

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting - 19 June 2019

Present: P Bastiman, M Bradford (Chairman), P Kelly, M Lewis and D Saunders

Also Present: L Sullivan and W Matthews

Apologies for absence: M Bezzant and T Egleton.

3. PRESENTATION FROM NETWORK RAIL

The Committee was provided with a presentation from Ruth Leuillete and Malcolm Armstrong from Network Rail on the proposed improvement of Rail Links to Heathrow Airport from the West.

The proposal was for a new direct rail link from the west to Heathrow, providing a step change in journeys to Britain's busiest airport through fast, frequent and reliable train services. This would be a nationally Significant Infrastructure Project and would require the submission of a Development Consent Order for planning permission

Members were informed that the proposal was not dependent on future possible airport expansion.

Design was progressing following extensive consultation to optimise the route and design solution. Network Rail was working with the Department for Transport and Heathrow Airport Limited. There was currently funding for development with further funding being subject to a satisfactory business case.

The potential benefits for a new rail link would be improved accessibility to Heathrow Airport from the south coast, the south west, south Wales and the West Midlands. Reduced congestion on Major Roads such as M4, M3 and M25 as well as reduced congestion at London Paddington.

There would be a boost to the economy with significant effects to the Thames Valley and further afield. Reference was made to Reading station being rebuilt to enable the handling of more train services, which included the new rail link to Heathrow. There would be significant train journey times saved compared to the current services from Slough to Heathrow.

The Committee was provided with the final plans which had been subject to intensive public consultation. The proposals would consist of approximately 6km of new rail infrastructure. There would be 3 access shafts, above ground, along the route.

The proposal would connect to the existing infrastructure, including facilities already built at Heathrow Terminal 5. Reference was also made to other projects which needed to be taken into consideration:

- Proposed third runway at Heathrow Airport
- CEMEX mineral extraction
- Proposals for southern rail access to Heathrow
- Highways England 'Smart Motorways' on M4 and M25.

With the proposals, 92% of journey times from Slough to Heathrow Terminal would be reduced, with 76% of journey times saved for car trips.

Details of the engineering and construction requirements were explained to Members with particular emphasis on the likely option of highways modelling at Hollow Hill Lane in Iver which would be a part of South Bucks which would be adversely affected.

In relation to the overall Highways modelling, there was a required proportionate approach to mitigations and it was reported that this would be based on data outputs from modelling. There would be a full assessment of the construction effects and the full scheme at completion.

In relation to the Cemex agreement there would be a commitment to a shared site which would result in decreased HGV impact (instead of 1400 HGV movements a month, proposed reduction to 400 HGV movements per month).

With regard to the proposed Hollow Hill Lane Closure, model outputs would assess traffic flow, noise and air quality impacts. Modelling demonstrated worse case scenarios i.e. robust case. Mitigation details proposed by the project would be subject to discussion with relevant local authority officers.

Over the whole route, most affected junctions identified from the strategic model would then be assessed at a local level to identify mitigations. The likely anticipated options for consideration would be highway improvements to most affected junctions.

In 2019 the outline business case had to be submitted to the Department for Transport, funding commitment for the scheme had to be secured and Development Consent Orders had to be submitted to secure planning permission.

In 2022, once funding and planning permission had been secured, construction would take five years.

Members discussed the impact of the proposals on residents of South Bucks and Network Rail was asked to provide details of the consultations which have taken place with affected local authorities. Officers from Network Rail reported that there

had been some joint meetings, and also separate meetings with local authorities but they would consider having all meetings as joint in the future to ensure joined up thinking and working took place.

Particular discussion took place on the works which were planned for Hollow Hill Lane, Iver, and Network Rail was asked whether Bucks County Council as the Highway Authority, and South Bucks District Council had been consulted, in terms of the traffic and highway impact on residents around Hollow Hill Lane.

Network Rail reported that they had used transport data from Slough Borough Council to undertake the impact assessment and they had been satisfied that this was robust data. Network Rail was made aware that traffic data from Bucks County Council for Iver had been used for purposes of the South Bucks Local Plan and they were asked to give consideration to this data as it should be as robust as the Slough data.

Members also asked for details of the other junctions which would be affected to enable feedback from Bucks County Council and South Bucks District Council. Members expressed a view that they did not perceive Network Rail had sufficient mitigation plans for the permanent closure of Hollow Hill Lane, based on the experience of when it was closed for a temporary period. They should not be expecting the local authorities to pick up significant costs to mitigate the effects of their project

The Committee expressed concern at Network Rail not consulting with all relevant local authorities affected by the proposals, particularly in relation to the impact the proposal would have on the highways and roads around the rail link at Hollow Hill Lane, Iver. It was asked that the relevant Cabinet Member be informed of these concerns.

RESOLVED – That Network Rail be thanked for their presentation and the relevant Cabinet Member be informed of this Committee’s concerns with regard to the lack of consultation with Bucks County Council and this Council by Network Rail on aspects of the proposed rail link to Heathrow Airport from the west, particularly in relation to the highway impact on Hollow Hill Lane, Iver.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 February and 14 May 2019 were approved and signed by the Chairman of the Committee as a correct record.

5. **HOMELESSNESS IN SOUTH BUCKS - UPDATE**

Michael Veryard, Housing Manager was in attendance and Members were reminded that at the last meeting of the Committee an update was requested on homelessness in South Bucks district.

The Committee was informed that during 2018/19, South Bucks District Council received a total of 107 homelessness applications which compared to a total of 102 homelessness applications in the preceding year, 2017/18.

Overall, the number of households in temporary accommodation saw an annual drop of 12% at the end of the year 2018/19 (55 down to 48). However, within this total, the number of households in nightly booked temporary accommodation had dropped more significantly with a 44% reduction overall (36 down to 20). This had significant implications for the Council's budget as nightly booked accommodation generated significant cost for the Council.

Members were informed that by national comparison, South Bucks had performed well, with a Local Government Association survey recording that 83% of authorities had seen an increase in homelessness applications and 61% had seen an increase in the use of temporary accommodation.

Under the provisions introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act, the Council has a duty to secure temporary accommodation when it accepted a Homelessness Relief Duty and it had reason to believe that the applicant was in priority need (e.g. household with or expecting children, applicant with significant medical issues etc.).

Members were informed that the Relief Duty lasted for a minimum of 56 days. Therefore, the Council would normally have to provide temporary accommodation for at least 56 days before it could make a final decision on whether or not it had a duty to secure longer term accommodation for the household. If the Council accepted this longer term duty then it had to continue to provide temporary accommodation until the applicant can secure a permanent move elsewhere.

In relation to Bed and Breakfast/Nightly Booked Accommodation, the Council placed applicants directly into this accommodation and payed a nightly rate directly to the landlord. The Council then re-charged the applicants £25.00 per night towards the cost of the accommodation (the Housing Act 1996 allowed the Council to make a reasonable charge to applicants in relation to the costs that it was paying).

The nightly rate payable by the Council varied depending on the type of accommodation and size of household and the Committee was provided with details of applicants who were in nightly booked accommodation in March 2019 to show the variation in cost.

Members were informed that comparisons with the rates paid by other authorities was difficult to make as this information was not generally shared, however, informal discussions with other authorities over the last 12 months had indicated that the rates paid by South Bucks District Council were comparable with other authorities and were in fact lower in some cases.

Reference was made to some of the schemes the Council had developed to reduce the cost of temporary accommodation; Gerrards Cross Former Police House, the Private Sector Leasing Scheme which operated in partnership with Paradigm, Bucks Housing Association Acquisitions and Bath Road which was still in the process of being developed. Bath Road would provide a significant additional supply of temporary accommodation to further reduce reliance on B & B provision.

For 2019/20, as of 19 June, 2019, there were a total of 52 households in temporary accommodation.

The Committee was made aware of the recent upturn in homelessness applications following the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, with the Duty to Refer resulting in more homeless clients being referred to local authorities and other statutory agencies.

Discussion took place on performance indicators for homelessness and Members asked that targets be kept under review to ensure targets were challenging.

Members were informed that the cost of the Private Sector Leasing Scheme to the Council was on average around £400-500 a month and this was paid in the form of a management fee to Paradigm. This equated to £11,500 per unit, of which there were 25 Units (May 2019).

In relation to the Bath Road site, Members were informed that these units would be for a mix of clients with families included. Safeguarding considerations would be undertaken, with consideration given to any client's vulnerabilities and needs when allocating accommodation. Checks were also carried out on B & B owners to ensure clients were safeguarded.

RESOLVED – That the report provided be noted.

6. **CRIME STATISTICS**

A report was received which provided details on the reporting of crime statistics for Members.

It was noted that verbal updates on crime statistics and trends would be reported at each Community Safety Partnership meeting by the Police Service, together with

updates provided at bi-monthly meetings with the Portfolio Holder, Community Safety Manager and Head of Service.

7. **CONSILIO BUSINESS PLAN**

The Committee was informed that the Business Plan for Consilio Property Ltd had been reviewed and amended for the financial year 2019/2020. The draft Plan had been approved by the Board of Consilio Property Ltd, and it was submitted to this Committee for comments prior to submission to Cabinet for approval and before it was submitted to the Consilio Property Ltd AGM.

RESOLVED – That the Business Plan for Consilio Property Ltd for financial year 2019/20, as detailed in the confidential report, be noted and Cabinet be informed that the Committee had no comments.

8. **END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT 2018/19**

The report outlined the annual performance of Council services against pre-agreed performance indicators and service objectives for the end of year, 2018-19.

Members were provided with the key points of the report:

- There was one Environment PI marked as awaiting data - Cumulative CO2 reduction from local authority operations from base year of 2008/09 (annual) – as this took some months for the data to come through.
- All priority PIs were on target.
- All PIs within the Leader's portfolio were on target.
- All PIs within Resources portfolio were on target.
- Healthy Communities: CdHS4 - Number of private sector dwellings vacant for more than 6 months and returned to occupation following local authority intervention was under the target of 15 at 0. This was due to there being no active intervention work undertaken by Housing Team during 2018/19 due to other workload demands and limited identification of suitable empty homes. Therefore, no empty homes were recorded as being returned to use as direct result of Council intervention. Complaints and enforcement work for empty homes causing nuisance or health concerns were dealt with on case by case basis. Annual Capacity Grid review and cleansing of Council Tax database was identifying long term empty homes that have been returned to use but not reported to the Council. This ensured that the Council provided an accurate empty homes total to inform the New Homes Bonus calculation.
- Planning & Economic Development: All PIs for this portfolio were on target.
- Environment: All PIs for this portfolio were on target.
- Customer & Business Support: JtBS1 availability of ICT systems to staff from 8am to 6pm was slightly under target of 99.5% at 96.5% for quarter 4, as was JtBS2, percentage of calls to ICT helpdesk resolved within agreed timescales

(by period) - under the target of 95% at 92.3%. Both of these were due to problems with staff recruitment and retention within Business Support's Infrastructure Team, the section has been running at a reduced capacity throughout the year. Members of the team have also been spending time supporting projects relating to the ICT Strategy and therefore diverted from dealing with support calls. These two factors have contributed to missing both yearly targets.

Discussion took place on some of the PIs and Members were informed that in relation to Empty Properties in the private sector, cross-referencing took place with Council Tax to identify potential empty properties. Members asked whether this should be a PI if the Council had no influence on forcing private landlords to return empty properties into the housing market. Officers reported that a review would take place on this PI and this would be reflected in the next reporting of performance indicators.

RESOLVED – That the end of year performance report be noted and Cabinet be informed that the Committee had no comments.

9. **STATUTORY GUIDANCE ON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FUNCTIONS**

Members noted the new statutory guidance on Overview and Scrutiny which would be taken into consideration when devising the overview and scrutiny arrangements for the new Unitary Council.

10. **BUCKS HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE SELECT COMMITTEE**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Buckinghamshire County Council Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee held on 19 March 2019

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Buckinghamshire County Council Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee be noted.

11. **BUCKS CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Buckinghamshire County Council Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee held on 12 March 2019.

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Buckinghamshire County Council Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee be noted.

12. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.

RESOLVED That the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be agreed.

13. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED that under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular persons (including the authority holding that information .

14. **FARNHAM PARK**

Consideration was given to a report which provided Members with details on the future options for the development of the playing fields.

Officers provided Members with the background to the various options outlined in the confidential report.

RESOLVED – That the confidential report be noted.

15. **CONSILIO BUSINESS PLAN APPENDICES**

The confidential appendices were noted.

The meeting terminated at 7.55 pm