

SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES AND PLACE COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee held in the Council Chamber, Shire Hall, Taunton, on Wednesday 22 May 2019 at 10.00 am

Present: Cllr A Groskop (Chair), Cllr P Ham, Cllr B Filmer, Cllr John Hunt, Cllr L Leyshon, Cllr M Keating, Cllr T Munt and Cllr A Bown (Vice-Chair)

Other Members present: Cllr H Davies, Cllr D Hall, Cllr F Nicholson

Apologies for absence: None

180 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

Cllr Ann Bown declared that she was an appointed Member of the Hinkley Point C Community Fund and as such would not take part in the debate of Item 6.

181 Minutes from the previous meeting held on 5 April 2019 - Agenda Item 3

The minutes of the meeting held on 05 April 2019 were accepted as being accurate by the Committee.

182 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

There were no public questions.

183 West Somerset Opportunities Area - Agenda Item 5

The Committee received this report which provided an update on the West Somerset Opportunities Area Programme.

The Programme is a key part of the Education Secretary's priority of tackling social mobility, and improving opportunities for young people across the country. Twelve areas with both poor social mobility and schools that face challenges, will receive a share of £72 million to boost opportunities for young people in these communities.

The areas chosen were amongst the weakest in both the 2016 Social Mobility Commission's index, and the Department for Education's data on school standards and capacity to improve. West Somerset was 324th out of 324 Council areas in the social mobility index in both 2016 and 2017.

The original plan was published in October 2017 by the DFE working across business, education and community to create and maintain more opportunity for our young people. It is important that this is a community wide initiative, supported by Early Years providers, Schools, Colleges, Businesses, The Voluntary Sector, Health, Council services, and most importantly young people and their families. The programme runs to March 2020, with a detailed delivery plan for 2018/20.

The report provided performance data for all Somerset district council against social mobility indicators for comparison. It also highlighted the key challenges for West Somerset and the work of the Partnership Board to address these challenges and develop the Opportunity Area Plan.

In a verbal update, the Committee were informed that the recent merger between West Somerset District Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council will change the ranking of West Somerset in the social mobility index. The change is expected to rank the area at around 160th. The data for the Taunton Deane area is much stronger and there is concern that this may mask some of the challenges faced by West Somerset.

The Committee were informed that the adult population of West Somerset is increasing but the young population is declining significantly. There is only one McDonald's restaurant in the area, which is an economic indicator in itself. Additionally, access to data is unaffordable to some families. In rural areas, there is a lack a commercial providers of free internet such as McDonald's and other free providers such as supermarkets and libraries may be some distance away.

Members discussed the lack of commercial viability for businesses such as McDonald's.

A Members questioned how many people in the area are still due to be moved to Universal Credit in the next stage of migration and it was agreed that this would be provided outside of the meeting.

A Member highlighted that the Taunton Deane area is only ranked 206th itself and also probable requires support, particularly if it is part of the plan to provide access to education and employment. In response, the Committee were informed that the data shows that all of Somerset ranks in the bottom half nationally and that rurality is an issue. There is significantly different funding for rural and urban areas and there is huge inconsistency in social mobility so we should be learning from best practice. Conversely, West Somerset is ranked as the 4th most beautiful place to live so professional and tourism services don't want the social mobility issues to be highlighted. We need to look deeper at different cohorts of the population.

A Member questioned what success will look like and a timeline of when this will be achieved. This is a DfE time-limited programme which ends in March next year. Some effects won't be some for some time e.g. improvements in early years but we are concentrating on legacy planning. The Partnership has been a huge advantage and we have some great outcomes for early years and college age but we are still struggling with end of Key Stage 2 and improving employment opportunities. Only three West Somerset businesses are part of the Somerset Chamber of Commerce.

A Member asked whether the merits of a three-tier school system had been considered. SCC has done a number of reviews and there is evidence of both pros and cons of a three-tier system. However, we decided not to focus on which system is best but instead to focus on the educational outcomes no matter the model.

Members raised the challenges in gaining internet access in the area. It was agreed that there is an issue with connectivity but that this is well-known and is being addressed. However, the less well-known issue is that affordability of data is still a challenge even where connectivity exists.

Members questioned how much budget is left. Of £5.6m, the programme has spent around £2.8m but the rest is all allocated.

The Chair summarised the main points raised and highlighted the concern about the plan for legacy. The Programme needs to be about results and not just the process of collecting data. The Committee noted the report but requested an update in around 6 months time to provide reassurance.

184 **Hinkley Point C Community Fund Update** - Agenda Item 6

The Committee received a presentation from the Programme Director and Vice-Chair of the Hinkley Point C (HPC) Community Fund.

The Community Fund is managed through the Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) which has been operating for 15 years as part of a national network.

SCF were contacted by EDF to manage the £12.8m HPC Community Fund agreed as part of the Section 106 agreement. The purpose of the Fund is to mitigate against the impacts of HPC and improve community development and the Trust's primary business is to administrate the award of grants.

The Fund launched in November 2017 and initially ran alongside the KIM Fund, of which the Small Grants Fund is still running.

Grants are awarded by an Award Panel and SCC, District Councils, SCF and EDF are all represented on the Panel. There is an open grant process now in place with a 1-stage process for grants under £50k and a 2-stage process for grants over £50k. Support is offered for applications to help applicants understand the language of the process and evidence their need and impact. Some grants are ring-fenced and some examples of grants awarded so far were shared with the Committee.

Members were informed that SCF offer a range of grants so if an application is unsuitable for the HPC Fund advice will be given for other grants if appropriate.

A Member questioned how it is decided if a scheme qualifies and whether there is direct or indirect impact. How does the Trust ensure that the focus is kept on areas of need? This is a difficult question as we are often asking people to measure the immeasurable. We help organisations to gain an understanding of need and we also look at enhancing quality of life but this may not be a direct mitigation. For example, a befriending service will not mitigate the effects of dust or noise in an area but it will impact on quality of life.

The Committee were informed that that the plan is for the jetty to be fully operational by September.

A Member raised the impact on housing availability especially in Mendip but also in Sedgemoor. Citizen's Advice services have been funded to assist people with housing support and advice.

A Member questioned whether funded arts and cultural facilities included the provision of a bar. It was confirmed that that grants to support workers based on site have been awarded. It was commented that good arts and cultural facilities already exist in Somerset but that better links are needed.

Members commented that the Fund should work more closely with Parish Councils and increase its communication with local communities. Communication and transport are the key issues.

The Committee noted the report.

185 Hinkley Point C Project: Transport update - Agenda Item 7

The Committee received this report that provided an update to Members on the work being done by the County Council and EDF Energy to mitigate the transport impacts of construction of Hinkley Point C (HPC). The report also outlined EDF Energy's responsibilities and activities regarding transport and travel.

In 2012 EDF Energy, New Nuclear Build Generation Company and the local authorities (Somerset County Council, Sedgemoor District Council, and West Somerset Council as was) signed a Section 106 (S106) Agreement in connection with the Development Consent Order to construct the new power station. This was in addition to a S106 Agreement relating to Site Preparatory Works at the site. The S106 agreements describe a range of obligations and financial contributions to mitigate impacts expected to arise from the project.

Delivery must be managed effectively and for the mitigation to be provided on a timely basis so that the impacts of the development upon communities are minimised. There are two HGV routes to the site where the most significant impacts are expected: from Junctions 23 and 24 of the M5 through specific corridors in Bridgwater and westward along the A39 and C182 to the HPC site. These corridors represent the geographical focus of the mitigation activity.

The Committee then considered a number of updates including corridor improvements, behaviour change, access to timely information, EDF activities and responsibilities including construction traffic, workforce traffic, incident management and EDF Energy-led infrastructure projects.

A Member commented that she had received a lot of complaints about traffic in Bridgwater whilst the cycle paths are being constructed and the impact of local businesses. It was confirmed that 2 different schemes are being completed at the same time so that disruption is only caused once. This should be completed by the end of June.

A Member expressed their gratitude for the improvements at Cannington but expressed concern that the Quantock crossing had been deferred and may no

longer be a priority. It was confirmed that there have been issues with the design brief as the scheme has come over budget. The scheme has not been abandoned but we are looking for a different funding scheme and will then proceed.

Members questioned how much traffic will reduce when the jetty is in use. The caps for traffic have been published within the report and these will alter as we go through different phases.

Members asked whether a park and ride system had been considered for Bridgwater. This has been considered for all major towns in Somerset and the issue is around economics and Taunton already struggle with financial stability. Members questioned whether this could be funded through HPC. This is not considered appropriate but a free bus service is provided for some affected areas.

Members commented that impacts are much wider than J23 and J24 and questioned whether other areas can be supported. Impacts can only be identified according to a tight geography. The network will be far superior once works are completed and local plans have been considered. We do now have some vehicle movements outside of the defined geography and this is a legacy which does pose some challenges.

It was confirmed that there is still a wish to deliver the Bristol Road/Wylds Road scheme but that a case has been made to deliver this at a later date.

A Member commented that, with regard to construction on the Yeovil western Corridor, that communication with communities and businesses was key. Learning points have been adopted around active community arrangements. We can push out controlled messages but it is difficult to manage communication and keep it factual. A Member expressed concern that no-one thought Mendip should be included on the Transport Forum and that there is still very little Mendip representation.

As transport limitations don't apply outside of the identified geographical area, Members questioned whether any wider monitoring takes place. The challenge is around the purpose of the monitoring. Monitoring is only in relation to the management plan to ensure compliance. Outside of this area it falls to general SCC Highways responsibility.

Members questioned whether there are sufficient funds to deliver Road improvement Schemes. Schemes are prioritised it is hoped that funds are sufficient, however, this remains to be seen as schemes are still being delivered.

A Member highlighted that HPC is not the only cause of traffic issues. The change in shopping habits to online delivery has also impacted and large lorries cannot always travel easily between some rural areas.

Members commented that construction schemes in Europe often display signs to advertise where funding is coming from. It makes it easier to mitigate if people know that EDF are paying for improvements. People would then be

aware of who is causing the problem but also who is funding the solution. This has been done in some areas e.g. J25 but the challenge is it requires the funding partner to want to advertise their name in connection with the scheme.

Members questioned what will happen to the community bus when funding is withdrawn in 2020 because the parking need will still exist. Packages of support and work to challenge behaviour will be in place throughout the build project.

The Committee noted the report and were invited to attend a site visit in October.

186 **Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee Work Programme - Agenda Item 8**

The Committee considered the work programme and requested a report on the findings of the recent Scrutiny Review.

187 **Any other urgent items of business - Agenda Item 9**

There were no other items of business.

(The meeting ended at 12.11 pm)

CHAIRMAN