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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD - 13 September 2022

MINUTES

- Present: Councillors: D Pinwell (Chairman), M Parker, Mrs D Holl-Allen MBE, M McLoughlin, W Qais, K Thomas, D Gibbin, M McLoughlin, A Hodgson (virtual)
- Councillors in Attendance: Councillor I Courts: Leader of the Council and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for the Economy
Councillor K Hawkins: Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment & Infrastructure (virtual)
Councillor M Carthew – Member of the Stronger Communities and Safer Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board
- Officers: Perry Wardle: Assistant Director, Growth and Development
Rupert Waters: Interim Head of Economic Development
Walter Bailey: Group Manager - Transport & Infrastructure Commissioning
David Balme: Senior Transport Planner
Gary Palmer: Group Manager – Policy & Engagement
Paul Rogers: Democratic Services

The Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board meeting commenced at 6:00 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Feeney, for whom Councillor D Gibbin was substituting; Councillor J Ryan, Councillor A Mackiewicz (Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Planning and Housing) and Councillor D Howell (Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Communities and Leisure).

2. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY OR CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Councillor K Thomas declared a non-pecuniary interest that she was an employee of JLR (Logistics) regarding agenda item 6 'Solihull Connected Refresh: Draft Transport Strategy'.

3. QUESTIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

No questions or deputations were received.

4. MINUTES

Councillor McLoughlin objected to the draft Minutes arising from the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board meeting held on 13th June

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD - 13 September 2022

2022 being approved, on the basis that the detail arising from agenda item 6 'Cabinet Portfolio Holders Priorities for the 2022/23 Municipal Year' was not sufficiently detailed in the draft Minutes, specifically the exchanges between Councillor McLoughlin and Councillor K Hawkins (Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment & Infrastructure) in respect of cycle lane infrastructure within the borough.

Councillor McLoughlin clarified that on page 14 of the draft Minutes, 3rd paragraph, he was referring specifically to a Brunel University study and Net Zero.

The Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board:

RESOLVED:

- (i) To defer consideration and approval of the draft Minutes arising from the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board meeting held on 13th June 2022 to the next Scrutiny Board meeting scheduled for 17th November 2022.

5. CIL LEVY / SECTION 106 ARRANGEMENTS (AND ASSOCIATED CHANGES IN THE PLANNING SYSTEM)

The report before the Scrutiny Board provided a review of arrangements on how the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 Agreements (S106) are deployed through the planning system in Solihull.

Infrastructure provided as part of new developments was generally secured through either S106 attached to the planning permission for the development itself, or via funds collected through CIL. The Group Manager (Policy & Engagement) informed Members that S106 arrangements provided site specific mitigation whereas CIL arrangements were more related to the accumulative effects of moderately sized developments based on floor space and chargeable development. The associated planning reform implications were yet to be fully understood.

The CIL and S106 arrangements were included within the current Local Plan Review, which was at an advanced stage of examination. Part of the evidence base for the Local Plan Review included the Infrastructure Delivery Plan Review, which highlighted infrastructure requirements.

Regulations set out that planning obligations, including S106 agreements, can only be sought when they have met a number of prescribed tests. The tests are then applied in relation to the development. There is a wide range of mitigation on development. Furthermore, the Council's Supplementary Planning Document assists further by providing guidelines on S106 and CIL arrangements.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD - 13 September 2022

The Full Cabinet meeting of 14th July 2022 clarified clawback procedures regarding S106 and CIL. In respect of CIL specifically, the decree of Full Council, as advised by the Cabinet, is required to approve the Charging Schedule, which was done so in April 2016. The Cabinet Portfolio for Communities and Leisure retains responsibility for overseeing the neighbourhood CIL bidding process, which is approved via consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder.

Regarding Strategic CIL arrangements, in the period since CIL was introduced in Solihull up to 31st March 2022, a total of £6,839,518 has accumulated in the Strategic CIL fund. At the Cabinet meeting held on 9th December 2021, Members noted *'In relation to Strategic CIL funds collected, the Council is at a key point with its new Local Plan, which sets out its strategy for development in the borough to 2036. As part of the process, the Authority's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) has been completed. It is envisaged that Strategic CIL fund will support the delivery of the IDP and will enable spending to be focussed on key infrastructure needs that will unlock growth'*. Strategic CIL funds are in effect focussed on key infrastructure needs.

As of 31st March 2022, a total of £1,320,480 had been accumulated in the local/neighbourhood CIL fund, which included monies paid directly to Parish Councils. Non-parished areas i.e. those areas for which the Council is responsible for spending the local neighbourhood proportion of CIL, are subject to a bidding process and consideration by the Cabinet Member. In the first 3 years of allocations being distributed, 32 projects were funded to a total of £417,995.00.

Monitoring arrangements for CIL funding include an annual report submitted to Full Cabinet detailing monies received, funding allocated to Parish Councils and funding spent. Member's attention was drawn to paragraph 3.34 of the report, which provided a summary of received CIL (Strategic and Neighbourhood) funding from 2016/17 to the present.

Having received the introduction to the report from the Group Manager (Policy & Engagement), Members of the Scrutiny Board submitted a number of related questions to the report, which in summary included the following matters:

Councillor Thomas noted that no Neighbourhood CIL had been spent in 2022 and referenced agenda item 7 'Draft Economic Strategy', which discussed the Council working with communities and developers for use of Strategic CIL. Councillor Thomas noted this had not happened historically within the Council and would this change in the future.

With reference to Appendix B 'Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill', Councillor Thomas noted that affordable housing was considered as infrastructure and queried what funding was consequently available to improve other infrastructure such as the highway and cycling network, and local health provision. Should affordable housing be included as an element of the infrastructure.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD - 13 September 2022

The Group Manager (Policy & Engagement) advised Members that Cabinet wanted the respective CIL funding to accumulate in order to be used in significant ways to unlock the growth opportunities identified in the Local Plan, as well as supporting other related Council strategies.

The approach to delivering affordable housing in the borough was to use S106 Agreements, which was detailed in the annual monitoring report submitted to Cabinet. Planning reform sought to include affordable housing in a single CIL infrastructure funding source. Such reform proposals were at an early stage in the Regeneration Bill, but the Council did raise the matter at the White Paper legislative stage.

Councillor McLoughlin highlighted paragraph 3.10 of the report, specifically that the Local Plan was currently nearing the end of the examination in public, seeking confirmation as to whether any comment / update had been received from the Inspector in light of it potentially impacting on the Funding Statement as detailed in the report.

Members were informed that the Planning Inspectors letter had been received by the Council, with initial findings having been distributed to all Councillors via the Communications Unit. A response from the Council to the Planning Inspectors letter was currently being drafted.

Councillor Qais queried if Strategic CIL could be used to support delivery of Council projects within the Capital Programme.

Members were advised that CIL could be used widely in its application, either via Capital based or other projects, which gave some flexibility as to how it could be deployed. However, once the CIL scheme was agreed and put in place in accordance with the established charging schedule it was prescriptive in nature.

The Assistant Director (Growth & Development) highlighted that Strategic CIL was a very important element to be used in order for the Council to plan over the longer term. Other important sources of funding were also received by the Council, such as the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement for transport related projects, and there was therefore a tactical element as to how CIL was spent to both deliver strategic infrastructure and maximise future funding obtained by the Council.

Councillor McLoughlin referenced the Charging Schedule, specifically within the report referencing '*...the Council had to "strike an appropriate balance between additional investment to support development and the potential effect on the viability of developments"*' and observed that this led to nil charging for some areas in the north of the borough. Furthermore, as the Borough Council had set the Charging Schedule it could not be amended by Parish Councils. The Group Manager (Policy & Engagement) advised that once the Charging Schedule was in place, the charges were not influenced by a Parish Council.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD - 13 September 2022

Councillor McLoughin noted that part of the challenge CIL brought with it was that it made planning work easier in respect of being an 'off the shelf' solution and ready-made rationale. The challenge currently experienced with the allocation of CIL was demonstrated by the table in the report (*'NCIL funds available in each bidding year'*), which illustrated in which Wards Neighbourhood CIL was being spent, and further by Appendix D (*'Residential Development on a Ward-by-Ward Basis'* and *'New Residential Dwellings 2014-21 by Ward'*), which showed two components whereby potential disadvantages were experienced by communities not benefitting from allocation of Neighbourhood CIL.

Having received and considered the report, the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board:

RESOLVED:

- (i) To note how CIL and S106 agreements were deployed through the planning system in Solihull; and,
- (ii) To note the comments made at the Scrutiny Board concerning the existing Neighbourhood CIL allocation within the borough.

6. SOLIHULL CONNECTED REFRESH - DRAFT TRANSPORT STRATEGY

The Senior Transport Planner introduced the report. The report before the Scrutiny Board provided an update on the refresh of the Solihull Connected Transport Strategy and provided the Scrutiny Board with the opportunity to scrutinise the proposed approach.

Members were informed that the Solihull Connected Draft Transport Strategy would sit alongside the Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) West Midlands Local Transport Plan (LTP). Members attention was drawn to the vision and four objectives of the Solihull Connected Draft Strategy, for which their views and comments were invited:

Paragraph 3.5 in the report stated ***'Views are sought from the Scrutiny Board on the proposed vision and objectives of Solihull Connected as set out in paragraphs 3.4.1 and 3.4.2'***

Vision: *Solihull will have a multi-modal transport system that accesses all parts of the borough, supports our economy, is safe to use and makes the borough healthier and fairer for communities, businesses, and visitors.*

Objectives:

- i. To make the transport network reach all parts of the borough
- ii. To help the economy grow in a way that is equal and fair for everyone.
- iii. To be safe and secure for all users.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD - 13
September 2022**

- iv. Transport will contribute to improving the quality of life in our borough.

Paragraph 3.11 of the report stated, '**Views are sought from the Scrutiny Board on the proposed themes and challenges for Solihull Connected**'. Members were informed that following consideration of the Scrutiny Boards comments on the Solihull Connected Draft Transport Strategy made at the Scrutiny Board meeting of 13th September 2021, the following themes were proposed to be addressed within the Draft Strategy:

- i. To take account of the progress since the first Solihull Connected transport strategy was adopted in 2016.
- ii. To respond to the environmental and transport challenges facing the borough.
- iii. To support the housing and economic plans for the borough.
- iv. To provide clarity as a number of high-profile schemes take place in the borough.

Paragraph 3.16 of the report stated '**Views are sought from the Scrutiny Board on the proposed policy areas**' (forming part of the Solihull Connected Draft Strategy) (abbreviated):

- i. Working with TfWM and bus operators (to address needs of different groups e.g. elderly).
- ii. Working with West Midlands Rail Executive and other parties.
- iii. Improving transport and travel connections to towns, districts and local centres.
- iv. Extending cycle network infrastructure across the borough.
- v. Highway schemes addressing congestion hotspots/traffic impacts; relieve constraints to economic growth/retention of economic assets.
- vi. Access from all parts of the borough to UKC Hub by bus, rail, cycle or, in future, West Midlands Metro.
- vii. Working with Communities and developers to make best use of S106 and CIL leading to early investment in the transport network.
- viii. Managing capacity on the highway network during periods of construction works and make parallel improvements to sustainable travel modes.
- ix. Reducing carbon from transport by promoting low carbon travel.
- x. Review of parking supply and economic success, congestion levels and uptake of active travel modes.
- xi. Understand the needs of the freight and logistics industry.
- xii. Take an active role in the development of future transport technology.

Other significant policy issues which required highlighting within the context of the Draft Solihull Connected strategy and related transport objectives within the Local Plan included:

- i. The change in commuting patterns and travel habits generally since the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD - 13
September 2022**

- ii. Population and demographic within the borough: The population within the borough was ageing.
- iii. Challenge around climate change.
- iv. HS2: Positive impacts when opened on the local economy and cross-borough transport links.
- v. Economic uncertainty.
- vi. Cycling and Walking strategies.
- vii. Electric Vehicle Strategy.
- viii. Birmingham Airport / NEC.
- ix. Neighbourhood Plans.
- x. Highway schemes and infrastructure.
- xi. Improving access (to the borough and across the borough).
- xii. Public health, access to employment, education provision, tourism.

The Solihull Connected Strategy divides the borough into 6 areas, each of which has a place-based strategy specific to transport needs in that area, which are:

- i. UKC Hub
- ii. North Solihull
- iii. Rural east
- iv. Solihull town centre
- v. Southern fringe
- vi. Urban core

The report requests (*Member's*) '**Views and sought from the Scrutiny Board on the proposed area strategies**' and '**Comments are sought from the Scrutiny Board on the overall approach that the Council is proposing to the development of transport strategy for Solihull**'.

Finally, the report states at paragraph 4.1 that '*Three options have therefore been considered to ensure that the Council has a transport strategy that fully reflects current policy:*

- a. *Do nothing i.e. retain Solihull Connected in its current form.*
- b. *Review the existing Solihull Connected transport strategy and update or refresh where applicable; and,*
- c. *Develop an entirely new strategy.*

The Scrutiny Board was advised that the Solihull Connected Refresh – Draft Transport Strategy would be submitted to the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 6th October 2023, with a view to going out to public consultation and adoption by the Spring of 2023.

Having received the introduction to the report from the Senior Transport Planner, Members of the Scrutiny Board submitted further questions pertinent to the report, which in summary included the following matters:

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD - 13
September 2022**

The Chairman invited Members of the Scrutiny Board to comment on the vision and objectives for Solihull Connected, as detailed in the report.

Councillor McLoughlin noted the behavioural approach adopted within the draft strategy, which was welcomed. However, Councillor McLoughlin highlighted one significant change being required in relation to *Objective 1 – To make the transport network reach all parts of the borough*. As it stood, the draft strategy appeared to give greater focus to the needs of commuters. More appropriate, alternative wording for Objective 1 would read as '*To make the transport network accessible to all people*', which also helped to frame the draft strategy towards people, rather than places/geography.

Councillor Thomas noted on page 85 of the report (under the heading '*Why are we doing it?*') the following: "*Whilst an increased focus on other modes of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport aims to limit any increases in the use of private vehicle usage across the borough, car use is still expected to continue to account for a significant proportion of travel going forward*". Councillor Thomas stated this was disappointing as the Solihull Connected strategy was expected to off-set increased car usage and levels of congestion, especially considering increased house building and growing population in the borough. This part of the strategy did not demonstrate enough ambition in its aims.

In respect of connectivity, the draft strategy referenced poor transport links and connectivity to the north of the borough, but it did not propose to address this. Councillor Thomas further noted that electric vehicle charging points appeared to be omitted from North Solihull, which had a greater need than many other parts of the borough owing to a higher number of properties without driveways.

The Group Manager (Transport & Infrastructure Commissioning) advised that it was not the intention of the draft strategy to resolve congestion issues associated with new growth only. Members were informed that the terminology used within the draft strategy would therefore be reviewed. With respect to connectivity across the borough, Members were advised that connectivity objectives had to be linked across the Council's strategies to be delivered.

Councillor Courts noted that the terminology within the draft strategy would be reviewed; for example, it was recognised that current transport infrastructure provided better connectivity from North Solihull to Birmingham than it did to Solihull town centre, and that greater clarity was required within the document to address these issues.

Councillor Mrs Holl-Allen stated she supported many of the objectives detailed within the draft strategy, especially those addressing access to public transport for older people, safety and security of public transport and frequency of bus services. Councillor Mrs Holl-Allen further noted that people needed to use and support public transport services if they were to be retained and expanded, that the frequency of stops on bus routes could have a bearing as to whether the

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD - 13 September 2022

elderly used such services and that accessibility to the public transport network / modal shift issues for users with mobility issues were of equal importance.

Councillor Qais stated that she supported all the objectives detailed in the draft strategy. Councillor Qais noted that many of the objectives were shared, or could be delivered, across the Solihull Connected and Solihull Economic Strategy, in conjunction with the application of CIL funding. A priority for the strategy had to be the linking of communities across the borough via access to transport service and infrastructure. Furthermore, if greater uptake of cycling and walking was to happen the public realm had to be made safe.

The Group Manager (Transport & Infrastructure Commissioning) drew Members attention to the first draft of the Solihull Connected Delivery Plan included as part of the agenda and advised the Delivery Plan would be developed further by the time the draft strategy went out for public consultation. The draft Solihull Connected Delivery Plan had previously been reported to the Cabinet Portfolio Holders Environment and Infrastructure decision session as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement. Further detailed progress reports would be made available as to how projects were to be taken forward.

Councillor Gibbin noted that there was a lack of detail present in the current draft strategy around integration of private hire vehicles into the public transport infrastructure, the perception of fear and crime by potential and existing users of public transport and that reference could be made to the Crime & Disorder Act in relation to the comments made by Councillor Qais and Councillor Mrs Holl-Allen with respect to improving the safety of the public realm and transport services. The Senior Transport Planner advised Members that he would liaise with colleagues in the Licensing Office regarding the issues raised in relation to unlicensed mini cabs.

Councillor Pinwell summarised the discussion as being supportive for the draft strategy's vision and objectives, with some clarity being required around wording and terminology.

The Scrutiny Board moved to consider the proposed themes and challenges for Solihull Connected.

Councillor Thomas stated that the key challenges in respect of public bus and train services was frequency of service. Acceptable minimum frequency of service was given as every 10 minutes, whilst there were some examples of train services running only half hourly and bus services hourly, which was not acceptable.

Concerning UK Central (UKC), Councillor Thomas noted multi-modal shift arrangements and access by bus services to UKC, yet the Solihull Connected Delivery Plan only referenced establishing bus routes from Dorridge to UKC and questioned how the actions detailed in the Delivery Plan would breach that gap.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD - 13 September 2022

Councillor Pinwell noted that the route from UKC via Dorridge would also stop at Solihull town centre as a transport hub. However, Councillor Pinwell also noted that some services were not frequent enough.

The Group Manager (Transport & Infrastructure Commissioning) informed Members that in developing the Solihull Connected draft strategy extensive research had been undertaken into current public transport provision within the borough, which would result in an evidence base being brought forward for the Solihull Connected strategy. The UKC – Dorridge – Shirley bus route was a circular route in essence. Key actions were recognised as required to address connectivity issues to North Solihull to connect those communities with the rest of the borough and to address the current arterial transport infrastructure leading from North Solihull to the centre of Birmingham.

The frequency and reliability of bus and train services was recognised as being critical to the supporting of and raising passenger numbers on the public transport network. However, it was also the case that frequency of service provision was largely a commercial decision made by the transport service provider, with definitions of frequency varying. A frequent service in an urban area may be defined in some cases as every 15 minutes. Higher service frequency leads to greater operational costs for the operator which is a commercial decision and outside of the Council's control.

Councillor Courts stated he wished to see a metro link in place to Birmingham International, but had some concerns with costs and timescales associated with such infrastructure projects. However, changes were required to be made to the highway network and infrastructure by conventional means to increase capacity on the highway network. Improving journey times on public transport services, as well as frequency of services, also had to be addressed. Councillor Courts felt it was clear within the draft strategy, however, that there was a commitment to connect people to employment, housing and town centres across the borough.

Councillor Gibbin referenced the Solihull transport infrastructure 'spoke' model and queried whether it was really understood where current and future demand for travel was located and what future demand looked like in the borough.

The Group Manager (Transport & Infrastructure Commissioning) informed the Scrutiny Board that the primary evidence base used to date was data from the 2011 Census. The Covid-19 pandemic had had some impact on the last Census to be undertaken regarding travel patterns and volumes. Other modelling tools were available, such as the West Midlands PRISM model, which incorporated census data, household travel data, data from the Department of Transport and town centre data amongst other sources. Socio-economic modelling was used in respect of future demand. Such modelling can assist in the design of transport projects and intervention solutions. A question to be addressed includes whether the Council was seeking to influence where people travelled to in the future via public transport

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD - 13 September 2022

infrastructure, design and the use of behavioural sciences to access employment, retail centres and housing.

Councillor Pinwell questioned the role of integrated ticketing arrangements in support of public transport use, such as bus-train-bus, and its role in addressing frequent car journeys. Members were advised that data snapshots could be taken from available ticketing information via bus and train services, TfWM surveys, transport modelling and Satnav data, but these data sources would not provide the whole picture for public travel patterns.

Councillor McLoughlin referred to paragraph 3.8 in the report (transport challenges facing residents and businesses within and to Solihull), specifically the issues of public transport services frequency and reliability. A fundamental problem concerning access to sustainable transport locations can be the distances involved to reach such hubs, sometimes involving walking or cycling for up to 25 minutes to reach them. Three services an hour can be sufficient to qualify as a sustainable transport hub (which may equate to a service every 30 minutes in real terms).

Councillor McLoughlin referred to paragraph 3.8 (1st bullet point) and suggested that the terminology used should be further reviewed e.g. reference made to '*...disabled and elderly travellers.*' Be amended to '*people with disabilities*'.

Councillor McLoughlin made further reference to paragraph 3.8 (2nd bullet point), highlighting Blythe Valley business park, for which access from Dorridge via bicycle entailed a 20 minutes cycle ride. Reality dictated that a journey had to be reviewed in full from the start to end point, which in this case entailed the length of journey to the train station.

With reference to paragraph 3.8 (penultimate bullet point), Councillor McLoughlin noted that the Levelling Up White Paper (in respect of promoting local growth) may contain the right intentions, but the Council did not have control over funding from Government or TfWM.

Councillor Pinwell summarised Member's contributions to this section of the report as recognising the challenges the draft strategy had to address, with the frequency and reliability of public transport services being a key factor in contributing towards a well-connected, sustainable public transport infrastructure.

Moving on to the next section of the report, Councillor Pinwell invited Members of the Scrutiny Board to comment on the proposed twelve policy areas (as detailed in paragraph 3.15 of the report) the Solihull Connected draft strategy was to address.

Councillor Parker stated he would like to see a Metro connection put in place to North Solihull in support of access to employment sites. In respect of the 12 key policy areas, Councillor Parker observed that the wording used in support of the 12 policy areas had to be sufficiently ambitious going forward and cited

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD - 13 September 2022

examples such as proposing a train station in Castle Bromwich, a commitment to providing access to a Metro and expansion of the SPRINT network to include Shirley and expansion and improvements to the borough wide cycle network infrastructure.

Regarding Shirley train station, Councillor Parker stated that it was in the wrong location which had led to its underutilisation, largely because of its relative remoteness to Shirley town centre which should be addressed as part of the draft strategy's policy review.

The Group Manager (Transport & Infrastructure Commissioning) confirmed with the Scrutiny Board that the references to Castle Bromwich and Shirley station facilities could be further reviewed and accentuated in the draft strategy.

Councillor McLoughlin highlighted the need for the draft strategy to highlight cycling infrastructure and park and ride facilities into Shirley, address safe and dry cycle storage facilities at Shirley train station and recognise the potential hazards presented by major roads when accessing Shirley as a pedestrian.

Councillor McLoughlin also emphasised that the draft strategy should make clear that the transport options put forward may positively or negatively impact some residents, citing the Blossom field Road cycle network public consultation as an example.

The Group Manager (Transport & Infrastructure Commissioning) acknowledged that related public consultation to the draft strategy had to be both targeted and accessible to the public. Members were advised that the intention was to consult with residents and businesses prior to any scheme design being commenced, with reports to follow to Cabinet to raise wider public awareness of any proposals (including with any internal and external partners and services). Officers recognised the requirement for a consultation and communications plan to be in place as part of the draft strategy's due diligence process.

Councillor Pinwell summarised the discussion at this point, highlighting the integral role the public consultation had to play in delivering the Solihull Connected draft strategy and Delivery Plan, that the highlighted policy areas had to be ambitious in their expected deliverables (such as Metro connectivity to North Solihull), the importance of the role station developments had to play as part of the draft strategy had to be recognised and highlighted, as well as the provision of station facilities to encourage and support sustainable travel to access them.

Moving on to the next section of the report, Councillor Pinwell invited Members of the Scrutiny Board to comment on the overall approach that the Council was proposing to the development of transport strategy for Solihull.

The Group Manager (Transport & Infrastructure Commissioning) informed the Scrutiny Board that policy objectives had been established for each area within

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD - 13 September 2022

the borough. Subject to the main Delivery Plan was the access strategy, which would be included as part of the draft strategy public consultation process. The access strategy set out detailed thinking for improvement proposals by area and proposals for securing the funding to deliver the proposals, subject to further public consultation. Further data collection was required at a local centre level to support future project proposals to implementation.

Councillor Thomas endorsed the draft strategy's ambition and direction, but questioned the level of ambition around project delivery in terms of scale; for example, the proposals to improve the cycle network infrastructure involved further upgrades to the best 3 existing cycle networks in Solihull, but did not really improve the overall cycling experience.

The Group Manager (Transport & Infrastructure Commissioning) advised that the intention was to use the Solihull Connected strategy to govern the wider approach to infrastructure delivery.

Councillor Pinwell noted that the transport strategy for Solihull was a substantial piece of work, with transport arrangements impacting on most areas of life for residents and businesses.

Having considered the Solihull Connected Refresh – Draft Transport Strategy report, the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board:

RESOLVED:

- (i) To note the issues set out in the report regarding the development of an updated transport strategy for the Borough; and,
- (ii) To direct Officers attention to the Scrutiny Board's responses and comments in relation to the questions set out in paragraph's 3.5, 3.11, 3.16, 3.37 and 3.40 of the report as detailed in the minutes for agenda 6 above and for considering when further updating the Council's transport strategy.

7. DRAFT ECONOMIC STRATEGY

The purpose of the report before the Scrutiny Board was to update Members on the development of the Economic Strategy and to provide the Scrutiny Board with the opportunity to give comments on the first draft.

The Interim Head of Economic Development introduced the report. Members were informed that the draft Economic Strategy had been submitted to the Scrutiny Board on two previous occasions. The report detailed the economic strategy for the borough as a whole. Officers had liaised with the private sector in the drafting of the draft strategy, as well as facilitating two stakeholder events, which drew out substantial themes for further consideration. The current draft Economic Strategy reflected the above consultation, as well as the

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD - 13 September 2022

comments provided previously by Members of the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board.

When speaking with private sector partners as part of the draft strategy engagement process, the Council was keen to promote the economic vision in the strategy that by 2032 Solihull would be the *UK's best-connected economy – for business, for people, forever*. Four headline / performance indicator areas would be monitored to track vision delivery. An Action Plan sat under the Economic Strategy.

Having received the report introduction from the Interim Head of Economic Development, Members of the Scrutiny Board raised several pertinent questions to the report, which in summary included the following matters:

Councillor Qais noted that the draft Economic Strategy demonstrated clarity when addressing the issues of community, people, place and business, which provided a strong economic strategy for any location. Councillor Qais noted that the supporting Action Plan linked actions to deliver the strategy objectives and that the strategy was a living document which provided opportunities for it to be revisited. Councillor Qais sought clarity as to how the Economic Strategy would be evaluated and monitored moving forward.

The Interim Head of Economic Development confirmed that a draft Action Plan was in place. The Action Plan could be amended as required and was formatted to reflect the Economic Strategy priorities, providing evidence for implementation progress of objectives, lead personnel and resources involved. A timetable for the first 3 years of the Economic Strategy was already in place.

Councillor Gibbin commended the drive and ambition detailed through the Economic Strategy, but questioned with regard to the NEC, Birmingham Airport and A45 corridor how potential tourists and business users would be attracted to the more rural areas, hotels and town centres located elsewhere in the borough.

Members were advised that good work had been delivered through the Visit Solihull campaign addressing business and leisure tourism directly. Further work was being taken forward to address this area.

The Assistant Director (Economy & Growth) further advised the Scrutiny Board that the current Tourism Forum included representatives from across the visitor economy and borough specifically aimed at growing tourism throughout Solihull. Examples being advertising located at the NEC during the Commonwealth Games that highlighted the leisure opportunities in the borough.

Councillor McLoughlin noted that due to the current economic climate with energy prices it may be considered appropriate to amend paragraph 3.10 to include the word *'supporting'*. Similarly, the economic conditions for small and medium size enterprises (SME's) and entrepreneurs should be recognised as

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD - 13 September 2022

challenging and consequently this should be acknowledged through additional support and signposting of business support services.

The Assistant Director (Economy & Growth) advised that the Council had recognised the issues raised by Councillor McLoughlin and doe directly support businesses via the Enterprise and Innovation Centres for example, but Officers would reflect further on these issues within the context of the Economic Strategy.

With reference to the preface to the Economic Strategy, Councillor Thomas noted that no context was provided as to why people were facing difficulties in accessing employment and secondly, in respect of a 'do nothing' option besides current employment levels falling there should be an accompanying expectation of increased business failures.

The Interim Head of Economic Growth stated that physical connectivity provided by transport infrastructure to employers and recognising employment opportunities were instrumental in providing pathways to employment in areas such North Solihull. With regard to Councillor Thomas' latter point, this was a technical point. On reviewing the Business and Employment Registers it appeared to evidence strong growth, however, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has premised that the data did not evidence true employment growth.

Councillor Qais welcomed the theme in paragraph 3.7 (g) '*Enterprise should be encouraged and smaller businesses given support to grow*' and welcomed any attempts to attract new businesses and employers into the borough. Councillor Qais questioned how new business development linked to the skills and apprenticeship opportunities, particularly as applicable for young people in the borough and noted that it was important to ensure that employment opportunities were not confined to town centres, but included village centres also.

Councillor Pinwell observed that a balance had to be achieved between support for town and village centres respectively, as the borough had a diverse range of local centres located within it as exemplified from Dorridge to Hobbs Moat. Economically strong town centres such as Solihull, Shirley and Chelmsley Wood, were required for economic benefit throughout the borough, however, and their profile and significance needed to be more pronounced in the draft Economic Strategy.

The Assistant Director (Economy & Growth) advised that the draft Economic strategy was a high-level strategy which highlighted town centres economic role within the borough. However, local centres were recognised as also carrying an important economic role and as such the Council worked with representatives and organisations within those local centres. Such an example was the production of the Shirley Economic Plan, which led to direct supportive interventions to be made for Shirley. Similarly, interventions were initiated in Balsall Common in respect of public realm works and also work with 'Visit Knowle'. In essence, the Council worked with the established character and

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD - 13 September 2022

profile of an existing centre, rather than attempting to create something that was not feasibly possible.

Members were advised that large scale projects were being implemented, as evidenced by Solihull town centre and Mell Square, which were considered to be of strategic benefit for the wider borough. Distinctiveness of specific places was recognised as being very important for telling the story of place leading to potential marketing and promotion possibilities.

Regarding operational interventions, all centres and localities in the borough were unique, requiring different services and interventions ranging from parking and sustainable access to train stations, highway signage and cleansing. Different interventions suited different centres and led to tailored strategies being produced for each locality.

Having reviewed and discussed the Draft Economic Strategy report, the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board:

RESOLVED:

- i. To note the development of the Economic Strategy to date; and,
- ii. To refer the Scrutiny Board's comments and suggestions for the draft Economic Strategy, as detailed in the Minutes under agenda item 7, for the attention of the Interim Head of Economic Development.

8. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

Having reviewed the Work Programme 2022/23 report, the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board:

RESOLVED:

- i. To agree to amend the Work Programme to consider the following reports at the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board scheduled for 17th November 2022:
 - a. Council Housing Asset Management Strategy report
 - b. Housing Allocations Scheme report
 - c. Housing Strategy report

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD - 13
September 2022**

- ii. To agree to amend the Work Programme to consider the following reports at the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board scheduled for 17th January 2023:
 - a. Review of the Budget Framework for Portfolio's Pertinent to the Scrutiny Board report
 - b. Net Zero Action Plan report
 - c. Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document

The Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board meeting closed at 8:27 p.m.

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