

Minutes of a meeting of the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 22 February 2022 in the Banqueting Hall - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 5.30 pm
Concluded 7.45 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
Mohammed Kamran Hussain Cunningham Dearden Hussain	Barker Felstead	Ahmed

Apologies: Councillor Chris Herd

Councillor Kamran Hussain in the Chair

79. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest received for matters under consideration.

80. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the reconvened meeting of 21 December 2021 and the meeting of 11 January 2022 held on 11 January 2022 be signed as a correct record.

Action – City Solicitor

81. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals to the Committee.

82. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted to review decisions to restrict documents.

83. CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY

The report of the Strategic Director, Place (**Document “M”**) was submitted to the Committee and provided an overview of progress made in relation to sustainable development climate action by the Council. It also included details of key headlines and a summary of the wider context for the work including West Yorkshire, national legislative and policy changes from the Government.

A sustainable development plan was approved by Executive in March 2020, was followed by the adoption of the Council Plan 2021-25 plus the approval by the Wellbeing Board of the District Plan 2021-25.

The disruption of the Covid pandemic was well known and acknowledged and had impacted on the context and progress of developmental challenges and opportunities. The report also specified the substantial legislative, policy and operational changes relating to environmental management, climate action and sustainable development.

The report detailed a considerable number of actions, initiatives and projects taking place including woodland trust work, sustainable development involving a private sector led Sustainable Development Partnership, engaging with key local businesses to improve food supply systems, low carbon infrastructure and low carbon for fleet vehicles. The Council continued to work collaboratively with WYCA to take clean growth and environmental resilience forward. The West Yorkshire Climate and Environment Plan was approved in October 2021 to address decarbonisation. Engagement work carried out in the summer of 2021 had already led to clean air compliant, low carbon vehicles as part of the Clean Air Programme, contributing to the overall emissions reduction. The programme was due to run over seven years and the progress already achieved had earned the Authority an award from the LGC in the Climate Response Awards 2021.

The North Sea BEGIN project was now a benchmark for projects to demonstrate innovative and inclusive approaches to regional development, the overall objective being to demonstrate at target sites, how cities could improve climate resilience with Blue Green Infrastructure involving stakeholders.

Funding allocated had not been fully spent due to the ongoing disruptions caused by the pandemic, but these had been rolled over into 2021-22 with capital re-profiled for future years' delivery. The report also outlined the external funding and how it was to be used.

The Clean Growth ambition would develop through the next six months to provide improved programming and reporting on initiatives, schemes, delivery and impact across all place-based investment.

Members were then given the opportunity to comment and ask questions. The details of these and the responses given are as below.

- The Chair asked who had benefitted, how, were there any targets in place

and how were Wards inputting their ideas etc?

- Officers advised that a dedicated report would go to each Area Committee and was presented at the relevant meetings. Officers were looking at the total impact, working with Area Co-ordinators to see what projects had been completed. Funds were allocated via the Grants Advisory Group (GAG) process
- Members requested that the details of the works carried out was circulated to them
- A Member asked for an explanation of what sustainable development was in lay man's terms
- Referring to paragraph 5.2 in the report, did the risks identified include flooding?
- Referring to paragraph 5.5 in the report, how would success be measured post declaration?
- Were green jobs a result of a shortage in qualified staff?
- Officers responded that it was a broad topic but summarised that it was ensuring a lasting future to benefit everyone in the District, future generations and the natural world. He also went on to say that such 'Wellbeing' work, led by the Council had been going on for 25 years. It's a means of understanding current policy and public interest, shaped by social, economic and environmental concerns and de-carbonisation. It was a positive and proactive response in the District facing a range of issues where risks could be identified and turned into opportunities. It was confirmed that flood risk was one of the challenges included. The fundamental focus on green jobs presented huge opportunities to develop. There was a real opportunity to match education and skills with applied and professional development, supporting existing businesses as well as underpin the move across all sectors to grow and operate safely, cleanly and inclusively. The Clean Growth ambition would seek to broaden out from the 'green' economy – mainly focussed on energy and environmental services – across other sectors like manufacturing, retail, hospitality, arts and creative industries, digital, construction, transport and logistics as well as health and care to enable and support the sustainable jobs the whole district requires – in the short-term and over the next decade.
- What were the council's opportunities to retrofit redundant buildings?
- Officers advised that locked in carbon needed to be addressed to ensure a positive legacy and to re-purpose for future fitness. Policy environment needed to shift – existing resources could be made more sustainable but could not become net zero. Re-generation needed to be kept at the core of what we do and must be viable
- In relation to electric vehicle charging points that were installed, how many were there and how were we encouraging their use?
- How were we encouraging people to 'buy in' to the clean air zone?
- Members were informed that the clean air zone was the backbone and was

a top priority focussed on commercial vehicles initially. Taxis and bus operators were offered grants to convert. A fixed strategy would be needed on the application of electric charging points as a priority on the key strategic plan. A specific agenda item would be brought back to the Committee on the subject of the Clean Air Zone (CAZ) but the focus of the District was on tackling poverty and disadvantage rather than solely on the environment as these issues were key to local residents. There were discussions taking place with the university and the local colleges to bring young people into new, sustainable work environments

- Would the CAZ report be available before the Spring implementation?
 - Officers advised that this information would follow
- How was the decline in public transport being addressed?
- Where would the green jobs be?
- Were the jobs being tracked?
 - Officers responded that major changes were happening via West Yorkshire bus services who had 'taken a hit'. The Mayor and the Leader were progressing the issue and a great deal of work was going on towards vehicular transition. A zero carbon bus bid had also been submitted to central Government. Business cases for £800 million investment had been developed by the Regional Mayor and the 5 West Yorkshire councils for a modern transport system. Locally, people wanted to look at travelling in a different way, but new green jobs would evolve as companies transitioned etc. The challenge was training and re-training people at all levels
- Was there any progress on the towpath in the Aire Valley for cyclists to use?
 - Officers responded that there was work going on to draw down funding for Active Travel to upgrade the towpath to Shipley linking it to other routes like the new Canal Road Greenway into Bradford centre

Resolved –

That the report be noted and that an update report be submitted in 2022-23

Action: Strategic Director, Place

84. SKILLS FOR WORK UPDATE

The report of the Assistant Director Office of the Chief Executive (**Document "T"**) was submitted to the Committee to provide an update on the Council's delivery arm for Apprenticeships, Adult, Family and community learning. The 'Skills for Work' (SfW) programme was intended to address skills inequalities and have a positive impact on residents by enhanced equality of opportunity. The report included details of achievements, the impact of Covid and future plans.

SfW was a fully traded service with all funding coming from external sources and was within the scope of Ofsted's common inspection framework. In response to Ofsted's recommendation for a discrete Board, SfW had its own Governing Body

to provide effective governance.

SfW was inspected in 2017 by Ofsted and was judged as Good. A further self-assessment using the Ofsted framework also was judged as good using specific headline inspection measures.

SfW was dependant on generating income from learners' participation, success and types of course, the numbers of which fell significantly for a variety of reasons during the Covid pandemic.

The reduction or venue closures severely restricted the more successful methods of marketing. Numbers dropped from 1200 to 300 and whilst there was a subsequent increase in December 2021 back up to 594, a significant portion of the client group remained unable or reluctant to engage, even when restrictions eased. Digital access and inclusion continued to be a barrier to learning and the success of the actions taken to mitigate the impact of less engagement through provision of online learning, IT equipment and staff training, still left barriers to success.

Over 600 young people have started on Kickstart placements for 18-24year olds, coordinated by SkillsHouse. Of these, 319 were within Bradford Council and 293 across the employer partnership which included a range of employer types and sizes covering all sectors of the economy. SfW were the preferred training provider for Bradford Council for Apprenticeships, enabling and supporting learners to gain skills and qualifications.

Adult and Community learner numbers fell and were much lower than pre-pandemic and achievement success also fell. A refreshed action plan was implemented and reviewed regularly in 2021 and indicated that achievement rates had recovered somewhat and were approaching the same levels as achieved in 2017/18.

The report concluded with thanks being given to partners and schools who had helped with engagement.

The Chair commented on the positive work and engagement at community level.

Members were then given the opportunity to comment and ask questions, the details of which, and the responses given, are as below.

- In relation to the applicant success rate – did this mean those who had passed or did it refer to the number undertaking education?
- Officers confirmed that it was the pass rate which was measured locally and nationally
- Applications for apprenticeships as a preference over the academic route, was this being taken into consideration to draw down funding to make it available to young people?
- Officers stated that is was an important pathway that could see more companies providing apprenticeships as they were a means to upskill workers as well as being used as a pathway into work. The impact on income for low income families was a barrier and national achievement

rates were higher at level 3 (A Level and BTEC). More high quality apprenticeship opportunities were needed plus adult apprenticeships should be encouraged, paying over the basic rate for those looking for career opportunities

- One Member commented that apprenticeships needed to be run properly, that they were poorly supported by companies and needed an improved financial offering. This would create a competitive market for apprentices
- Officers stated that pre-apprenticeship pathways were being investigated as well as a leaving care programme
- A member commented that skills centres had disappeared from schools and asked whether people were upskilling later on and if there was any help available
- Officers stated that national Government funding was available up to Level 3 qualifications and that only the qualification was funded, not living expenses. Skills funding had not kept pace with the modern labour market

Resolved –

- 1. That the contents of the report be noted, that members noted the challenges posed by the pandemic to the service, and mitigating actions undertaken**
- 2. That Members welcomed the continued success of SfW's Apprenticeships programme across the District, and the progress made in recovering Adult and Community Learning provision in 2021/22 to date**
- 3. That Members would promote and support the Community and Family learning provision available in the localities to stimulate residents' engagement with the programme**
- 4. That Members considered current delivery data (Appendix 2) and community settings (Appendix 4) and would facilitate appropriate connections to additional venues and/or community groups that could increase the reach of the service within disadvantaged communities.**

Action: Chief Executive

85. WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Chair (**Document "U"**) was submitted to provide Members with the work plan for the current municipal year for review and comment.

Resolved –

That the Work Programme continued to be regularly reviewed during the year.

Action: Overview and Scrutiny Lead

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER