

ECONOMY & PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 15th June, 2022
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

[View the agenda here](#)

[Watch the meeting here](#)

- Present:** Councillor Gary White (Chair)
- Councillors:** Susan Beeston David Grocott Barry Panter
Joel Edginton-Plunkett David Hutchison Craig Skelding
Richard Gorton Sue Moffat
- Apologies:** Councillor(s) Robert Bettley-Smith and Gillian Burnett
- Substitutes:** Councillor John Tagg
Deputy Mayor - Councillor Simon White (In place of Mayor - Councillor Gillian Burnett)
- Officers:** Daniel Dickinson Head of Legal & Governance /Monitoring Officer
Geoff Durham Mayor's Secretary / Member Support Officer
Georgina Evans Head of Strategy, People and Performance
Jemma March Planning Policy Manager
Simon McEneny Executive Director of Growth and Development
- Also in attendance:** HS2
Staffordshire Police
Portfolio Holder – Strategic Planning
Portfolio Holder – Community Safety and Wellbeing
Portfolio Holder – Finance, Town Centres and Growth

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

2. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March, 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

3. **UPDATE FROM CABINET**

Economy & Place Scrutiny Committee - 15/06/22

The BID Manager, Alex Taylor had asked for support to prepare some financial bids. However, Alex had now left the BID and a new manager had started at the beginning of the month. Discussions were taking place as to the level of support needed.

4. HS2 PRESENTATION

Members received a presentation giving an overview of how HS2 would be put in place across the Borough.

The presentation outlined the different phases of the development and included maps of the route through the Borough. In addition, improvement works were shown which included Hanchurch Junction 15 of the M6 being changed to manage the traffic flow coming through; A footbridge would be placed over the A500 and mitigation works and noise barriers would be installed.

The Chair asked how much disruption would hit the communities across the Borough over the next 5 to 7 years and when and how would the communities be engaged with.

Members were advised that HS2 representatives were going out and about into the communities – holding regular meetings, either virtual or face to face. At present, other than the smaller scale activities that people were being made aware of, more information events would be held to share the designs.

The Chair stated that there were two major concerns for Whitmore and Madeley; the two tunnels which required 11,000v cables to run the tunnelling machines and the routing of those cables which could be disruptive. A request had been made to route the cables outside of any major conurbation and the Chair asked if there was any update on that.

There were no details on this at present but HS2 would inform the Committee in due course.

A question was asked regarding the status and powers of the security guards who had been seen in television footage, dressed in black with their faces covered and no ID.

These people were part of the national enforcement team and had their faces covered for their own safety. HS2 were always aware of who was on site at any particular time. They had no physical powers to remove people but the police had been on site.

Regarding opportunities for local people, HS2 was asked if the stretch going through North Staffordshire would favour North Staffordshire companies in the bidding process.

The procurement process had to be open and fair to ensure the best deal for the tax payer, therefore it had to be open to everyone, not just within North Staffordshire. However, local businesses were given all the information they needed to give them the best chance of being competitive.

The presentation had outlined ancient woodland being replaced with new plants and vegetation. This was not replacing like for like! Also there had been an instance where someone had tried to engage with a presentation and was prevented from

going in. In addition, was there a chance to make HS2 work for the Borough through jobs, connectivity, re-imagining of the railways locally or was it all a done deal.

In terms of the biodiversity angle, it was recognised that an ancient woodland could not be replaced as it was but a lot of the benefit, for example the soil would be translocated off the site and taken to the new sites. Wherever possible, the take-down of ancient woodlands would be minimised. The figures were not currently known but these would be shared at a later date.

Regarding the ability to feed into the designs, landowners would be engaged with to ensure that their insight was considered.

In relation to the groundwork charities, £5m was mentioned. Did organisations who claimed it have to be directly affected by the work of HS2.

The total was £5m but for a local project, up to £75,000 could be applied for or there was the strategic project of over £100,000. As part of the management of the funds, HS2 would look at what other awards had been made to ensure that they were spread out evenly across communities.

The presentation had covered the dualling of Clayton Road from Junction 15 up to Newcastle. HS2 was asked how this would be done.

An extra lane would be put in on the side coming down to Eddie Stobarts. The Newcastle/Trentham Road would be upgraded with a signalised junction. Also, the Blackbrook junction at the Swan with Two Necks which was a bad junction was being considered to become a signalised junction.

The Chair stated that HS2 would be asked to come back when there was anything more substantive to consider and discuss. In addition, responses to the questions that had not been answered this evening would be circulated to Members in due course.

Resolved: That the information be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

5. **POLICING PRESENCE IN NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME TOWN CENTRE**

A presentation was given by Staffordshire Police regarding policing presence in the town centre. This had been brought to Scrutiny following concerns raised at the previous meeting about footfall being compromised due to issues within the town centre and the lack of police presence during the daytime / weekend.

In terms of policing around the town centre it had been acknowledged that there had been an increase in crime incidents and anti-social behaviour.

Newcastle, at present, had neighbourhood teams based here with three shifts covering from 8am until midnight, with the Safer Nights programme on a Friday and Saturday night running until 3am.

There were currently 4 police constables dedicated to the town centre, split across the shifts 2:1:1 with each shift having a dedicated PCSO.

Economy & Place Scrutiny Committee - 15/06/22

Being based at Castle House was advantageous as it created a good working relationship with the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team and the Rough Sleeping Team.

In the last few weeks there had been a drive to increase police presence, not only in terms of physical presence but also so that local businesses and users of the town would know what was going on from a policing point of view through the Smart Alert System.

In terms of where policing would be moving into the future, from 27 June, Staffordshire Police would be moving from a response hub model. Currently, officers servicing 999 calls were based out of Hanley and travelled to Newcastle at the commencement of their shift. From 27 June, seventy officers would be based at Newcastle – split across five shifts. At present, officers on the response teams rotated around areas to north of Staffordshire. With this transformation model, officers based at Newcastle would work in Newcastle, therefore increasing their local knowledge. The ability to respond to immediate incidents such as public order issues would be increased.

The Police were in communication with the Council around how CPNW and CPN's were processed in terms of breaches.

The Chair referred to there being more police presence in Castle House and asked if this meant more police hours physically on the streets.

By having local response officers, it was hoped that local response officers would know what problems were occurring in Newcastle. The reduction in response time would put less onto the neighbourhood officers who could then concentrate more on the problem solving issues.

The timings of the Safer Nights scheme on a Friday and Saturday Nights were requested and also, how many officers were present.

With Safer Nights, the PCSO's went on duty before the PC's. The Neighbourhood team went on duty from 5pm and worked through to 3am. PC's presence on the town centre was from 10pm. Under the new model, for the first three to six months, the Safer Nights role would be owned by the night shift which would work a duty of 10pm to 7am. In terms of numbers, at present the full complement of the neighbourhood shift went on duty, which was around six or seven PC's. In addition a carrier would come across from Hanley and would have a similar number on one of the larger police vehicles.

Under the new model, the neighbourhood teams would have ownership for early intervention from 8pm to 10.30pm in the town centre. Officers would be going into the pubs to find out what they had got planned for that evening and engaging with the licensees. From 10.30pm to 5am the response night crew would take over. Newcastle's night time economy ended at around 2.30am but officers would remain on duty until at least 3am.

A comment was made that for protests such as Walleys Quarry or HS2, the police presence was high but there never seemed to be anyone in the town centre when needed.

Walleys Quarry had become very resource intensive for the police so a decision was made that it become a Force response thus putting a command structure in place so

it would be overseen by a Chief Constable. The command structure would fall through the ranks if protests became disruptive and this would relieve some of the pressure on the neighbourhood teams.

The review timescale of three to six months was queried. This was to do with how Safer Nights in Newcastle would be policed by the night shift.

The biggest issue in the town centre was 'rough sitting' and this needed to be the number one focus. The Council and Police needed to work together to try and stop it from happening. In addition, it was queried whether the police were going out to businesses to discuss this issue as premises owners were not making complaints. It was off-putting for shoppers wanting to go into shops when there was someone sitting outside.

The police had limited powers to move them on unless they were breaching the PSPO in place.

Members were advised of a link to a survey about the police service. This link would be forwarded to all Members.

Resolved: That the information be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

6. **BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth, Councillor Fear introduced the item, drawing Members' attention to paragraphs 1.6, 1.9 and section 2 of the report.

In January, 2021 the Council set out to do a plan for the Borough and this was the first consultation for the plan, running for 14 weeks between November, 2021 and January, 2022. Two more consultations would follow in due course.

Consultations took place both face to face and virtually with 3,649 comments being received, two petitions and 757 'template' letters.

A key theme coming out of the consultation was a demand to use brownfield sites, wherever possible, to protect Green Belt land. There was a lot of discussion on infrastructure and how it would impact on communities. Climate change, Brexit and Covid were also touched upon.

All comments were published and made publically available on the consultation portal.

It was stated that lots of people had difficulty looking at the consultation online and this needed to be acknowledged. People had also been expecting comments made at face to face meetings to be gathered.

There had been some issues online because a new software provider had been brought in to do a consultation portal. It was also found that people had made technical errors on their side. However, when anyone had a problem they were instantly responded to.

Economy & Place Scrutiny Committee - 15/06/22

It was asked whether the Council was complying with its Statement of Community Involvement.

The only anomaly had been that the Statement of Community Involvement stated that venues would have notepaper for people to make comments on. This was made difficult by covid but also with 37 questions in the document it may have been better to have produced a leaflet with the questions written down but this could have put people off. Therefore anything that was brought into the venue was taken away as a representation, it was logged and the persons details were taken.

The legality of treating the 757 individual template letters as a petition was questioned.

The letters were summarised for the presentation and the strength of feeling from those letters came across very clearly and all of the comments would be taken into account.

From a legal point of view, there was nothing to say in which way such responses should be treated in a local plan consultation process. It was all in terms of reasonableness and fairness of the process and principles of natural justice. The opportunity to make comments and have those properly considered and taken into account.

The budget was also questioned, as to whether the consultation process had been within budget as it had gone on longer than planned.

In terms of extending the consultation, two further physical (in Keele and Audley), and one further virtual event were held – it was more of a time delay and therefore would have remained within the consultation budget.

It was queried whether the Scrutiny Committee would have the opportunity to get more involved with some of the suggestions that had come forward from residents.

The document looked at the process of consultation and in that respect it was hoped that some of the worries had been dealt with. Further consultation documents would be brought back to this committee. If Members wanted to underline things at this time before it went before Cabinet, that would be fine.

Resolved: That the feedback on the Newcastle under Lyme Local Plan Issues & Strategic Options consultation be noted, and following review, provide comments for further consideration at Cabinet.

[Watch the debate here](#)

7. FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND AND TOWN DEALS FOR KIDSGROVE AND NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME PRESENTATION

The Committee received a presentation on the Future High Streets and Town Deals Funding projects.

Future High Streets Fund:

The former Civic Offices building had now been demolished and once the basement area had been filled in, would be handed over as a complete site at the end of the month. The site would be used for mixed use development.

The York Place building had now been purchased by the Council and redevelopment options were been looked at following the appointment of Wilmot Dixon.

Kidsgrove Town Deal:

The Chatterley Valley Scheme had been made possible through the use of Town Deal Funds and works were starting on site shortly. This would include a roundabout, a new entrance to the site and relocation of some utilities and would become an advanced ceramic campus.

There would be an upgrade to Kidsgrove Station, canal enhancements and a shared service hub.

Kidsgrove Sports Centre had now had the pool properly surfaced, tested and filled with water. It was hoped that it would reopen in the third or fourth week in July.

Newcastle Town Deal:

The Knutton Masterplan and Cross Street Chesterton Masterplans were being considered.

A training facility would be developed for training and research into circus skills alongside a Centre for Performing Arts in the town centre.

Also, enhancing key gateway sites and walking and cycling networks and a smart digital infrastructure.

The Midway car park would be demolished upon completion of the new car park on the Ryecroft site and would be replaced with whatever the market required at that time, be it residential or office use.

Resolved: That the information be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

8. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair asked Members to email any ideas for Scrutiny to himself which would then be incorporated into the Work Programme.

9. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

10. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

**Councillor Gary White
Chair**

Economy & Place Scrutiny Committee - 15/06/22

Meeting concluded at 9.11 pm