

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

**10th October, 2019 at 5.30 pm
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

- Present:** Councillor Rollins (Chair);
Councillors Allcock, Eaves, M Hussain and
Padda.
- Apologies:** Councillors Crumpton, L Giles, Hackett, Sandars
and Singh.
- In attendance:** Dr Alison Knight, Executive Director -
Neighbourhoods;
Lesley Hagger, Executive Director Children's
Services and Education;
Chris Ward, Director of Education, Skills and
Employment;
Max Cookson, Waste & Transport Manager
Adele Smith, Programmes Manager- Strategy
and Partnerships;
Errol Blackwood, Post 16 Manager;
Andy Miller, Strategic Planning & Transportation
Manager
Talvinder Sandhu, Transportation Team Leader;
Consultant

14/19 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 18th July,
2019 be approved as a correct record.

15/19 Our Waste, Our Resources – A Strategy for England

The Board received the update report from the Waste and
Transport Manager and was advised that the council was awaiting

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further Government guidance before a full response could be developed.

The Board was advised that the Council was working with other members of the West Midlands Combined Authority waste and resources group and local partnerships to consider best practice and be ready to progress when guidance was published. Several options were being looked at in relation to food waste recycling, a mapping exercise had been carried out and the Council continued to work with WRAP and local partnerships to prepare for further information from government.

The Board discussed the proposals in the report and noted the following comments and responses to questions: -

- Representation had been made to the Government to move forward on the guidance;
- There was a risk if the Council made a decision without the updated guidance and ceased collections, as other Authorities had, it could be the wrong decision and the Council could incur costs if the guidance required that collections were to be restarted;
- WRAP was providing advice to the Council on the way forward, financial support had not been provided but it was considered important to work with WRAP;
- the Board was assured that there were potential savings to be made in the future if the Council take into consideration the economies of scale and timescales
- the Board was advised that an update could be circulated following a meeting of the WMCA Waste and Resource work group the following week and a further report prepared once all the information was available.

Resolved

- (1) that a further report relating to the future options for Food Waste Recycling in Sandwell be requested following publication of Government guidance.

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16/19 Sandwell Guarantee

The Board received a progress report from the Director – Education Skills and Employment and Programmes Manager, Strategy and Partnerships about the Sandwell Guarantee.

The Sandwell Guarantee began in September 2014 to respond to high youth unemployment in the area and limited external support for this age group. The funding for the programme came from Council reserves and funded wage subsidies for local employers to employ an apprentice or provide a job opportunity.

The Sandwell Guarantee was an ‘ethos’ and represented access routes for Sandwell residents to Employment support including Work Experience, the Connexions Service, Youth Services and Sandwell College

The Board received a summary of the current position, the challenges and performance of the programme. The Sandwell Guarantee had been successful and had helped fund 700 young people in the Borough to find training opportunities and work, with 368 organisations being supported by the programme.

The Board noted the following responses to questions and comments: -

- during the programme the number of unemployed people decreased and there was a decrease in NEET figures. The Board was advised that this was a good outcome because the national trend for number of unemployed was increasing during the same period;
- it was not possible to show a direct correlation between delivery of the programme and the reduction in unemployment figures or NEET figures. The statistical trends within the 5 years of delivery had seen an improving picture.
- £1.7 million had been invested by the Council in this programme for young people, the unit price was £3000, half the price of going through the DWP Future Jobs Fund wage subsidy programme, which averaged £6000 per job and for only a 6-month opportunity. The Sandwell Guarantee performed well on a value for money basis;
- the exit strategy was in progress, the programme was due to end 31st March 2020;

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- the Board raised concerns that once the programme ceased there would be a rise in the youth unemployment trend and that the figures could not prove that the decrease was entirely attributable to the Sandwell Guarantee;
- the Board was advised that work with young people could continue if funding was identified. The service model was in place, but it would cost £300,000 per annum to keep it going;
- the Council could use its apprenticeship levy and draw down for training, but not for wage subsidy, which was what was provided in the Sandwell Guarantee;

The Board suggested that at the end of the programme the performance data should be reviewed to establish if there was evidence to prove the impact of the Sandwell Guarantee and requested clarification if there was potential to continue specific services, such as work with disabled young people and young people in care. It was confirmed that there was potential but that the costs would have to be investigated.

The Board was proud of the Sandwell Guarantee and all that it had achieved to reduce youth unemployment in Sandwell.

Resolved

- (1) That the Director of Education Skills and Employment calculate the cost analysis to continue the work with young people focus on disabled and young people in care;
- (2) The Director of Education, Skills and Environment provide an update report to the Board to advise of the costs and revised budget to continue the Sandwell Guarantee once the Government settlement figure is confirmed in March 2020.

17/19

Unified Careers Offer for 15-29 year olds

The Board received a report from the Director of Education Skills and Environment and the Post 16 Manager to consider how the Council's unified 15-29 careers and employment 'offer' and

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supported young people more effectively during their transition to adulthood.

The Board was advised that the Council commissioned Cambridge Education to carry out a review of education which included Connexions and the Employment and Skills team's two services that identified a range of possible options to deliver a preferred model of provision.

In April 2019 services were co-located in the same office to bring together the Connexions service, tracking and NEET engagement services with the services offered by the Employment and Skills service, to provide a coherent integrated offer to young people and adults.

The Board was provided with an update of the current position in relation to:

- Challenge for schools
- Support for NEETs / unemployed aged 15-29
- Black Country Impact
- Progress to higher education
- Preparing for the world of work/ events
- Working with employers
- Jobs of the future
- Online platforms

The Board welcomed the approach taken and the success of the integration of services, unified offer for 16-25 year olds and the joined up delivery of services.

The Chair highlighted the importance of the joined-up approach for young people and was advised that further work being carried out to reach into schools. She thanked officers for the work so far and indicated that the Board would maintain oversight of this work and assess progress in 12 months' time.

Resolved:

- that the Director of Education Skills and Employment be requested to submit a progress report relating to the Unified Careers Offer for 15-29 year in 12 months.

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18/19 Sandwell Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan SCWIP

The Board received a report from the Director Regeneration and Growth and a presentation to provide an overview of the development of Sandwell's Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (SCWIP). The comments and recommendations of the Scrutiny Board would be referred to Cabinet to be taken into consideration when the SCWIP was considered in December 2019.

The Strategic Planning & Transportation Manager, Transportation Team Leader and consultant appointed by the Council were in attendance to provide a presentation and respond to members questions.

The presentation outlined the following:

- The process undertaken
- An overview including Government requirements
- The network map
- Indicative costs
- The Matrix
- Next steps

The Board considered the draft SCWIP and presentation. The main messages were noted: -

- Sandwell Council was ahead of other Authorities in developing the SCWIP to meet Government requirements;
- the data gathering aligned to the vision 2030 ambitions for health, air quality and transport and took into consideration other major projects and ongoing work in Sandwell;
- the data gathered highlighted the demand for cycling and walking, the need for access to rail and metro stops now and, in the future, the connectivity and access to work and attractions;
- from the evidence gathered 15 cycle routes were identified and 6 walking zones. The mapped routes and zones highlighted air quality hotspots, congestion hotspots, transport hubs, regeneration areas, large trip attractors and other matters, such as quiet and segregated cycling were flagged up showing proposed interventions. Department for Transport (DfT) guidance was expected later this year to

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show what good cycle provision looked like and these would be taken into consideration as proposals within the SCWIP are developed;

- cross boundary working has identified where routes span over one or more area, and also includes improvements to canal access points and routes along the canal network. The more detailed interventions, such as junction improvements, footway widening, dropped kerbs etc would be identified in the plan on a thematic basis for each area, including several interventions that would be place led;
- the costing for the implementation of the SCWIP would be around £12 million following an initial costing exercise based on proposed interventions, but this was not a precise figure because interventions and implementation were difficult to cost at this stage without detailed designs being undertaken and then costed and this has been an issue for most Local Authorities in developing their LCWIP; this has been reported back to the DfT;
- prioritising which of the 15 cycling schemes should be first had meant that a scoring process had to be developed, so that the policy objectives were given points and the highest score against the relevant policy objective would be the next scheme to progress once funding was available;
- the stakeholder engagement already undertaken informed the draft SCWIP and Cabinet would consider the final draft in December 2019.

The Chair welcomed the detailed work undertaken and thanked the presenters for an excellent report. The Board noted the following comments in response to questions:

- the prioritisation planning tool would be regularly updated and the data collected puts Sandwell in a good place for bid submissions, to get the 15 cycle projects and 6 walking projects moving;
- there were many funding initiatives that have short deadlines, the prioritisation planning tool enables timely submission of bids for a range of objectives;
- the SCWIP would improve the journey to work and leisure for approximately 34% adults in the Borough with no access to a car;
- Government announced that Local Authorities with Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) would be

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prioritised for funding and Sandwell will be of advantage when bidding for funding with the development of the SCWIP;

- the proposed West Midlands Cycle Hire Scheme, which was to be implemented across the seven districts, was not currently operating because the contractual arrangements had failed. The re-procurement process had commenced, and the West Midlands Combined Authority was planning to provide the infrastructure and procure a refreshed scheme;
- the benefits of cycling to health and wellbeing of residents was a driver for the cycle hire scheme. The Council, working with the West Midlands Combined Authority was aiming to get more people cycling and is considering sponsorship to procure bikes to develop a low-income cycle hire scheme;
- the Cycle Network consists of three tiers; the National Cycle Network (NCN), the Metropolitan Cycle Network as identified in the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan – Movement for Growth, and a local Sandwell Network identified in the Sandwell Cycling Strategy
- the Sprint Project would sit more in the second tier, as part of the West Midlands Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (WMLCWIP) rather than the Sandwell plan, however it was noted that the A34 corridor and Hagley Road would be part of the Sprint project and that major group network funding was being investigated for sections of the Wolverhampton Road. It was noted that this would not be delivered in one stretch and that Government funding was being applied for.

The Chair thanked everyone involved for the report, the development of the SCWIP had been under the Scrutiny Boards watch for the last two years and she was very pleased with the draft report before the Board, which would put Sandwell in a good place to submit bids, to get projects going and to develop the cycle and walking routes in the plan.

Resolved:

- that the Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board recommend to Cabinet that the draft Sandwell Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan be approved.

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(Meeting ended at 6.25 pm)

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