

MINUTES OF MEETING OF WHITTLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 MARCH 2018

PRESENT:

Members of the Committee:

Councillors Sandison (Chair), Brader, Douglas, Gillias, Mrs O'Rourke and Ms Watson-Merret

In attendance:

Adrian Hart (Transport Planning Manager, Warwickshire County Council), Margaret Smith (Team Leader, Transport Planning, Warwickshire County Council), Nick Dauncey (Transport Planning, Warwickshire County Council), Ben Simm (Senior Development Manager, Warwickshire County Council) Edward Palusinski (Chair, Rugby Borough Neighbourhood Watch), Councillor Cade (Rugby Borough Neighbourhood Watch) and Chief Inspector Dafydd Goddard (Warwickshire Police)

Officers:

Dan Green (Head of Environment and Public Realm), David Burrows (Regulatory Services Manager), Michelle Dickson (Communities and Projects Manager), Keith Newell (Community Safety Partnership Manager) and Linn Ashmore (Democratic Services Officer)

38. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2018 were approved and signed by the Chair.

39. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillor Roberts.

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item 5 of Part 1 - Councillor Mrs O'Rourke declared a general non-pecuniary interest by virtue of a connection with Rugby Credit Union.

41. AIR QUALITY MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT – MID YEAR UPDATE

The committee received a report (Part 1 – agenda item 4) concerning an update on air quality monitoring.

Officers from Warwickshire County Council (WCC) attended the meeting to discuss transport matters relating to air quality issues.

Members received a verbal briefing on the work that had been carried out over the past six months, sustainable transport initiatives and transport planning. During the discussion the following points were made:

Overview of past six months

- WCC and the borough council had similar issues.
- There was a need to strike a local balance between housing growth, employment and jobs.
- Rugby was a very pro-growth authority thriving to meet Government aspirations.
- As a planning authority with responsibility for air quality monitoring, and having a strong focus on the growth agenda, there was a constant push-pull effect.
- There were important but competing objectives.
- The aim was for highways, roads and transport systems to work as best they can.
- Officers took regard of air quality issues as much as possible.
- Some problems were easier to resolve than others. Often when one set of issues was resolved, this shifted a problem elsewhere. Dealing with all matters comprehensively was very difficult.
- As an authority, Rugby was so positive about growth this created more challenges.
- Some of the schemes and initiatives officers carried out have brought forward the improvements to the gyratory system earlier than planned.
- Pinch point funding had helped some issues.
- The growth proposals for the southwest would partly address the issues in Dunchurch.
- Air quality and transport problems were not being shied away from.
- Finding capacity could be challenging.
- The Local Plan review was an exciting opportunity for Rugby.

A thorough overhaul of the overall Local Transport Plan was being proposed because the plan had not been reviewed since 2011.

Work would be carried out in conjunction with Rugby Borough Council. A progressive approach was needed to include a range of different conversations including parking and the impact of people's choices on their mode of transport.

Sustainable Transport - Current Initiatives

- The rail offer for Rugby and the One Rugby concept.
- Sustainable transport access, to improve the interchange and balance parking on the north and south side of the Mill Road tunnel.
- Work was carried out in conjunction with the Rugby Parkway concept at Houlton to provide more strategic facilities and avoidance of the town centre.
- The new houses and employment offer on the east side of Rugby would create a mass transit situation.
- A new rail station would provide quicker and more convenient options to get to the town centre and to Birmingham/London.
- Business casework was undertaken on Department for Transport (DfT) models.
- Virgin Trains, who were nearing the end of their franchise period, were keen to start work.

- The new London Northwestern Railway franchise would take over for a further 7/9 year franchise period and were interested in growing the market and improving journey times.
- It was important to keep the momentum going and target new franchise bidders and include Rugby Station within each bidding process.
- The aim was to create a sustainable transport hub and work closely with the rail industry on the commercial aspect.
- Examples of cycle routes included to/from the town centre, the rail station, the Gateway site and Houlton.
- Links between the station and town centre were needed.
- Other work topics included putting infrastructure in place in line with a modal shift, the availability of parking and journey choices.
- Work carried out with Warwick District on a town wide and corridor basis resulted in a mode shift and investment in high quality franchises.
- The new Bus Services Act 2017 offers local authorities powers to bring about change and allow for improved partnership working with bus operators and the potential for commercial network franchise partnerships. Bus companies would be approached with a view to bringing opportunities to the table and improve bus provision in the town. A bus interchange facility would bring operators savings and benefit the public.

During further discussion the following points were made:

Members raised concerns that existing infrastructure could not cope with the level of growth, particularly from the Houlton and Bilton Fields Farm developments. Due to Rugby's location, HGV's use the town as a short cut and soon the town centre would grind to a halt. Members asked whether the mitigation measures would be sustainable and commented that the increased signalisation proposed by WCC to cope with increased traffic would produce more air pollutants.

WCC Highways Development would carry out assessments as development comes forward within the Local Plan, and apply development strategies that focus on the overall growth in Rugby. Each application would be subject to transport assessments and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to review any impact on the environment.

The WCC highways teams engage with the environment team at RBC and there was a good working relationship with the council's planning team to consider concerns and discuss solutions.

Developers often find ways of getting around mitigation. The Planning Inspector approved the Ashlawn Road development at appeal.

Mitigation was always requested where there was a safety or capacity issue. The National Planning Policy Framework states that development can only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the impacts of development are severe

The DfT 2013 circular states that where development would have an effect on the transport network, the Highway Authority is asked to assess that impact. WCC Highways would assess any impact on the level of queues and junctions. Motorists change their behaviour after a 30 second change. WCC also assess the impact on air quality but can only take action where there is an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).

Transport Planning

Traffic modelling was carried out as part of the Local Plan assessment.

Work would progress on improving public transport and the links between bus and rail travel. A holistic approach on the site within the Local Plan would be based around the worst-case scenario.

Members questioned the number of applications refused by WCC and commented that Rugby's town centre roads were gridlocked with traffic. A question was also asked about the mitigation for high priority areas and the focus on health and wellbeing.

WCC officers responded to say they objected to a number of applications but it could be difficult to look at the current position and put the growth over the top. They were bound by a number of controls and parameters including the DfT, NPPF and Government guidance. Often there were few grounds for objection.

Current work included a bid for portable air quality monitors and the Transport for West Midlands Trip Planner app to encourage non-polluting transport and focus on health and fitness.

The RTP programme would resolve many issues around Dunchurch. Even sustainable modes cannot alleviate all the problems. The link road was an important change for residents.

The Houlton building programme was behind and this would delay its contributions and the Highways Authority design work. The Ashlawn Road improvements were a sensitive area.

Objections were made to the employment land at south west of Rugby because there were no assessments for Princethorpe and the gyratory.

Decisions can only be taken within the current systems in place.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) add detail to the policies in the Local Plan and provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design for the right type of development. Members commented that traffic calming had not been included at Coton Park. An SPD for the southwest site was being looked at.

The Coventry and Warwickshire Air Quality Alliance Group, was made up of local health teams and district and borough councils. It provides an opportunity for joint working to pool ideas and support a standardised approach that contributes to the development of ways to address poor air quality. This prompted developers to think about and account for air quality impacts on their developments.

The view of people was that it was preferable to be inside your car and not to walk or cycle. A current campaign was aimed at encouraging people to think about the way they travel. The health agenda was considered the best method of appealing to people. Monitors record data but not reduce pollution.

Members asked what they could tell residents in their wards. This was difficult, waiting for the southwest site to come forward. It was a matter of developers' cash flow and timing. A bid through the housing infrastructure would go towards funding. WCC were awaiting outcomes for three bids, which included the A5 and the south west site at Rugby.

Timing has been put back which was frustrating. There was a bid to try to bring infrastructure forward early then deliver through developers. Some small tweaks had been completed at Dunchurch but there were much larger projects that required funding which was being chased.

WCC were working with developers before house building commenced to accommodate the crossroads and link road. Works included the widening of the southbound section of the A426.

Members asked about modal shift and commented that there was not enough bus stand space in the town centre to match town growth and no proposal to identify the location of a viable interchange.

WCC advised there was a struggle to identify any specific location to meet the requirements of a bus station but would consider reviewing this again. This would need to be a site bus operators would commit to and bus routes were always subject to change.

Warwick had a good example of an interchange and further work was needed locally with Stagecoach.

Members commented that bus links between the town centre and out of town shopping centres would be welcomed and noted formal agreements with providers would be needed.

There was agreement that a change in behaviour was needed. Children see the world differently and if they could be educated to see health benefits and safety, parents would become more aware. There were examples of children from poorer housing areas with poor diets who regularly walked to school. People were interested in the environment and health.

There were opportunities to change public view. Cycling was becoming more popular on the back of the Olympic legacy. Approaches to obesity, diet and active lifestyles have changed over the past five years.

Young people were not as interested in learning to drive a car and transport technology is changing.

Members commented on the safety of cyclists using roads and pavements and noted there were opportunities for safe off road routes, particularly at Houlton.

An on/off road approach was taken and three metre wide cycle ways were being rolled out to share foot and cycle ways. The Design Guides would feature these. Sustrans was responsible for a national network.

WCC would be willing to engage with the council's scrutiny committees. The scope and timescales of how best this could be achieved would need to be agreed.

A Transport Strategy would be key for the wider community and incorporate the impact on rural areas.

The Regulatory Services Manager reported that a meeting of a Licensing Sub-Committee had approved the first electric vehicle to be licenced as a hackney carriage vehicle

RESOLVED THAT –

- (1) the topic of joint working with WCC on a review of a Transport Strategy be considered for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme; and
- (2) Officers from WCC and the Regulatory Services Manager be thanked for attending the meeting.

42. COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR CONTRACTS

The committee received a report (Part 1 – agenda item 5) concerning an update on voluntary and community sector contracts in respect of advice and community infrastructure support.

Representatives from Warwickshire CAVA and Citizens Advice Bureau had been invited to attend the meeting. Unfortunately, they were unable to attend but both bodies had submitted written reports with feedback on the new contracts.

The Communities and Project Manager presented the report and answered questions from members.

During discussion the following points were made:

The past twelve months had seen an interesting change in relations with the community and voluntary sectors.

One of the issues that had been reported back included contract monitoring. There was a need to be proportionate and reasonable and contract holders were accountable for service delivery.

Key Performance Indicator's (KPI's) were scheduled for review on an annual basis and this would take place in the near future. As part of this review, work would be carried out to explore whether the right information was being requested.

Discussions with the Housing Services Team had highlighted the fact that there had been some reluctance for officers to refer clients to the CAB for assistance. The CAB was a trusted brand and work had been carried out to build officer confidence. The recently refreshed team was now more likely to suggest independent advice to clients and officers were satisfied in the quality of advice given to clients.

The feedback from CAB in relation to funding the contract monitoring was positive and collaborative working had improved.

Members asked about the level of advice and support clients received and the number of referrals being made. There was concern that those in most need were not accessing support and members questioned whether there were enough opportunities available to clients within the system.

Officers signpost clients but they cannot guarantee the advice on offer would be taken. There was intensive housing management support available but officers need to balance this with the needs of the business. It was not possible to provide the service without receipt of rental income.

With regard to number of referrals, the contracts were monitored during quarterly meetings with the organisations and a lot of statistics were produced for these. The CAB had not indicated there was any form of capacity issue. The value of the face-to-face contact was invaluable.

Members acknowledged that a lot of good work was being carried out by the contracted organisations and commented this needed to be properly maintained to avoid potential for double accounting, and with KPI's that were fit for purpose. There appeared to be more confidence in the data provided from

the CAB than WCAVA due to the issues with internal reporting systems. Some of the figures contained in the report from WCAVA were queried.

The regular meetings with the organisations helped pick up the narratives behind the figures through taking a small sample and extrapolating areas

The work of the volunteer and community sectors resulted in significant savings to local authorities.

Members found it difficult to judge how helpful the feedback received was and asked about the second point of contact. This would be raised in follow-up meetings with the organisations, but the feedback provided a flavour of how useful the service was.

A question was raised about the reduction of £35,000 identified during the budget setting process. Members were informed that the initial savings realised from the change from service level agreements (SLA's) to the awarding of contracts had now been absorbed within budgets. The figure of £120,000 for the funding of SLA's for 2016/17 was not a saving to the council.

The impact on Rugby Credit Union and Age UK was raised. There had been no specific feedback received. It was noted that some organisations were better than others at becoming more resilient and self-reliant.

There was a need for organisations to take a broader view of funding opportunities and more work would be carried out with them on this.

RESOLVED THAT – the Communities and Projects Manager be thanked for attending the meeting.

43. CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY

The committee received a report (Part 1 – agenda item 6) concerning the annual review of the work of the Rugby Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

The Community Safety Partnership Manager attended the meeting to present the report and answer questions.

The following points were raised:

- It had been a good year for the CSP.
- Reduction in serious violent crime had risen from six per cent in 2016/17 to a further 11 per cent this year.
- Continuing growth in Rugby meant there were more opportunities for crime to be committed.
- Feedback from victims of personal anti-social behaviour had been very good. This was the third year in succession that the 100% target was achieved.
- The new 'Transforming Rehabilitation' reforms introduced by Government had impacted on reoffending rates. The 'Through-the Gate' programme introduced as part of the reforms had failed in every respect. The Futures Unlocked programme introduced by the CSP had been a successful scheme based on 3-6 months support and included a mentoring programme and support for the needs of individual on a range of services including healthcare and food.
- Figures for the first year of the new reforms were awaited.
- The priorities for 2017/18 had not changed.

- The cost of dealing with serious violent crime for agencies such as the NHS, recovery services, police and the courts was very high.
- Rugby no longer had a reputation of crime relating to town centre pubs.
- The CSP had equipped police with hand held metal detectors and two knife arches.
- Figures for domestic burglary had risen by 46%, with 354 offences reported up to the end of December 2017.
- A rural initiative involved nine local villages with levels of activity ranging from crime prevention displays to full protected village status.
- A significant amount of work was required by the Community Safety Partnership Manager on domestic homicide reviews to implement 60 recommendations for two current reviews.
- The Chair of the Rugby CSP was personally liable and responsible in law.

During further discussion the following points were made:

A scrutiny review of Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) was currently underway, which also linked to Community Protection Notices (CPNs). Members commented that more collaborative working was required as the council had limited warden resources and intelligence support to identify nuisance hotspots.

Providing intelligence was not an issue but enforcement would be the challenge due to the reduction in police numbers. There were many issues at Newbold Quarry Park needing attention.

It was noted that 19 CPN warnings had been produced and ten CPNs had been issued. Eleven PSPOs had been issued for dogs being off leads and seven of these resulted in fines.

The Chair of Rugby Borough Neighbourhood Watch gave members a brief outline of the work of the group which included the following points:

- The group had been running for 14 years.
- The group works closely with local police.
- The community at Eden Park was supported to set up its own scheme and hold a safer neighbourhood event.
- The group encourages local communities to set up their own watch schemes.
- There were plans to form a central group of representatives from each watch scheme.
- Opportunities to engage and work with other agencies were welcomed.
- Social media accounts such as Facebook and Twitter were beginning to receive feedback. Eden Park has its own Twitter site.
- The support of local councillors and police was needed.

Chief Inspector Goddad had been invited to attend the meeting to brief the committee on the new police model introduced from 1st June. The following points were raised:

- A project was set up in 2016 to review the policing service for West Mercia Police.
- A new explosion in cybercrime had been seen.
- Sex exploitation was targeted with the best use of technology.
- This past year had seen technological advances in policing with the issue of smart phones and laptops.
- There was a move towards a command and control system.

- There was a fully automotive crime recording system with body worn video.
- The new objectives were based on maximising efficiency within the current financial plan.
- Uniformed officers supplement the 999 response including the roads unit.
- Firearms had a separate radio channel.
- The Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) was just one part of the policing function.
- Demand reduction would be seen through prioritising calls. More signposting would take place and early calls would be fielded to map instant demand.
- SNT would take up the initial neighbourhood concerns and work towards a short term response rather than long term issues.
- SNT was ring fenced as much as possible to focus on visible engagement and problem solving and enhancing partnership working.
- Resourcing figures included:
 - Warwickshire had seen a reduction of 19 PCSOs, 1 sergeant post from Rugby and 4 PCs.
 - A SNT inspector with borough wide responsibility would be retained.
 - There were no reductions in PC's in Rugby
 - At the current time there were 20 PCSO's across 7 teams
 - The new model was for 6, which meant a loss of 4 but Rugby was currently running with 13 so this was a gain.
- There was a need to make the service financially viable.
- A briefing pack would be provided for the Rugby Borough Neighbourhood Watch group.
- A soft launch was introduced in June and there would be a gradual move towards the new operating model.

During further discussion the following points were made:

Warwickshire police has access to drones but their use was still at an early stage.

Members asked about how successful the integrated approach was so far and were informed that the situation was healthier than when the new model was first introduced. This was now imbedded and work was being carried out as efficiently as possible.

The budget was not affected by the new precept within the council tax.

Members commented that the agenda did not allow time for full discussions and CI Goddard agreed to return if needed.

RESOLVED THAT – Chief Inspector Goddard and the Community Safety Partnership Manager be thanked for attending the meeting.

44. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18

The committee received a report (Part 1 – agenda item 7) concerning the progress of scrutiny reviews and the overview and scrutiny forward work programme for 2017/18.

The chairs and vice-chairs would be meeting to discuss the outcomes of the recent scrutiny workshop, this topic would be included on the agenda for the

meeting of Brooke on 12 April. Members of this committee were invited to attend that meeting.

RESOLVED THAT – the report be noted.

CHAIR