

**Minutes of the Economy, Skills, Transport and
Environment
Scrutiny Board**

**7th March, 2019 at 5.30 pm
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor Rollins (Chair);
Councillor Singh (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Ashman, Chidley, E M Giles and
Preece.

Apologies: Councillors Ahmed, Ali and Allcock.

In attendance: Sarah Middleton, Chief Executive, Black
Country Consortium Ltd;
Dr Alison Knight, Executive Director,
Neighbourhoods;
Max Cookson, Service Manager –
Commercial Services.

6/19 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 7th
February, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

7/19 Black Country Consortium Local Enterprise Partnership

The Chief Executive of Black Country Consortium Ltd provided a presentation relating to Sandwell which gave an overview of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) with a focus on the local economy, delivery and investment; cross LEP collaboration and the 'Local Industrial Strategy'.

The Executive Director - Neighbourhoods welcomed partnership working with the Black Country Consortium (BCC) which had resulted in additional funding, jobs and new apprenticeships within Sandwell.

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The Board was advised that work on the regeneration corridor pipeline and the scale of the pipeline was developing. The strengthening of towns and mapping of strategic companies would be considered further.

It was reported that work was ongoing in relation to health and care in Sandwell and the direct path and gaps for skills development in care services, in addition to major regeneration programmes such as the Metro extension and work at Burnt Tree Island.

In response to questions raised by members Scrutiny Board:-

- the Board was advised that the figures presented relating to spend on schools to prevent skills issue in future years reflected the current position and that more funding needed to be targeted at schools. Currently funding was available to LEPS, careers and enterprise services for secondary schools;
- the Adult skills budget was to be devolved and distributed through the West Midlands Combined Authority. The Government had allocated capital funding but no revenue;
- the West Midlands Combined Authority was developing an Industrial Strategy and a Local Industrial Strategy would be developed.

In relation to the criteria for identifying projects, the Board was advised that there were a series of templates to consider and to evaluate which was most appropriate to use for which project. Some projects would bring brown field sites back into use, others may provide jobs or may be a pipeline project. The Chief Executive advised that due to depleting funds clarity was needed on which projects to progress.

In addition the Board noted that :-

- the Council provided the BCC LEP with information and advised Leaders to align project work with the Council's regeneration project plan;
- in relation to small businesses, the Board was advised that the project process was the same;

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- the BCC LEP supported the Council to tap into different budgets, considered what the business needed and how to pull together the right grant;
- there were concerns that small and medium business enterprises (SMEs) would not have the ability to contribute back. The Board was advised that there were some funds that specifically targeted some small businesses and companies and that SMEs could target skills courses as well;
- the LEP could work with provider networks to organise bite size courses and to get a class room of people to make the training viable.

The Scrutiny Board welcomed the presentation and the work being undertaken to regenerate Sandwell.

8/19 Food Waste Recycling

It was reported that on 12th July 2018 the Board had considered food waste collections, statistics and poor collections rates of food waste, how this would impact on Sandwell relating to organic food waste and the use of the anaerobic waste site.

In relation to the domestic waste collection profile in Sandwell, it was noted that the food waste collection was the most expensive service due to the need to use a special vehicle with a lined plastic pod in a recycle vehicle and an additional operative to load the food waste and the extra cost of the service and treatment of food waste.

The participation level for the food waste service was reported to be 18% boroughwide. Since its introduction in 2012, the rate had declined from 6362 to 3876 tonnages (39%). Anecdotal evidence indicated that when people became aware of the food waste they produced they changed behaviours to reduce the waste produced. However, whilst the amount of food waste had reduced, the cost of the service remained the same.

Targeted reward schemes had been considered to stem the decline in terms of cost to run the scheme and increase the collection and consideration had been given to ceasing the

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service which would equate to a saving of approximately £640,000 per annum.

Following advice from the Waste and Resource Action Programme (WRAP) which advised councils with campaigns to increase declining participation levels and increase tonnages, WRAP was unable to offer support to Sandwell on the basis that, 'where authorities where food waste collections operate alongside weekly residual collections there was limited scope for improving yields'.

The EU amending Directive 2008/98/EC (Circular Economy) required member states to ensure that bio-waste (including food waste) was either collected separately or recycled at source as home composting. This obligation was not required to be in place until 31st December 2023 and would require transposition into UK regulation.

The Board acknowledged that whilst the regulation could be made mandatory, participation could not be made mandatory. It was, however, important to raise awareness.

Members considered incentives to encourage people to dispose of food waste in the food recycle units, including the 'BINgo' scheme operated by sticking numbers on bins by way of distributing to resident's bingo cards and the crews putting bingo numbers on bins put out each week. Cash and voucher prizes were given for those participants first to present a completed bingo card.

Having considered the update and presentation, Scrutiny: -

- raised concerns about incentives such as BINgo, as those residents that had already taken the initiative and started to recycle or compost kitchen scraps in their gardens were disadvantaged by the schemes for doing a better thing;
- noted that local authorities were trying a range of different approaches;
- considered that the costs of the service would continue to increase;
- noted that the future of the EU Directive was unclear due to the position with Brexit;

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- highlighted the need to consider potential savings of £640,000 per annum until 31st December 2023;
- considered options to future proof the service, such as: -
 - replace half of the podded waste vehicles;
 - determine if there would there be a need to replace the food bins;
 - consider if compost bins should be offered to residents at a subsidised cost;
 - establish if residents who were recycling and composting were getting any benefits of the funding available;
 - organic waste – consider schemes where residents could sign up for an organic waste collection service.

The Vice-Chair indicated that the amount of actual food waste collected was minimal (18% across the Borough) and therefore savings options of £640,000 per annum should be considered to implement savings in the service delivery.

The Service Manager highlighted the main requirements from the Resources and Waste Strategy (December 2018). The Government was currently consulting on the proposals, the outcomes of the consultation would be known in the Autumn 2019.

in relation to consistency of collections by local authorities, he advised that the Government was consulting on the proposals and that more would be known in the Autumn 2019 following the consultation process and preparation of the food waste regulations.

The Chair thanked Members and officers for their contribution and hard work on the Scrutiny Board through the municipal year.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Cabinet be requested to consider:
 - a. an options appraisal relating to the future for food waste recycling in Sandwell;
 - b. the requirements of the EU amending Directive 2008/98/EC (Circular Economy) in relation to food waste;

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- c. consider options on how to encourage residents to reduce food waste;
 - d. the focus for future food waste campaigns in Sandwell to ‘reduce first and recycle last’;
- (2) That in connection with (1) above, a further report be submitted to the Scrutiny Board;
- (3) That a further report be submitted to the Scrutiny Board in September 2019 relating to how Sandwell is responding to ‘Our Waste Our Resources – A Strategy for England’.

(Meeting ended at 6.47 pm)

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