

Minutes of Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board

11 July 2024 at 6.00pm
in the Council Chamber - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

Present: Councillor Davies (Chair);
Councillors Rahman (Vice-Chair), Jeffcoat, Kalebe-
Nyamongo, Kaur, Weston and Wilkes.

Officers: Andy Miller (Strategic Planning & Transportation
Manager), Alex Goddard (Scrutiny Lead Officer) and
Anthony Lloyd (Democratic Services Officer).

15/24 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dhatt,
Hemingway, Hussain and Johnston.

16/24 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

17/24 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 7
March 2024 are confirmed as a correct record.

18/24 **Additional Item of Business**

There were no urgent additional items of business to
consider.

Planning & Delivery of Active Travel Projects (walking & cycling)

The Government's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy was published in April 2017 with the aim of making cycling and walking the natural choices for shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journey. The strategy sought to double the 2013 number of journeys, or part journeys, made by cycle, by 2025. It recognised that achieving this required a sustained investment in cycling infrastructure by Central Government, Local Transport Authorities and third parties. The Government anticipated that Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) would be the principal vehicle for targeting this investment.

The West Midlands Combined Authority had developed an LCWIP that covered the West Midlands; any policy changes or adaptations automatically applied to the seven authorities that constituted the Combined Authority.

Sandwell Council had developed a Sandwell LCWIP that identified a plan to develop local cycling and walking networks throughout the borough until 2030. The Sandwell Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (SCWIP) was published in January 2020. Consultation with the public in relation to the plan had been carried out alongside topography work, journey to work data, integrated cycling and UK cycling research.

Sandwell's cycling network was comprised of the National Cycle Network, the West Midlands Strategic Network, the Black Country and Sandwell local networks and the Canal Towpath Network. When combined, the routes covered the majority of the borough.

The main source of funding for the active travel routes originated from Central Government including the Active Travel Fund and the City Region Sustainable Transport Fund. Funds were allocated to the West Midlands Combined Authority to ensure that individual schemes proposed by local authorities were appropriate. Regardless of the origin of the funding, projects were required to adhere to the Department for Transport's guidance for cycling infrastructure design LTN 1/20. In total, over £65m worth of

investment had been obtained through the various funding schemes.

Members were minded that Active Travel was a statutory consultee on planning applications and that many new developments included cycling infrastructure. Additionally, many organisations, both private and public, had begun to include cycling infrastructure into their designs.

Cameras were in place to monitor some of the cycle routes within the borough, however, due to many of the routes being only partially completed, it was difficult to distinguish overall usage. Public Health had continued to promote the cycle routes and a dedicated officer had been assigned to continue the work. Bicycle training for both young people and adults was also available.

It was highlighted that although works were extensive, it also gave the Council the opportunity to use the funds to help improve existing road structure. In response to questions from members, the following points were made:-

- A joint black country transport team worked across both Sandwell and Dudley to ensure cross-boundary working was efficient;
- the canal network was used where possible but not all sections were deemed appropriate or safe;
- the Council's website detailed current and upcoming cycle routes;
- extensive plans were in place to consider cycle storage/racks and was currently being trialled in Halesowen;
- research had considered what was working well for other local authorities, as well as several cities abroad, and lessons learned had been applied to the Council's own schemes;
- although the target of doubling cyclists by 2025 would most likely not be achieved, the ambitious target encourage positive work to take place;
- the bulk of works had a target completion date of 2032, with half of the works expected to be completed by 2027.

Members noted the report and thanked Officers for their attendance.

Resolved that:-

- 1.1 in relation to Black Country wide development, further updates are provided to the Board at a future meeting; and
- 1.2 the possibility of joint-team working with Birmingham City Council, as seen with Dudley and Wolverhampton, be explored.

20/24 **Tracking and Monitoring of Scrutiny Recommendations**

The Board noted the status of actions and recommendations it had made. Further updates would be reported to future meetings of the Board.

21/24 **Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2024 – 2025.**

The Board received an overview of the Board's Work Programme for the 2024-2025 municipal year. It was noted a work programming session had taken place on 8 July 2024 which allowed the Board to discuss services, key issues and priorities.

Suggestions for scrutiny topics that had been received from members of the public were addressed accordingly. Suggestions in relation to parking services, the household recycling centre, evening and night time economy, and people not in education, employment or training were added to the work programme for the 2024 – 2025 municipal year.

It was highlighted that the suggestion to review a licence for a local waste centre was not within the remit of the Board. Additionally, a suggestion to consider on how community engagement could be improved would not be considered.

The Board also agreed to establish a working group to support the development of the Sandwell Local Plan before its consideration at Cabinet in September 2024.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the work programme for the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board for the 2024 - 2025 municipal year is approved.
- (2) that a Working Group comprised of the all members of the Board is established to consider the Sandwell Local Plan.

Meeting ended at 7.27pm.

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