

the City Council's representatives on the West Midlands Combined Authority Transport Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

18. Support for Businesses and the Work of Coventry and Warwickshire Growth Hub

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) considered a report of the Director of Regeneration and Economy on the support Coventry City Council (CCC) had been giving to businesses during the 2023/24 financial year, and how the Authority had worked alongside local business support partners including Coventry and Warwickshire (CW) Growth Hub to ensure that needs and opportunities facing Coventry businesses and the local economy were being as effectively addressed as possible.

The Briefing note provided economic context as background information and details of Business Support Activities Led by Coventry City Council, and the Work of CW Growth Hub in Coventry's Business Support Ecosystem.

The Board noted that the jobs that had been created for the local economy through the business support programmes and Inward Investment activities would play an important role in reducing local health inequalities. Giving local people greater access to good employment would play an important role in improving health, and in working in partnership with the Employment and Skills Service and the Employer Hub. The Council were working to match as many local residents as possible with new job and training opportunities that were being created.

In addition, the Authority had worked with its Public Health Team to raise awareness of "A Fairer Coventry" amongst local businesses, and ensure more businesses were considering the benefits of additional measures they could take to reduce health inequalities, as highlighted in the 2021 "Call to Action".

In considering the briefing note, the Board asked questions and received responses on the matters summarised below:

- Many small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the city received support – business advice and grants. The Business Support Team's work was vital to these businesses who operated very differently from large organisations. The help ensured they operated in the best way possible and were able to consider growth. Recently, assisting with advice on energy bills had been essential for businesses.
- There was criteria for business support, but most small and medium enterprises were eligible.
- Differences in the numbers of businesses supported in each Ward was due to the differences of the numbers of businesses operating in the Wards. Further work would be undertaken to ensure data regarding numbers of businesses were captured and to link with as many businesses as possible in each area.
- A dedicated marketing co-ordinator was in place for organising campaigns, events, social media, pod casts, webinars, apps, etc., to reach out to businesses.

- To maximise inclusion and accessibility, all options for marketing the Council's business support services should be in place, including direct marketing through leafleting, posters and radio and television advertising.
- Members understanding of Business Support Services would enable them to provide details of the services available to residents and signpost them accordingly.
- The West Midlands Investment Zone would offer tax incentives and business rate opportunities for new investment/investors.
- Compared to the national average, Coventry were below the average for skills and employment.
- Recession – if the economy shrinks for two consecutive quarters, it was considered to be a technical recession as growth was expected in future quarters.
- Innovation and working with Universities – foreign investment figures were indicative of the success of the two Universities in the City. The statistics highlighted the attractiveness of the City for investment.
- Health of workforce – work was undertaken with businesses to provide guidance on health programmes for a healthy workforce which was essential to a thriving business and the impact on public health generally.
- Targeted work for business start-ups was undertaken with the unemployed. Work was carried out through The Job Shop, who linked with the Growth Hub.
- The automotive and future mobility, digital, and e-commerce sectors attracted the most foreign investment.
- A co-ordinated cross boundary business support programme was essential for the Coventry and Warwickshire areas and the West Midlands region.
- Business support was available from a number of organisations. The Growth Hub was unique as it carried out a detailed diagnostic with businesses to work out what the best options and solutions were for their specific needs and directed them to appropriate support/help/grant.
- The Growth Hub was 50% Coventry and 50% Warwickshire owned and was a beacon in its work. In Coventry, the Growth Hub's work was reported to the Coventry Shareholder Committee.
- Upgrade work was currently being carried out on the Growth Hub Website.

The Board requested that the Web link to the 'West Midlands Investment Zone' report, being submitted to the meeting of Cabinet on 12th March 2024, be circulated to them. The Board also requested that to maximise inclusion, all options for marketing the Council's Business Support Services should be in place, including direct marketing through leafleting, posters and radio and television advertising.

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3):

- 1) **Notes the contents of the briefing note.**
- 2) **Had no further recommendations for the Cabinet Member.**

19. Local Air Quality Action Plan Update

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) received a presentation of the Director of Transport and Innovation that provided an update on progress in delivering the actions agreed as part of the Local Air Quality Action Plan (LAQAP).

At their meeting on 30th November 2022 (minute 14/22 referred), the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) considered an item on the Coventry Local Air Quality Action Plan and made recommendations to officers and requested a further update on progress.

The Council recognised the impact of air pollution on health and wellbeing and was committed to taking action to improve air quality in the city. It was recognised that air pollution had effects on health across the life course, contributing to the development or exacerbation of a range of health conditions, as well as to mortality at a population level. The LAQAP package of measures would support the improvement of public health by tackling air quality problems within the city as well as by promoting sustainable and active travel.

The presentation highlighted the following progress of the Plan's actions:

Delivery and Status:

- Spon End / J7 scheme completed 2023
- JAQU report received Dec 23 – identified Holyhead Rd was sole non-compliant site
- JAQU review of Holyhead Road data
- Foleshill Road had achieved compliance
- Coundon Cycleway substantially complete – remedial works and extension to UHS to be done

Spon End / J7

- Spon End / J7 scheme completed 2023
- Allesley Old Road / Hearsall Lane signals upgrade completed
- ASE operational on AOR [Feb 24]
- ASE on Hearsall Lane / Spon End goes live March 24
- Godiva site options report received – under review
- Parking arrangements with Rugby Club extended to Autumn 24
- VMS to be installed on Pickford Way

JAQU Update

- Stage 1 Assessment Report – Nov 23
- Coventry judged to be non-compliant – Holyhead Rd
- Foleshill Road – compliance achieved
- Holyhead Road – conflicting monitoring evidence
- JAQU undertaking further review of monitoring evidence – outcome awaited
- Once review completed, CCC would need to submit a change control with revised scheme
- Upper Hill Street re-opening no longer recommended

Holyhead Rd / Lower Coundon

- Multiple schemes happening in the Lower Coundon / Naul's Mill area
- Completion of Air Quality obligations on Holyhead Road
- Completion of Coundon Cycleway to Upper Hill Street Bridge
- Lower Coundon Liveable Neighbourhood
- Cycle Contraflow Pilot
- Moseley Avenue / Engleton Average Speed Enforcement (ASE)
 - Uncertainty over Network Rail's proposals
 - Barkers Butts Level Crossing

Next Steps

- Completion of JAQU review of Holyhead Road data
- Engagement with community on options for completion of Coundon Cycle Route and related traffic management
- Moseley Avenue / Engleton Average Speed Enforcement (ASE)
- Clarify Network Rail plans for Coundon level crossing and Holyhead Road bridge
- Prepare change control for LAQAP with alternative scheme to submit to JAQU

In considering the presentation, the Board questioned officers, received responses and discussed matters summarised below:

- Ball Hill - early monitoring for CO2 emissions were carried out in 2028/2019 and work undertaken to ensure that Ball Hill came into compliance. Monitors were in place and further work would be undertaken if it was required. Recent work at Ball Hill was a community lead project through Grapevine.
- The Government Ministerial direction on air quality emissions was for Holyhead Road and Foleshill Road.
- Network Rail Plans for Coundon Road level crossing and the Holyhead Road bridge were still unknown at this stage.
- Concerns that should the level crossing on Coundon Road be closed, it could impact businesses in the area, similarly closure of the Holyhead Road for Bridge works. It was important to keep traffic moving and for alternative routes be put in place prior to any closures.
- The Coundon Cycle Lane completion was expected in 2024/25.
- Upper Hill Street - Trend on air conditions (CO2) had reduced. Design work that was undertaken indicated that it was going to be a longer- term project that wouldn't meet JAQU requirements. The case had been superseded.
- Coundon Cycle Lane – consider option of route through Naul's Mill Park.
- Funding had been secured for linking the cycle lane to the top end of Keresley.
- Lower Coundon Liveable Neighbourhood – consultation to be undertaken with the community to identify priorities. Improving air quality was the main objective. Known traffic management issues in the area had resulted in this area being selected for the scheme.
- Spon End Junction 7 – Some traffic management feedback. No feedback from pedestrians using the area. Signing had been enhanced at the junction for left turn into the Butts. Removal of Bus Lanes and upgraded signals had been an improvement.

- Compliance with air quality levels on the Foleshill Rd could possibly be attributed to the use of electric buses on that route.
- Foleshill – £50m had been provided by the Authority for electric buses, in addition to bus company investment. Park and Ride for the area needed to be looked at as part of the Rider Transport Strategy. Oxford, York and Cambridge operated Park and Ride – the Cambridge scheme was subsidised by the Local Authority at a high cost.
- Wider Travel Action Fund – surveys had been carried out on some side streets used as cut throughs for traffic. Further work was needed to improve situation.
- Monitoring was in place to see how the air quality works and the changes at Junction 7 (Spon End) had impacted traffic flows on local roads in area.

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3):

- 1) Notes the content of the presentation at Appendix 1 to the Briefing Note.**
- 2) Had no further recommendations to make to the Cabinet Member.**

20. Work Programme 2023/24

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) received a report of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator that detailed issues on the Board's Work Programme for meetings of the Board for 2023/24.

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3):

- 1) Notes the issues on the Board's Work Programme for 2023/24.**
- 2) Requests that further updates on the Coventry and Warwickshire Growth Hub be submitted to the Board and this be added to the Work Programme for 2024/25.**

21. Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 4.00 pm)