

**THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OF NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME**

**HS2 WORKING GROUP REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL**

**Date: 27<sup>th</sup> November 2013**

**Preliminary Report from the HS2 Working Group**

**Submitted by: David Stringer – Chairman of the HS2 Working Group**

**Ward(s) affected: All**

**Purpose of the Report**

To consider the preliminary report of the HS2 Working Group (Appendix 1).

**Recommendations**

That the Council considers the recommendations of the HS2 Working Group.

**Reasons**

For the Council to form an overall view on HS2 which will assist in the formulation of the formal consultation response to the proposed route which is due on the 31 January 2014.

1. **Background**

The HS2 Working Group was set up to explore the arguments for and against the proposed High Speed Rail link between the North of England and London. The preliminary report of the working group is attached as appendix 1.

2. **Issues**

The cross-party group decided that it would concentrate on how the proposal would affect North Staffordshire rather than the United Kingdom as a whole in relation to:

- Environmental impact
- Compensation
- Economic benefits

It was also determined that the preferred method of obtaining the relevant information would be to offer all stakeholders the opportunity to present their case to a meeting of the Working Group. A wide range of stakeholders gave evidence to the Working Group including Members of Parliament, local Authorities, representatives of local Chambers of Trade and Commerce, Keele University, protest groups and HS2 Ltd itself. Those unable to attend a meeting were invited to present a written submission. A number of meetings have taken place of the Working Group where the latest information available on HS2 has been discussed.

HS2 are currently consulting on the preferred route for HS2 with a formal response required by 31 January 2014.

The report from the Working Group recommends that the Council should oppose the HS2 proposals and in so doing it should join forces with Staffordshire County and the other Councils within Staffordshire to establish a joint policy of opposition, but not necessarily link in with any national protest movement.

However in the event that the scheme is given assent in Parliament the following recommendations are made by the Working Group:-

- The Council should work with the relevant parties to ensure that the environmental impact is kept to a minimum. Wherever possible land should be restored to its original condition after the completion of construction.
- The Council should work with the relevant parties to ensure that compensation is full and fair with particular reference to those who live outside the area where compensation is automatic and those who are owners of agricultural land.
- The Council should work with Network Rail to ensure that the provision of train services to London from Stoke are as frequent as possible. Also that quality commuter services are initiated at the earliest possible opportunity.
- The Council should continue to seek opportunities to enhance the development of business and employment that may arise from the rail network.

The Economic and Development Enterprise Scrutiny Committee on the 4<sup>th</sup> November received the HS2 Working Group Report and endorsed their recommendations.

3. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

If HS2 is to go ahead it will have a wide ranging impact on a number of the Council's current Corporate Priorities. These are alluded to within the report from the Working Group.

4. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

HS2 is not yet at the Hybrid Bill stage. The full legal and statutory implications will become apparent in the future.

5. **Equality Impact Assessment**

Not applicable at this stage.

6. **Financial and Resource Implications**

HS2 will have a substantial economic impact on the Borough, information which the working group has obtained to date forms part of their report.

7. **Major Risks**

HS2 will have a direct impact on a significant number of residents within the Borough and indirectly every resident within the Borough. Associated risks are detailed within the report from the Working Group attached at Appendix 1.