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Economy, Environment & Place Scrutiny Committee - 05/02/20

ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT & PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 5th February, 2020
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

Present: Mayor's Consort - Councillor Gary White (Chair)

Councillors: G. Heesom M. Reddish D.Grocott
M. Olszewski D. Jones
B. Panter Mrs J Cooper

Substitutes: Councillor Mark Holland (In place of Councillor John Tagg)

Officers: Simon McEneny Executive Director -
Commercial Development &
Economic Growth
Daniel Dickinson Head of Legal /Monitoring
Officer
Jemma March Planning Policy Manager
Nesta Barker Head of Environmental Health
Services
Shawn Fleet Head of Planning and
Development
Denise French Democratic Services Team
Leader

Also in attendance: Councillor Trevor Johnson Portfolio Holder - Environment
and Recycling
Councillor Paul Northcott Portfolio Holder - Planning and
Growth

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Tagg who was represented by Councillor M Holland; and from Councillor A Rout.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th December 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

4. AIR QUALITY BRIEFING

The Committee considered a report from the Head of Environmental Services. The report briefed Members on the air quality project requirements, progress to date and future works required for the creation of the Air Quality Local Plan.

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The Borough Council, along with Stoke on Trent City Council, was part of thirty three 'third wave authorities' who were required to complete a feasibility study to identify actions that could be taken to bring forward compliances for exceedances for nitrogen dioxide pollutants in particular areas. In Stoke and Newcastle the identified area was the A53 from Sandy Lane to where it crossed the A500 and travelled along Festival Park. The feasibility study identified that bus retro fit was the only potentially cost effective measure that could have an impact to bring forward compliance but this could not be achieved by the compliance date of 2021.

In October 2018 the Council was served with two ministerial directions to undertake works which were coordinated by the Government's Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU). The directions and JAQU guidance required:

- (i) Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council and Stoke on Trent City Council to jointly further investigate EU exceedances of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) on roads within the Borough and identify measures that could bring forward compliance within limits as soon as possible; or to review implementation of a chargeable Clean Air Zone (CAZ); and
- (ii) NULBC to implement a bus engine retrofit programme to busses that operate on the A53 to be implemented as soon as possible in order to bring forward compliance of nitrogen dioxide levels.

A number of reports had been submitted to the Cabinet who believed a highways/transport solution could be found to reduce pollution levels rather than a chargeable CAZ which would be damaging to business and the town centre.

The primary critical success factor was to achieve compliance with the NO₂ limits in the shortest possible time; this timescale had been agreed with JAQU to be by 2022. The investigation and proposals were required to be wider than the A53 and had to address other areas experiencing exceedances of the limits for NO₂ along with any 'displacement routes' that may result from any measures introduced. The scope of the study area included most of the urban area of the Borough along with the whole of Stoke City. All options were to be measured against a benchmark of a CAZ which also had to be modelled by the local study and the categories of a CAZ were presented.

The work to date had included a Strategic Outline Case and initial evidence submission. The present stage was Options Development/Appraisal. In October 2019 an options development workshop had been held involving officers and members from the 3 Authorities and representatives of Highways England and JAQU. This had identified some initial traffic management options including:

- Retrofitting the bus fleet
- Banning turns
- Banning traffic during peak periods
- Creating one way systems
- Low Emission Strategy – this had been agreed in the Strategic Outline Business Case

There would be further work on these options along with consideration of benchmark CAZ options.

Alongside this, the Authority was able to submit a bid for Clean Air Funding; this Fund was to support local authorities to deliver action plans and to counteract dis-benefits that may arise from implementation of other solutions.

Work to retrofit buses was underway with identification that 25 buses that travelled on the A53 would need this work.

The work was being undertaken by a Joint Officer Group (JOG) of the 3 Authorities involved. The governance arrangements were presented and also showed where and when decisions would be made.

In discussing the presentation, the following issues were raised:

- Further information was requested on the 5 traffic management options presented in the report. The Head of Environmental Services (HES) explained that these options would be explored further in terms of how they could work at various junctions. Modelling would be used with information on traffic origin and destination to analyse feasible alternative routes along with the resultant impact on air quality. There would also be consideration of how highways signage could be used to divert traffic.
- Why had the A53 been chosen? The HES explained that the Government had responded to the environmental law charity Client Earth and had carried out Air Quality modelling to identify national pollutant exceedances. The Pollution Climate Mapping identified the A53 as a road of concern. Local authorities were tasked with addressing any exceedances of NO₂ levels. The A34 did not exceed the pollutant levels and any roads managed by Highways England were not within the scope.
- Members raised concern about any measures to address NO₂ levels having an impact elsewhere by pushing the issues to another location. The HES explained that it was a requirement that any measures must not create further exceedances by transferring the issue to other locations.
- Would the Committee receive information on the modelling? Members suggested traffic flows at the traffic light junction at Basford Park Road/Etruria road were smooth when the traffic lights were not working, however, the lights did create safe crossing for pedestrians.
- Members asked whether the Administration was doing everything possible to address the NO₂ levels without incurring any charges for residents. The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Recycling confirmed that this commitment had been made at Cabinet and would be adhered to.
- Members asked whether proposals could impact public transport and how would the Authority know that buses were not exceeding the levels. The HES advised that part of the modelling considered busses. During the consideration of options there would be a need to consider whether or not they could be delivered. All buses that had the retrofit option would be clearly identifiable by visual design.
- Members thanked the Head of Environmental Services and her colleagues for their hard work to date and the successful partnership working between the agencies.

Agreed: that the Committee sends a strong message to the Cabinet urging that a solution be found that will not incur charges to residents.

5. JOINT LOCAL PLAN - CONSULTATION

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The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Commercial Development and Economic Growth on the Draft Joint Local Plan. The Plan was being developed as a joint Plan with Stoke on Trent City Council (SOTCC).

A formal consultation on “Preferred Options” had been completed and the next stage was to undertake a consultation on the Draft Local Plan (Part One – Strategy and Policies) during spring.

Jemma March, Planning Policy Manager, made a presentation on the outcomes of the consultation and updated on the next steps in the Plan process:

- There had been 824 representations received as part of the consultation resulting in 5,494 individual points; along with 7 petitions received in relation to specific sites. The Preferred Options Consultation and Responses Document was attached as a supporting document to the Draft Joint Local Plan;
- The current stage focused on policies only with the next stage being site specific;
- The six key aims for the Join Local Plan were presented:
 - UK Central Hub for Innovation and Investment
 - Healthy & Active Communities
 - Dynamic & Diverse Neighbourhoods
 - Utilising our Natural Assets and Resources
 - Strong City Centre & Market Town with a Diverse Network of Towns and Villages
 - Making our Historic Past Work for the Future
- A key driver for the Plan was to focus on the economy with any housing provision being in support of economic growth;
- Any policy prefixed by “S” indicated a strategic policy and this would assist any areas developing a Neighbourhood Plan as it would have to be in broad conformity with those strategic policies.
- The presentation highlighted the key policies under each heading – Strategic; Economy; Housing; Transport; Centres; Design and Heritage; Natural and Rural Environment; Environmental Resources and Infrastructure.
- The consultation process was outlined and would include online; deposit copies of the Plan at various places including libraries; as well as planned consultation events.

Members raised queries as follows:

- What was the process leading up to formal adoption of the Plan? The PPM advised that a consultation on the policies would commence shortly; consultation on Part 2 of the Plan would be held in Autumn 2020 and would be site specific; officers would review the consultation results and once approved by both Authorities the Plan would be submitted to the Secretary of State; an Inspector would be allocated and examination in public would be held; the Inspector would report back to both Councils around winter 2021.
- Members noted that housing allocations over the Plan period were minimum of 14,064 dwellings to be in Newcastle-under-Lyme of which at least 8,641 would be new site allocations and a minimum of 19,296 dwellings in Stoke-on-Trent of which at least 8,129 would be new site allocations. Members asked how it was that both Authorities had a similar requirement for new dwellings when Newcastle had an overall lower requirement for total number of dwellings? The PPM explained that the allocations were based from 2013 when all areas of housing commitments were reviewed including any housing

that had been delivered; this Borough had both fewer housing commitments and less delivery. It was noted that the ratio was around 800:580 for SOTCC:NULBC.

- Members asked about the link between housing and the economy in the SOTCC area. Joanne Mayne, from SOTCC, explained that Stoke on Trent was a constrained area and it was expected that many sites would be infill. There were a large number of sites that already had planning permission. There would be growth at City Station for which a Masterplanning exercise was underway. SOTCC were also preparing a bid to the Transforming Cities programme.
- Members noted the importance of an adopted Plan to help shape the Borough and give protection against speculative developments.
- Members suggested the Keele University Growth Corridor was of great potential; however, was there a risk of relying on this area for economic growth without the identification of any other areas. The PPM explained that it was important to have up to date evidence and this was being gathered. This would support the growth area for Keele along with any other options.
- The potential technology through the Keele Community Smart Transport Demonstrator (CSTD) was welcomed but more clarity and detail was needed.
- Members thanked officers for the work done to date and thanked the Portfolio Holder for the open approach to the Local Plan process.

Agreed: that

- (a) The presentation be noted;
- (b) The process whereby the Draft Joint Local Plan Part One Strategy and Policies Consultation be published for formal public consultation during Spring 2020 be supported;
- (c) The consultation be carried out in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement; and
- (d) The results of the consultation be reported back to this Committee in Summer 2020 to inform the next stage of plan preparation (Part 2 Site Allocations) in partnership with Stoke on Trent City Council.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Work Programme. Following discussion with officers, the Member who had requested a report on Bradwell Crematorium was happy for the item to be kept under review but an update was not needed for the March meeting.

The Chair updated the Committee on progress with the Walley's Quarry Scrutiny Review. A Task and Finish Group had been set up and a site visit date was being arranged; there would also be a training session for the Group. A date for a half day meeting was still under discussion.

The Committee considered amending the date for the March meeting to enable the Air Quality Outline Business Case to be presented.

Agreed:

- (a) That the Work Programme be received and the item on Bradwell Crematorium be added to the items to keep under review; and
- (b) The next meeting of the Committee take place on Thursday 26 March at 7.00pm at a venue to be confirmed.

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7. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present.

8. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

**Mayor's Consort - Councillor Gary White
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 8.15 pm