

**Minutes of the Future Council Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday, 16th March, 2022 at 6.00 pm
In Committee Room 2, The Council House, Priory Road, Dudley**

Present:

Councillor A Lees (Chair)

Councillors S Ali, C Barnett, D Corfield, J Cowell, A Davies, P Dobb, J Foster, Z Islam, M Rogers and S Saleem.

Officers:

H Coldicott (Team Manager – Facilities Management), S Cooper (Head of Corporate Landlord Services), N Lissimore (Principal Engineer), M Yates (Project Design and Delivery Manager) and K Taylor (Democratic Services Officer).

Also in Attendance:

D Harris (Transport Strategy and Place Manager) and A Greatholder (Principal Policy and Strategy Officer) (Transport for West Midlands) for Agenda Item No. 6.

R Lamond (Strategic Planning Manager) (West Midlands Combined Authority) for Agenda Item No 7.

One Member of the Public.

Also in Attendance via Microsoft Teams:

L Shoaf (Chief Executive) (West Midlands Combined Authority) for Agenda Item No. 5 and N Younger (Development Manager) (West Midlands Combined Authority) for Agenda Item No. 7.

62 **Apology for Absence**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor E Lawrence.

63 **Declarations of Interest**

No member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct.

The Committee heard representations from a member of the public encouraging Members to act against proposed transportation plans that would greatly impact the area and referred to comments made at the previous Scrutiny Committee on the relocation of the proposed tram track near the Merry Hill Shopping Centre to be repositioned on steel stilts above the canal waterway, which would also protect the existing landscape. It was also suggested that a tramline through Sandwell would be beneficial and referred to the urgency in prioritising Dudley Buses in Broad Street, Birmingham for transport users.

Members supported the comments made and suggested that a letter outlining the recommendation agreed at the previous meeting be sent to Midlands Metro Alliance directly for consideration.

Councillor C Barnett acknowledged comments made by the member of the public and suggested that Members had limited powers to influence plans for the West Midlands region going forward. The Chair referred to the commitment by Cabinet Members and cross-party Members representing Dudley on the West Midlands Combined Authority Boards petitioning for change and influencing plans where appropriate. Reference was also made to the discussions held at the West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to ensure that Dudley and the Black Country received fair investment and projects.

In referring to comments made regarding the embankment near the Merry Hill Shopping Centre, Councillor A Davies requested that representatives of the Transport for West Midlands investigate whether an assessment had been undertaken in relation to the landscape and requested that consideration be given to the re-planting of the trees, if not already reflected in the assessment.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the member of public for his attendance and comments made.

Resolved

- (1) That a letter, on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee, be sent to Midlands Metro Alliance on the comments made at the meeting in relation to the relocation of the section of the tram track near the Merry Hill Shopping Centre for consideration.
- (2) That representatives of the Transport for West Midlands be requested to investigate whether an assessment had been undertaken in relation to the landscape and consideration be given to the re-planting of the trees, if not already reflected in the assessment.



The Chief Executive of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) gave a detailed presentation on the recommendations following a scrutiny review undertaken to understand whether the regional economic recovery proposals, which the West Midlands Combined Authority were supporting and enabling, were meeting the needs that had been identified within the Black Country sub-region. The review also considered whether the specific sub-regional needs were being adequately considered during the development of wider regional policies and delivered sustainably.

With regard to the coherence of the funding landscape, it was acknowledged that in the current form, ringfenced and short-term Government funding pots did not provide the flexibility for the West Midlands region to invest in the way that was needed. This was made clear in the submissions to Government with regard to Budgets and Spending Reviews and was also reflected in the proposals for a further West Midlands Devolution Deal. A Single Assurance Framework had been developed to ensure consistent and fair consideration for the allocation of all WMCA funding and evaluated impacts and benefits for the region.

The Chief Executive referred to the immediate need to review regional skills plans in order to produce a clear strategy for career pathways and address economic injustice in Birmingham and the Black Country. It was noted that various emergency support schemes had been adopted during the Pandemic, and the need to access future support systems mentioned within the Levelling-Up White Paper was highlighted. The WMCA had also established an Economic Growth Board which was empowered to drive delivery of inclusive economic growth across the region.

Recognising that many residents in the Black Country resided, worked, and retired in the Black Country, a Corporate Strategy had been agreed in order to deliver a holistic approach and highlighted the work undertaken on inclusive economic growth. Collaborative working with the Economic Growth Board and other joint boards with partners from other agencies on economic growth in relation to education and health was also emphasised.

The Chief Executive emphasised the importance of consolidated decisions that were considered across public bodies with best practice shared widely and acknowledged that local authorities were the most appropriate to understand the needs of localities in order to shape the wider regional economic strategy.

The Strategic Economic Development Board considered a report on the future of business support by considering new ways of collaborative working to promote growth and create jobs. The recommendations of the report had taken into account the Local Enterprise Partnerships Review and the Levelling-Up White Paper, and it was anticipated that the outcomes would result in a number of changes in relation to economic governance.



The recent publication of the Levelling-Up White Paper embedded the principals of levelling up and referred to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund commitment to the WMCA to enable decisions to be made at scale. A new skills mission to support 200,000 more people to train each year, including additional 80,000 completing courses with the lowest skills levels was mentioned, together with a Future Skills Unit to review data and evidence where skills gaps existed and categorised by industry. The WMCA welcomed the additional investment in activities for young people and would ensure this was connected into the WM Network of Youth Hubs.

Dudley had been included within the 55 Education Investment Areas, where school outcomes were weakest, and identified for investment, support, and action over the next decade. A trailblazer devolution agreement for the West Midlands would be considered, including opportunities to secure new influence and decision-making. It was further noted that where a devolution deal did not yet exist, Local Enterprise Partnerships would continue to play a vital role in supporting local businesses and the local economy.

Members asked questions, made comments and responses were given, where appropriate, as follows:-

- Councillor C Bayton, as Chair of the WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee, referred to the recommendation of a deep dive scrutiny in the next Municipal Year following issues highlighted in relation to skills levels within Dudley and the Black Country.
- Councillor J Cowell referred to the recommendations in relation to general support for businesses and the long-term whole life approach and considered that the training courses selected for people out of employment were not constructive and progressive and that focus was needed on education that were catered to businesses, and queried whether dedicated support had been considered by Central Government to address the issue further.

The Chief Executive referred to the success of local decisions and administration by the WMCA on the categories of training required which had been successful and demonstrated better outcomes. It was further noted that an additional £11m funding had been awarded to continue the work in relation to bespoke boot-camps for various business sectors.



- Councillor C Bayton acknowledged that the predominant industry of unemployment within Dudley was retail and service industry, and that many Dudley residents required lower entry levels for employment. It was noted that Combined Authority Funding for Skills had predominately focused on higher level skills, however further consideration was needed on a local level to review employment opportunities in order to prevent long periods of unemployment and ensure a seamless transition to ensure the best opportunities for Dudley residents.

The Chief Executive emphasised the importance of Governance Structures and partnership working with local authorities within the Combined Authority in order to drive commitments to further devolution and regeneration for better funding for the region.

- Following a request by Councillor C Barnett in relation to the additional 45,000 Black Country residents in employment required to reach the England-wide average employment rate of 75% and the increasing need for industry space within Dudley, the Chief Executive undertook to provide a breakdown of figures specifically relating to Dudley.
- Councillor S Ali expressed his thanks to all involved in the Scrutiny Review in particular that the recommendations made reemphasised priorities and highlighted areas that needed to be addressed in relation to education, skills and supporting businesses in the Black Country.
- It was considered that all Local Authorities, including Dudley, contributed, supported and facilitated all aspects of people's lives including education, housing, skills and employment. Councillor S Ali suggested that the recent publication of the Levelling-Up White Paper did not reflect the fundamental role of the Local Authority in those areas and requested that the Scrutiny Committee compose a letter to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities reminding Government of the importance of Local Authorities and their fundamental role in delivering the Levelling-Up Agenda.
- In responding to a question raised by Councillor J Foster, the Chief Executive of WMCA undertook to clarify whether the England-wide average employment rate of 75% included all people of working age together with those in full-time education and training.



- Councillor J Foster referred to the focus given to Birmingham in attracting companies that were relocating outside London and requested whether consideration had been given to promoting the Black Country for that purpose which would also provide managerial and professional employment opportunities.

The Committee was informed that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) second headquarters had been unveiled in Wolverhampton which was a positive for the Black Country as the department played a key role in supporting communities to unlock their full economic potential.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked The Chief Executive of the WMCA for her attendance and excellent presentation given.

In concluding the debate, and following consideration given to comments made, the Committee agreed to write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities outlining comments made acknowledging the role of Local Authorities in delivering the Levelling-Up Agenda with resources available.

As Chair of the WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor C Bayton confirmed that the Board would scrutinise the proposed additional powers the Combined Authority may wish to take on as part of the trailblazer deal ensuring that there was a continuity link between the powers sought by the Combined Authority and the role of the Local Authorities and supported the recommendation made.

Resolved

- (1) That the presentation and report submitted in relation to the West Midlands Combined Authority Investment – Black Country Review, together with comments made at the meeting, be noted.
- (2) That the Chief Executive – West Midlands Combined Authority be requested to provide a breakdown of figures specifically relating to Dudley on the number of residents in employment required in order to reach the England-wide average rate of 75%, and to clarify whether the England-wide average employment rate of 75% involved all people of working age together with those in full-time education and training.
- (3) That the Chair, on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee, drafts a letter to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities outlining Members comments in relation to the Levelling-Up Agenda and circulate to Members of the Committee for approval prior to submission.



West Midlands Local Transport Plan – Engagement on the Draft West Midlands Local Transport Plan 5 Core Strategy

A report of the Deputy Chief Executive was submitted on the development of a new West Midlands Local Transport Plan and in particular the engagement on the new Local Transport Plan Core Strategy which commenced on 7th February, 2022. Representatives from Transport for West Midlands were also in attendance at the meeting.

A Greatholder, Principal Policy and Strategy Officer, referred to the statutory duty to produce and review a Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the area, which would be developed in partnership with a range of stakeholders and shaped through engagement with the public. The LTP included policies to promote safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport to, from and within the area as well as plans to implement those policies. The LTP role in supporting local authorities to make decisions relating to their planning functions was mentioned, and that Government considered it a key document during their decision-making in relation to funding awarded to support local actions.

The progress made with the existing LTP ‘Movement for Growth’ including many of the core implementation proposals having been delivered or were being progressed was mentioned, however in considering the significant number of changes within the West Midlands and Dudley, a refresh in approach was recognised including recharging the West Midlands as part of the pandemic recovery, addressing climate emergency and inclusive growth. Mobility had been identified as a key sector for the West Midlands and work would be required with the local sector to consider future services. The challenges faced in relation to rising fuel costs, cost of living crisis and the impact to public transport as a result of Covid-19 would also be considered.

Reference was made to the Transport for West Midlands Green Paper which was published in July to aid conversations with the public over the future of the LTP across a number of channels with a range of stakeholder groups, including open surveys for the general public and business to respond to, stakeholder sessions with the transport sector, and deep deliberative engagement with the online community. The high number of responses to the consultation showcased positive public engagement amongst key themes including support for the Motives for Change, in relation to tackling the climate emergency and inequalities in transport access.

Concerns raised predominately related to the levels of traffic on local roads which prevented people from choosing to walk and cycle in order to support a better quality of life. Although car use would continue to be important in future it was recognised that usage should be reduced, however this was unavailable due to the lack of control over the environmental factors that resulted in the dependency on cars. It was acknowledged that if significant behaviour change were to be achieved, it would require the discouragement of car use by demand management or “sticks”.



Feedback was provided on the Leaders' Summit that was held on 24th September, 2021 in that Leaders acknowledged the need to change the approach to ensure aims were effectively delivered, particularly in relation to case and demand management. Local Authorities were expected to lead on implementation, and it was emphasised that to progress, the plan must be fair, transparent and delivered public aspirations.

The main aim for the LTP was for residents of West Midlands and Dudley to thrive without having to drive and own a car. It was noted that the vision for a well-connected 45-minute region of 15-minute neighbourhoods where people can travel to access services through a mix of walk, wheel, and wheel modes was being considered. It was noted that the LTP embedded the five core issues that had been agreed including the need to improve accessibility, reducing traffic and electrifying transport systems, therefore consideration would be needed to incorporate those into individual assessments of where and how people were going to access what they needed.

The core strategy set out principles of working with Local Authorities and communities in order for local measures to be implemented as appropriate to that area, recognising that a balanced approach was required in order to shape the programme ensuring a balance between rapid progress and long-term transformation.

The existing and emerging key transport proposals for Dudley was outlined including the Brierley Hill Future High Street, Mobility Hubs and Electric Vehicle Charging and Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Programme.

It was noted that a consultation exercise had commenced on 7th February, 2022 on the LTP Core Strategy and would conclude on 4th April, 2022, whilst considering the three principles for effective engagement including being inclusive, the need to be unbiased and empowering and deliberative. The next stages in developing the LTP and Core Strategy was outlined at the meeting.

Following the presentation, Members asked questions, made comments and responses were given as appropriate: -

- In responding to a question raised by the Chair in relation to the success of the Transport for West Midlands delivering the proposals mentioned, the Principal Policy and Strategy Officer confirmed that during the development of the Six Big Moves, consideration would be given to the implementation and how those factors would affect people moving forward. It was confirmed that the transport planning process was not formulaic and anticipated that a low 'trade-off' would be required in communities to address the issues raised. The need to involve communities in decision-making was also recognised.



- Councillor C Barnett acknowledged the risk implementations in continuing existing transport infrastructure and referred to the number of measures proposed including the introduction of integrated cycle lanes. Clarification was sought as to the designated responsible authority in introducing measures that could be considered unpopular amongst residents.

In responding, the Principal Policy and Strategy Officer emphasised the support required by all, including Elected Members, to help build the narrative. Although the Core Strategy focused on the broad principles, there were opportunities to tailor the Strategy further. The importance for support to ensure effective communication and engagement with Members and communities was mentioned.

- In responding to a question raised by Councillor J Foster in relation to the figures identified in reducing car usage and whether there were individual targets set for specific areas, the Principal Policy and Strategy Officer confirmed that the figures demonstrated the scale only and in considering the growth economy, it was anticipated that high numbers for all areas would be identified. It was confirmed that focus had not yet been given on how this would be achieved and that a level of action may be required to progress further.
- Councillor J Foster referred to the diversities amongst Local Authorities, in particular, the challenges faced by residents within the Black Country travelling for employment following the reduction of public transport accessibility, and that consideration should be given to the 86% of Black Country population that resided and worked within the Black Country. It was evident that developments were increasing in areas within Dudley where the lack of demand could not justify public transport services in those areas which would be exacerbated from the additional pressures arising from the Black Country Plan for further housing developments without addressing public transport issues.

The Principal Policy and Strategy Officer confirmed that developing a better understanding of challenges and global areas was a priority in generating Plans going forward and consideration would be given to function, people, form and adapting measures to support the needs of local communities. The need to promote a reduction in unnecessary leisure trips which generated more carbon emissions was also emphasised.

- Councillor A Davies commented on the perception of convenience in using cars and that a balance was needed against targets in areas including greener energy and transport and raised concerns that funding and long-term plans were based on an ideal scenario and therefore a commitment and realistic approach was needed. Reference was also made to improving infrastructure to provide sufficient electric charging facilities.

The Principal Policy and Strategy Officer acknowledged the concerns raised and that a balance was essential for the success of the Plan and confirmed that the LTP advice did not focus primarily on public transport but promoted better options available.

- Following comments made by Councillor C Barnett in that further discussions were needed with local businesses and employees on the proposals and how the Plans linked with Government Policies going forward, the Principal Policy and Strategy Officer referred to the level of change of Government Policy. Government had acknowledged the need for behaviour change and it was reiterated that further work was needed in relation to policy implementation and future transport services in the United Kingdom.
- Councillor C Bayton, although welcomed the proposed 15-minute neighbourhoods, raised concerns on the potential implications arising for the need to plan for place as well as dwellings. It was also recognised that transport patronage had not fully resumed since the pandemic, and in the event of the withdrawal of the current subsidy awarded by Central Government and the Local Authority unable to increase the Transport Levy, a question was raised as to how the move to public transport and connectivity would be achieved.

In responding, the Principal Policy and Strategy Officer agreed with comments made and acknowledged that difficult decisions may be required, and that work was ongoing to review options available. The challenges faced in the limits to improving public transport was referred to and should there be a need for a further transport service, consideration of the management of demand would be undertaken.

- Councillor S Ali also commented positively on the concept of 15-minute neighbourhoods and considered the improvement required for accessing cycling, walking, schools and public transport and the need for planning for place which requires sufficient investment to deliver the proposals.



- The Principal Engineer commented on the work undertaken on the area-based strategy and the constrained highway networks within the four Town Centres together with the challenges faced in introducing cycling routes throughout the West Midlands. It was acknowledged that Government funding focused on active travel and bus routes and the need to balance introducing measures without disadvantaging cars was mentioned. It was noted that the Plan was a 20-year strategy and reference was made to the emerging key transport proposals for Dudley as outlined in the presentation given. In developing the 15-minute neighbourhoods, further work was needed to address the parking issues in areas, with work being prioritised in areas where corridors could be created without difficulty. Working with Elected Members was essential in supporting and engaging with communities.
- In responding to a question raised by Councillor S Ali on the modelling work undertaken to deliver the Plan, the Transport Strategy and Place Manager confirmed that the impact arising from the proposals would be assessed throughout the process.
- Councillor D Corfield referred to the growing pressures by Car Manufacturers for electric vehicles and the affordability of the vehicles together with the expectations for accessible and faster electric vehicle charging points. The Chair acknowledged that there were not enough charging points to effectively implement change and efficient, affordable, and accessible public transport was required to encourage use.
- Councillor Z Islam referred to the lack of connectivity between Birmingham City Centre and Dudley and sought clarification on the potential implications should the Plan not meet the aims of communities and accessibility concerns, and whether it was adaptable to address any issues that may arise.

The Principal Policy and Strategy Officer acknowledged that the Plan required transition, infrastructure changes and partnership working with Local Authorities in relation to planning, and that it was evident that a broader view was needed on options available to travel.

- Councillor J Foster shared her interest to the development of the model implemented by Greater Manchester and the response by the public. It was also suggested that further investment was required for public transport and options available to be more attractive for users.

Resolved

- (1) That the progress on development of the West Midlands Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the publication of the West Midlands Transport Green Paper, be noted.



- (2) That the approach for developing the Local Transport Plan Big Moves and Area Strategies through to Summer 2022, be noted.

67 **West Midlands Combined Authority – Housing and Regeneration Investments in Dudley**

The Strategic Planning Manager was in attendance and provided an overview of the briefing paper submitted through presentation slides on the overview of the strong joint working and co-investment that had and is taking place between the West Midlands Combined Authority and Dudley MBC on housing and regeneration policy, business cases, investment and delivery matters.

The High-Level Deliverables for 2022/23 was outlined at the meeting including investing and supporting housing and regeneration schemes across the region, working closely with the private sector and local authorities to unlock and accelerate sustainable delivery, together with supporting and delivering coordinated investment packages. The aim to be national pioneers in advanced methods of construction, zero carbon housing and brownfield regeneration and delivery was also referred to.

The West Midlands Combined Authority and Dudley Council had successfully worked in supporting locally led funding bids and securing critical new funding to support housing and regeneration and delivering a range of different and complex projects including Portersfield and Cookley Works. Driving forward key delivery-focused strategies to support Dudley's activity and leadership and co-developing the Single Commissioning Framework with Dudley Colleagues was mentioned.

A summary of the Housing and Land Funds secured was outlined which were deployed into housing, regeneration and commercial schemes and projects through a bespoke funding portal and framework namely, Single Commissioning Framework (SCF), including a set criterion for prospective recipients.

A list of investments within the Dudley area was highlighted at the meeting together with photographs of projects including the Cavendish House Demolition, with over 1,200 homes and over 750 jobs supported to date. A number of identified schemes and projects for potential investment from the West Midlands Combined Authority Devolved Housing and Land Funds would potentially create over 1,300 homes and over 300 jobs in Dudley.

It was noted that the West Midlands Investment Prospectus 2022 was launched on 16th March, 2022 at the MIPIM property conference in France by the Mayor of the West Midlands, Andy Street. The Investment Prospectus 2022 set out the regional vision, compelling reasons to invest in the region and opportunities available to investors and strategic partners. The Prospectus specifically referred to the Dudley Innovation Zone and Dudley Town Centre.



Reference was made to the Levelling Up White Paper, in particular of the significant implications for regeneration in the West Midlands. Local Authorities across England had been given the opportunity to apply for a portion of the £1.8bn of Brownfield and Infrastructure Funding awarded to regenerate underused land and deliver transport links and community facilities. Good relationships had been built with the department on the future landscape of the region and requirements for planning for place, housing and commercial development.

Following the presentation given, Members asked questions, made comments and responses were given, where appropriate, as follows:-

- In responding to a question raised by Councillor C Barnett, the Strategic Planning Manager undertook to provide further information on the number of affordable homes secured by the West Midlands Combined Authority and specific units in relation to the Music Institute identified as an approved investment from the West Midlands Combined Authority Devolved Housing and Land Funds in Dudley.
- In responding to a question raised by Councillor C Bayton in relation to instances where developers were unable to deliver the outputs agreed, the Development Manager confirmed that clawback provisions were included as standard in grant agreements and applications would be considered on an individual basis.
- Councillor C Bayton referred to the significant demand for social housing in Dudley, in that it was evident that the building rate could not meet the increasing demand and requested that consideration be given to the use of alternative construction methods for special projects in Dudley in order to accelerate offers for social housing.

In responding, the Strategic Planning Manager commented on the positive ongoing conversations with Dudley officers on investments to schemes and referred to the conditions placed on housing funding by Central Government. The importance of developing strong relationships with Housing Associations was also acknowledged.

- In responding to comments made by Councillor C Bayton in relation to alternative construction methods, the Chair referred to Advanced Management Construction and the financial implications in applying this method.
- In responding to a question raised by Councillor J Foster, the Strategic Planning Manager undertook to provide further information on the proposed actions and timescales in relation to addressing the need for affordable housing within Dudley and the wider-region.



Resolved

- (1) That the presentation on the overview of the strong joint working and co-investment that had and is taking place between the West Midlands Combined Authority and Dudley MBC on housing and regeneration policy, business cases, investment and delivery matters, be noted.
- (2) That the Strategic Planning Manager be requested to provide further information on :-
 - the number of affordable homes secured by the West Midlands Combined Authority;
 - specific units on the Music Institute identified as an approved investment from the West Midlands Combined Authority Devolved Housing and Land Funds in Dudley
 - proposed actions and timescales in relation to addressing the need for affordable housing within Dudley and the wider region.

68 **Presentation on the Improvement to the Council House Campus in Dudley**

The Head of Corporate Landlord Services gave a detailed presentation updating Members on the refurbishment of the Council House Campus. It was noted that the presentation circulated had since been updated and a revised copy would be e-mailed to the Committee following the meeting.

In presenting key information, the Head of Corporate Landlord Services referred to the new work styles that had been agreed as part of the Future Council Programme. It was noted that the numbers of staff within each style were currently being considered which would influence the type of space required going forward.

A summary of the main points suggested by the Committee at the meeting in June, 2021 was outlined at the meeting. The Team Manager – Facilities Management confirmed that anti-slip treads had been placed to the steps outside the Council Chamber and meetings held with Equality and Accessibility experts, with an email having been sent to all Members seeking their views and comments on accessibility.

The Team Manager – Facilities Management informed Members that the major elements of disrepair including the roof had been addressed through a phased approach and was in progress. It was anticipated that the scaffolding would be removed in readiness for the cycling route event at the Commonwealth Games 2022. It was noted that a new air source heat pump, funded by the Public Sector Decarbonisation Grants, was currently being installed to reduce reliance on gas which ultimately reduced carbon emissions, together with the installation of energy saving LED lighting across the campus.



Developing work on key functional areas had commenced with consideration to improving the main entrance reception and security, collaboration space and modern desk space. It was proposed that a formal waiting room would be integrated on the ground floor together with bookable meeting spaces and units to work in. Designated collaboration project space in order to create different types of creative and meeting spaces for internal use was mentioned. It was noted that a new street entrance would be necessary in the Old Police Building to accommodate the proposals.

It was confirmed that a pilot would be undertaken on a single pod with consideration being given to a commercial basis to pay for space going forward. The predominate aim in considering functional space was to offer as many desks in the campus as possible to connect with the wider aims and aspirations in increasing the number of employees working agilely, with less reliance on fixed office desk space. It was anticipated that 355 desks could be available in the Council House as a whole.

A map outlining the proposed Senior Leadership Team space had been amended to reflect a dedicated space for the Opposition Group, and it was noted that the request to accommodate the Senior Leadership Team to one area had been incorporated into the specification, together with bookable rooms for Cabinet Members. The challenges faced in remodelling the space whilst considering the complex rules of the listed building status of the Council House was referred to.

The Project Design and Delivery Manager confirmed that the costs reported at the last meeting had not changed and that approximately £125,000 had been spent to date, and that an element of the budget in relation to Mechanical and Electrical works would be utilised to create an access link to collaboration spaces. Local suppliers would also be encouraged to procurement opportunities and a specific requirement of apprenticeships would be included in contracts.

A programme of timeframes was outlined with the roof expected to be completed by Spring 2023 with the majority of the proposals expected to be completed by Spring 2024. The timeline in analysing success of collaboration spaces was expected to take place over twelve months and further consideration would be given to the temporary relocation of the Senior Leadership Team and Committee Meetings.

In concluding, the Head of Corporate Landlord Services referred to the e-mail sent to Members requesting views on accessibility, and it was noted that five responses had been received with comments relating to toilet facilities, accessibility and cycling facilities which would be considered accordingly. Following a request by the Chair, the Head of Corporate Landlord Services agreed to re-send the e-mail to all Members for further consideration.

Following the presentation, Members asked questions, made comments and responses were given where appropriate as follows: -



- In responding to a question raised by the Chair in relation to inadequate disabled facilities at the Council House and Town Hall, the Head of Corporate Landlord Services confirmed that a lift would be installed between the Bistro and Town Hall, and funding had been allocated to resurface the Members Car Park and widen spaces. Further consideration would also be given to improving the flow of buildings and the permissions granted to employees accessing the car park during working hours.
- In responding to comments made by Councillor D Corfield, the Head of Corporate Landlord Services undertook to consider the lack of a disabled parking space outside the disabled access on the lower ground of the Council House.
- Councillor Z Islam referred to the challenging stairway and access points for Members of Public attending Full Council meetings and advocated the urgency in addressing access facilities for disabled people. The Head of Corporate Landlord Services welcomed the comments made, however he reiterated the limited powers available in remodelling structures due to the buildings listed status, however consideration would be given to other options available.
- Councillor Z Islam welcomed the consideration and implementation of the points made by the Scrutiny Committee at the meeting in June 2021.
- In responding to comments made by Councillor J Cowell in relation to the need for the Council Chamber to be flexible for users, including the possibility of installing flip up desks, the Head of Corporate Landlord Services agreed to investigate further in consultation with Access in Dudley.
- In responding to comments made by Councillor D Corfield, the Head of Corporate Landlord Services undertook to review the possibility of installing motion lighting outside lift exits.
- Councillor Z Islam requested that consideration be given to updating the Audio system in Committee Rooms.
- Councillor J Foster queried whether the lack of designated disabled car parking spaces could be discriminatory for employees and the public and suggested that a number of spaces could be reserved for Members when meetings are taking place and requested that further consideration be given to the layout of the car park. It was also suggested that equality training including the requirements of the law, be made available to employees.

The Head of Corporate Landlord Services reiterated that a review would be undertaken of the management of the car park, including permissions granted for employees parking, and assured the Committee that appropriate advice and consideration had been given to the proposals made in relation to Equality and Accessibility.

- Councillor S Ali recommended that further consultation should be undertaken with Group Leaders and Members on the proposals suggested and that key partners and local businesses should be consulted on their views on the proposed collaboration area.
- Councillor J Foster echoed comments made by Councillor S Ali, particularly that there remained concerns about the proposals and that there was the opportunity for further discussions with the opposition leaders and consultation/engagement separately from the meeting. The Head of Corporate Landlord Services agreed to discuss this further with Councillor J Foster following the meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the information contained within the presentation on the refurbishment of the Council House Campus, be noted.
- (2) That the Head of Corporate Landlord Services consider the comments and suggestions made by the Committee, as outlined above.

The meeting ended at 9.25pm

CHAIR



FC/112