound decisions on investment in transport infrastructure.
- Advantage had not been taken of the scope to engage with Councillors who were school governors to encourage a greater response to the consultation process using the networks available to them.

- It was complex to prioritise actions and be sure as to what their impact was likely to be.
- The ATPM commented that the school capital investment strategy was on the website and this demonstrated the impact of the exercise of parental preference in seeking school places. The cabinet member – transport and roads commented on the adverse effects parental choice had had on the transport network.
- It was suggested that improved mapping of the effects of actions at various locations and breaking down the analysis to show the effect on different school types and locations would assist in matters such as negotiations over S106 contributions at the pre-planning application advice stage and in developing neighbourhood development plans.
- It was critically important that an implementation plan translating strategy into action was developed to accompany the strategy. This needed to join up actions required across the authority including education, transport and planning and have regard to priorities and all other relevant plans. The TMS commented that a prioritisation framework would be helpful as part of such a plan.
- It was observed that the Sustrans contract was part way through its duration yet the strategy had not been published. The relationship of that work to the strategy needed to be considered to ensure that that work contributed to the delivery of the strategy.
- It was suggested that the council should seek support from local MPs to assist in resolving transport issues and that their attention should be drawn how valuable Plasc surveys had previously been in assessing needs.

RESOLVED:

- That**
- (a) the strategy should clearly link targets to the strategy's aims and objectives and ensure that it showed how actions can deliver on those objectives;**
 - (b) the wording in relation to the vacant seat payment scheme should be modified;**
 - (c) the strategy should contain a clear timetable for review of the strategy;**
 - (d) the executive should again be asked to request schools to update their school travel plans making clear to them the potential benefits to schools of doing so and drawing on the support of councillors who are school governors to encourage this work to take place;**
 - (e) officers be requested to liaise with public health colleagues to assist in the development of effective targets;**
 - (f) the executive be asked to ensure that relevant council held data is actively shared with schools to prompt them to share their own data for the SMOTS;**
 - (g) the executive be requested to explore means of data collection for the SMOTS, to seek to secure more robust data to inform policy and assist in prioritising actions, with regard also being had to NHS data;**
 - (h) accident information in the strategy and methods of data collection should be clarified;**
 - (i) the executive be requested to seek support from local MPs to assist in resolving transport issues and that their attention should be drawn to the value that Plasc surveys had previously been in assessing needs;**

- (j) the executive is requested to ensure that the SMOTS makes clear the evidence used to inform the strategy, the efforts made to secure evidence and any deficiencies in collecting evidence;
- (k) the executive be requested to ensure that the capacity and performance measures in the Sustrans contract are aligned to the strategy;
- (l) the executive be requested to ensure that an implementation plan translating strategy into action is developed to accompany the strategy;
- (m) the Sustrans contract was part way through its duration yet the strategy had not been published. The relationship of that work to the strategy needed to be considered to ensure that that work contributed to the delivery of the strategy; and
- (n) the Statutory Scrutiny Officer be informed of the annual review of the action plan and following consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman consider whether there are any material matters requiring consideration by the Committee.

(The meeting adjourned between 12:05 and 12:18.)

8. HEREFORDSHIRE LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Committee was invited to review the draft high level strategic document and determine any recommendations to improve its effectiveness.

The Directorate Services Team Leader gave a presentation. A copy of the presentation slides had been previously circulated.

In the course of discussion the following principal points were made:

- The sustainability of the expectation placed on local communities to self-help was questioned.
- Regarding the mitigation of flood risks identified within the strategy, there was a feeling that the requisite proactive preventative work was not being carried out. Confirmation was sought that the allocation of funding within the current contract with Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) was capable of mitigating the flood risks identified within the strategy. In response it was clarified that a risk-based approach was taken targeting resources and funding at those areas that were most susceptible to flooding.

The Asset Management Team Leader (AMTL) commented that the contract was recognised nationally as performing well and efficient. Resources were in place to deliver the contract. Work had to be prioritised.

A Member questioned whether the contract was actually working efficiently commenting that there were a number of instances where the contractor seemed unresponsive and drainage problems occurred regularly and repeatedly at the same locations.

- There was a lack of clarity about the respective responsibilities of landowners and the council, for example in respect of clearing ditches, and communication needed to be improved.
- There was a lack of connection between the strategy and the facts on the ground.
- An implementation plan was needed to ensure that actions identified were completed in a co-ordinated way.

- It was remarked that water courses ran through some of the strategic housing sites in the core strategy. It was asked if the Environment Agency models could be relied upon and to what extent the council could review the Agency's assessments or had to take them at face value. It was also asked if the council drew on local knowledge as part of its evidence gathering.

The ATML commented on the complexity of flood modelling. BBLP did review planning applications and did draw on local knowledge. He also confirmed that the firm did also explore sources of available funding including s106 contributions. Funding was limited and priority was given to where funding from the environment agency could be secured.

The cabinet member – infrastructure commented on the work of the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) and the Environment Agency's strategy to manage fluvial flooding.

- Surface water run off needed to be managed and respective responsibilities of all the agencies involved made clear.
- Section 10.1 of the report acknowledged that changes to land use and land management affected flood risk but it was questioned whether the approach to mitigate this risk was sufficiently joined up; and whether local knowledge from the lengthsman and parish councils was actively sought
- It was also asked how much proactive work and how much reactive work was undertaken and how it was ensured that measures were proportionate to the risk.
- Clarification was sought on what arrangements were in place to ensure that Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SUDS) were maintained.

The ATML commented in response that the council did offer to adopt SUDS assets seeking to ensure that there was a sustainable long term solution for their management. There was a proactive approach to the emptying of highway gullies with a programme to deal with every gully within the next 18 months to years. Reactive work took place in response to specific issues. In terms of issues arising from land use the firm was working closely with the Wye Catchment Partnership and the Wye and Usk foundation. The Environment Agency tended to take the lead on run off from fields because it had greater powers available to it to act. Locality stewards were working with lengthsman to improve understanding of issues. Gullies were being recorded and marked. Asset mapping had taken place and the action plan accompanying the strategy identified the need to develop and maintain a register of assets that were considered to have a significant effect on a flood risk. He also reported that Welsh Water was actively developing a rainscape solution to manage the amount of surface water entering sewers. Developers were not permitted to increase surface water run off. SUDS were required.

- It was asked whether sufficient data was being provided by Severn Trent.
- A public facing document needed to be produced
- It was suggested that the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust had useful information and skills in relation to water management that could be drawn upon.

RESOLVED:

- That**
- (a) the strategy should recognise the importance of clear and effective communication of responsibilities in respect of all relevant parties;**
 - (b) the executive be advised of the importance of preparing a joined up implementation plan;**
 - (c) careful consideration be given to how land use and management affect flood risk, ways of educating people on this point and developing mitigating measures;**

- (d) a public facing document be produced setting out what to do in the event of flooding and relevant legal remedies for those affected;
- (e) BBLP be requested to seek information from lengthsman and local councillors on local conditions and identified flood risks as a matter of course; and
- (f) the Statutory Scrutiny Officer be informed of the annual review of the action plan and following consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman consider whether there are any material matters requiring consideration by the Committee.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee reviewed its work programme.

The Chairman undertook to explore with the Vice-Chairman a request that the delivery of housing growth targets should be included in the work programme.

RESOLVED:

- That
- (a) the draft work programme as set out at appendix 1 to the report be approved;
 - (b) the committee should contribute to the response to the consultation on West Mercia Fire and Rescue Governance as requested; and
 - (c) a standing panel of up to 5 members be appointed to maintain a watching brief as proposals for the Minerals and Waste local plan develop, with Councillors Bowen (Chairman) and Swinglehurst appointed to it and other nominations to be sought from Group Leaders.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 11 September 2017

The meeting ended at 1.12 pm

Chairman