

**Minutes of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment
Scrutiny Board**

**16th November, 2017 at 5.30 pm
at the Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor Hickey (Chair);
Councillors Allcock and Ashman.

Apologies: Councillors Ahmed, Crompton, Dhallu, Rouf and
Tagger.

9/17 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 14th
September, 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

10/17 **Road Safety Plan 2017- 2022**

The Cabinet Member – Highways and Environment provided an introduction to the Strategic Road Safety Plan 2017- 2022, thanked officers of the Road Safety Team for the work they had done and welcomed the invitation to bring the draft plan to Scrutiny Board for its views and comments prior to Cabinet sign off.

The Highways Traffic and Road Safety Team provided a presentation to highlight the objectives of the Road Safety Plan 2017 – 2022 and the effects of road traffic accidents (RTAs) on Society.

The presentation gave further detail of the objectives of the Road Safety Plan in relation to the following:

- How it supports the UN and Government road safety strategies.
- Contribution to the 2030 Vision ambitions 2,6,7,8.
- The headlines for Sandwell road traffic casualty analysis.
- The vulnerable groups.

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The Board was advised that the Council had a statutory duty under the Road Safety Act to provide a Road Safety Plan. The purpose of the plan was to work together to build a safer road system, working with partners, particularly with Police and highways agency.

The Board welcomed the reduction of casualties and noted that this may in part have been due to people using vehicles less due to rising motoring costs and austerity measures. The Board was mindful of the challenge to prevent a rise in incidents in light of the population increase in Sandwell and a reduction in petrol prices in recent years.

The Cabinet Member welcomed the various initiatives introduced by the team to involve schools and communities in road safety including an initiative at St Matthew's C.E. School, Windmill Lane, Smethwick called 'Kid's Court'. The Board viewed a video of the 'Kid's Court' initiative and was advised that this was only the third of its kind in the Country; one in Liverpool, one in Birmingham and one in Sandwell.

The Kid's Court was about working closely with partners and school children to identify drivers who were clearly breaking the rules in a speed check area. Once pulled over by the appropriate authority the driver was given a choice whether to attend Kid's Court or be fined. 13 people were escorted into Kid's Court during the initiative, which was to be rolled out to other schools in Sandwell.

The Board was advised that modern technology and interactive games were also being used to educate young people in relation to road safety.

In response to questions the Board was advised that traditional ways of delivering road safety messages through visits to schools were still delivered and that the message to wear bright clothes on dark evenings, the 'be bright, be seen' campaign was delivered in this way as part of the Safer 6 campaign.

The Board heard that everything that could be done to reduce casualties was being done and that 20 mile per hour speed initiatives on main roads and 'rat runs' with higher than normal casualty statistics was being rolled out. The Board recognised that there had to be a range of initiatives to deter and reduce road incidents. It was explained to the Board that preventable accidents were incidents that happened when the driver had acted outside the normal driving rules. The police and fire service also had targets to reduce accidents and raise awareness.

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The Board considered that incidents were more prevalent in areas of deprivation and was advised that there had been more accidents in the Smethwick area where there were more 'new to UK' families and where there were over 70 languages spoken. The Board was advised that pictorial cards were being considered in these areas to get the messages of road safety across to residents and particularly for children and parents for whom English was not the first language.

In relation to cyclist accidents, the Board was reminded that the cycling strategy would be considered by the Board early in 2018.

The Board was advised that there was discussion about adding noise generation to electric cars to reduce the risks associated with silent running vehicles and that further initiatives were being considered to raise awareness of the risks of wearing headphones on the road and pavements in relation to road safety.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for the presentation and video.

Resolved that the Scrutiny Board endorse the Strategic Road Safety Plan 2017-2022 to inform road safety delivery within the Borough over the next five years.

11/17 **Regeneration Update**

The Executive Director - Neighbourhoods provided a report to respond to a request for information as to how suitable sites are identified for funding support from the Back-Country City Deal and the West Midlands Combined Authority Land and Property Fund, and to provide an update on the progress being made on the current major development programmes and projects that were underway or were being advanced for future funding applications.

The Board was advised that the Sandwell Site Allocations and Delivery Development Plan (SADD) underpinned the Joint Core Strategy which provided direction for location based regeneration to address economic, transportation, social and environmental needs. The SADD provided detailed land use allocations and designations to guide development until 2021. The Board was advised that there would be Council refresh of how to deal with land allocations in the

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future, pulling together a funding plan and looking for future loan funding and potential grants.

For larger sites that had not been developed, the team would be visiting them to discuss how to progress and for smaller sites, such as derelict public houses, the team would be looking to use building control notices to make improvements.

The Board received an update on the current position for a number of major developments in Sandwell as follows:

- West Bromwich Town Centre
- North Smethwick Black Patch area
- Grove Lane Smethwick
- Friar Park Housing Site (Bescot)
- Dudley Port area Tipton
- Midlands Metro, Wednesbury to Brierly Hill
- Bromford Road, Oldbury
- Strategic Housing Plan.

The Chair was pleased to note that 80 houses had already been built in Sandwell and that opportunities were being considered to increase numbers of houses being built. In response to Members concerns relating to land banking, the Executive Director advised that there was a need for more local powers and that discussions were being held at Land and Housing Group to move things forward.

Members were mindful that the delays in house building were not necessarily due to a delay in the planning system but often because the developer did not carry the development out straight away. The Chair advised that she had recently spoken with Councillor Ian Shires who was leading a work stream for the West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee relating to land banking.

The Chair referred to a recent recommendation to the Board to consider alternative methods of housing construction and requested scrutiny to progress arrangements to visit to alternative construction methods in Walsall.

The Chair thanked the Executive Director for a comprehensive update.

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Resolved that the update be received and a further update be submitted in 6 months to the Board.

12/17 **Vice-Chairs Working Group update**

Councillor Ashman, Vice-Chair, advised that the work group would meet to consider Employment and Skills for the over 50's, and work around 'Fuller Working Lives' and 'No Desire to Retire' programmes.

Councillor Hickey, Chair, advised that the Town Leads would be contacted to ask about the six-town offer in relation to Night time economy, visitor economy and the cultural offer.

(Meeting ended 7:25 pm)

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