

Minutes of Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board

13 July 2023 at 5.47pm
in the Council Chamber - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

Present: Councillor Owen (Vice- Chair in the Chair);
Councillors Dhatt, Kordala, Rahman, J Singh and
Taylor.

Also Present: Mr S Singh (Residents of Europa Avenue
Representative).

Officers: Andy Miller (Strategic Planning and Transport
Manager), Talvinder Sandhu (Transportation Team
Manager), Johane Gandiwa (Committee and
Constitutional Services Lead Officer), John Swann
(Democratic Services Officer) and Prabjot Multani
(Business and Member Services Officer).

20/23 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors
Ashraf, Chapman, Hemingway and Hussain.

21/23 **Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

Councillor Taylor declared a personal interest in the matter
referred to at Minute No. 24/23; Europa Avenue Cycle Route
Towns Fund Scheme in that she was the Cabinet Member
for Sustainable Transport who oversaw the scheme in 2021.

22/23

Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meetings held on 28 February and 20 April 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

23/23

Additional Item of Business

There were no urgent additional items of business to consider.

24/23

Europa Avenue Cycle Route Towns Fund Scheme

Further to Minute No's. 20/22 (7 December 2022), 4/23 (18 January 2023), 8/23 (1 March 2023) and 12/23 (21 June 2023) of Cabinet Petitions Committee; the Board received a summary of the Europa Avenue Cycle Route Towns Fund Scheme which had been referred to scrutiny to consider whether consultation with residents had been conducted at the time.

The Strategic Planning and Transport Manager outlined that the cycle path was longstanding in nature, having been an adopted highway since the 1970s and that the upgrades were financed via National Lottery funding from cycling charity Sustrans.

In 2017, the government published a cycling and walking investment strategy which had aimed to ensure cycling and walking were the natural choices when planning journeys. This model required local authorities to produce local cycling and infrastructure plans and set out that segregated cycle paths were the preferred choice of bike lane as it was separate from the carriageway utilised by motor vehicles.

The widening of the cycle path was in line with existing Sandwell Council policy since 2020 and proposed the widening of the highway from 2.5m to 4.3m.

Local consultation had taken place in 2021 and included writing to 350 properties within the Europa Avenue, West Bromwich locality, 44 responses had been received being of equal split in favour and against the proposed scheme.

Following the consideration of the responses received by residents in March 2022, the Cabinet Member had approved the scheme as originally proposed on 28 June 2022.

Residents were contacted via post following the approval of the scheme which had resulted in a petition against the proposals with 146 signatories having been recorded by the Council.

Cabinet Petitions Committee had subsequently referred the matter to the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board for further consideration.

The Residents of Europa Avenue Representative was in attendance who expressed reservations regarding the scheme. In particular, the following points were highlighted:-

- 146 residents had objected to the proposal which had been received by the Cabinet Petitions Committee;
- some residents were of the opinion that the time period between the consultation concluding and works commencing had been too brief;
- the public consultation could have been more extensive in nature;
- the link to the online questionnaire had been inaccessible to some residents.

Following comments and questions from members of the Board, the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- the Towns Funding needed to be utilised by March 2025;
- the cycle path had formed part of the National Cycle Route No. 5;
- there was no legal requirement to consult as these were classified as permitted works regarding an existing highway;
- proposals did not include any changes to roads accessible to motor vehicles;

- it was proposed that the four trees which would be removed as part of the works would be replaced on a two- for- one basis;
- the questionnaire sent to residents was specifically designed for this scheme;
- an environmental impact assessment had not been conducted which was in line with Sandwell Council policy for planned works of this scale;
- that a working group of the Scrutiny Board be established and conduct a site- visit to better understand the scheme.

Resolved that a Working Group comprised of Councillors Dhatt, Kordala, Owen, Rahman, J Singh and Taylor be established and a site visit be arranged to consider the Europa Avenue Cycle Route Towns Fund Scheme.

25/23 **Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Action Tracker**

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

26/23 **Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2023/ 24**

The Board received an overview of the Board's Work Programme for the 2023/ 24 municipal year. It was noted a work programming session had taken place on 12 June 2023 which allowed the Board to discuss services, key issues and priorities.

The Board would be conducting a scrutiny review on the 2017- 2022 Strategic Road Safety Plan and had established a working group accordingly.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the work programme for the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board for the 2023/ 24 municipal year be approved;
- (2) that a Working Group comprised of Councillors Dhatt, Kordala, Owen, Rahman, J Singh and Taylor be established to conduct a scrutiny review on the 2017- 2022 Strategic Road Safety Plan.

27/23 Cabinet Forward Plan

The Board received the Cabinet Forward Plan.

Meeting ended at 6.23pm

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk