

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 26th August,
2020

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair), and Councillors Joanne Beecham, Michael Chalk, Peter Fleming, Pattie Hill, Ann Isherwood, Mark Shurmer and Yvonne Smith

Also Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships

Officers:

Ruth Bamford, Kevin Dicks and Mike Dunphy

Democratic Services Officer:

J Bayley

20. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Salman Akbar, Andrew Fry and Jenny Wheeler. Members were advised that Councillors Joanne Beecham and Yvonne Smith were attending respectively as Councillor Akbar and Wheeler's substitutes.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of any party whip.

22. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no registered public speakers on this occasion.

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Chair

23. E-SCOOTER TRIAL - REPORT TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager presented a report outlining the Council's proposals for a bid to take part in a national e-scooter trial.

During the presentation of the report the following matters were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- The Government had been proposing to launch an e-scooter trial in 2021. The Department for Transport (DfT) had brought the scheme forward in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in order to provide an alternative form of sustainable transport to the public.
- In Britain, e-scooters remained illegal outside of private land. Legislation was going through parliament to permit e-scooters to operate on public highways in certain circumstances.
- The deadline for applications to be submitted to the DfT to participate in the e-scooter trial was 31st August 2020. Successful bidders would need to identify a location in which the trial would take place. E-scooters would not be permitted to operate outside of that identified area.
- Since the Executive Committee meeting the Council had been advised that it was likely that the West Midlands Combined Authority's (WMCA) e-scooter bid would cover parts of Wolverhampton, Birmingham and Coventry. There would not therefore be an opportunity for Redditch to be the focus of the combined authority's trial.
- Should the bid for Redditch be successful, the Council would need to ensure that appropriate Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) were in place before the trial could be launched.
- The Council had gone out to tender in respect of an e-scooter trial in Redditch and there had been 12 responses. A company had been selected in this process to deliver the trial in Redditch. This operator had experience of managing similar schemes in big cities.
- The location for the trial in Redditch, should the bid be successful, would range throughout parts of the town centre.
- The operator would be expected to take on all liabilities in respect of the e-scooter scheme and would be responsible for

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maintenance and recovery of the e-scooters after use. The company would be insured for these purposes.

- Should the bid be successful Council Officers would meet with representatives of the operator on an ongoing basis to discuss the trial.

After the report had been presented Members discussed the following points in detail:

- The positive impact that e-scooters could have on vehicle emissions in Redditch town centre and the potential for electric buses to operate in the Borough. Officers explained that Bromsgrove District Council had recently made a successful bid for electric buses to operate in their district and Redditch would feature on the routes for some of these vehicles.
- The benefits to be accrued, in respect of climate change, as a result of people using alternative forms of transport rather than relying on cars.
- The extent to which people with physical disabilities and parents with young children in pushchairs could use e-scooters. Officers acknowledged that, as with bicycles, e-scooters would not be suitable for everybody to use.
- The requirements in respect of customers who would use e-scooters. The Committee was informed that drivers would need to be at least 16 years of age and would have to have a provisional driving licence or a driving licence.
- The potential for accidents to occur involving e-scooters. Officers explained that the e-scooters would only operate on public highways where there was a maximum speed limit of 30 miles per hour and the vehicles could only operate at a maximum speed of 15 miles per hour, which would limit the potential for accidents to occur.
- The potential for fatal accidents to occur involving e-scooters. Members were advised that on the continent, where e-scooters could operate at faster speeds than proposed for the trial in Redditch, there had been very few fatalities.
- The potential for accident data to be provided to the Council. Officers explained that this data could be requested for the meetings that would take place between representatives of the Council and representatives of the operator.

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- The need for a data sharing agreement to be drawn up between the Council and the operator, which was a DfT requirement for such schemes.
- The safety features installed on e-scooters. The Committee was informed that the e-scooters would have lights and a dual breaking system which could be operated both on a manual and an automatic basis. Customers who signed up with the operator to use the e-scooters would all be provided with a free helmet to help protect the driver in the event of an accident.
- The concerns that had been raised by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) in respect of the safety of people who were partially sighted or blind once e-scooters were in operation.
- The role of the customer in choosing whether to use an e-scooter and in assessing any potential risks to their safety.
- The timeframes for the launch of the scheme, should the Council's bid be successful. Officers explained that the start of the trial would be determined by the DfT, though there would be some time needed to establish the scheme at a local level.
- The potential for the trial to be extended beyond 12 months. The Committee was advised that the 12 months' duration for the trial had been determined by the DfT but there was the possibility that the Council could decide to extend the trial at a local level should Members feel that this was appropriate.
- The reasons why the trial would operate within parts of the town centre rather than the whole of the Borough and the extent to which this would enable an accurate assessment of local demand for e-scooters. Officers explained that the choice of location for the trial was based on market research and advice received from the chosen operator.
- The potential for the location in which the e-scooters operated to be extended to the whole of the Borough once the trial had concluded.
- The arrangements that would be in place to monitor use of the e-scooters and to ensure that privately owned e-scooters were not driven in the Borough as part of the trial. Officers explained that the operator would monitor e-scooter usage and it was likely that the official e-scooters in the trial would have identifiable branding.

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- The requirements in respect of customers disposing of the e-scooters after use. The Committee was informed that before a customer could dispose of an e-scooter they would have to submit a photograph showing that the e-scooter had been left in a safe place.
- The cost that would be charged to hire an e-scooter. Officers explained that customers would need to pay £1 to unlock a scooter and an extra 20 pence every minute.
- The number of e-scooters that would be used as part of a trial in Redditch. The Committee was informed that there would be 100 e-scooters available to use during the trial.
- The hours in which an e-scooter could be used. Members were advised that e-scooters would be available to hire 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

During consideration of this item the Chair of the Committee explained that the Executive Committee had determined at a meeting held on 4th August 2020 that the Council should submit a bid to take part in the national e-scooters trial. This had been discussed as an urgent item of business that had not been included on the Executive Committee's Work Programme and therefore there had been no opportunity to pre-scrutinise the proposals. The debate during the extra meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 26th August 2020 had been requested to provide an opportunity for Members to scrutinise in detail the Council's proposals for a bid to take part in the national e-scooter trial and to make suggestions about that trial.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships attended the meeting in his capacity as the lead Portfolio Holder for the e-scooters trial. Members were asked to note that Officers had worked very hard to prepare the Council's bid in respect of e-scooters, which was an initiative with which the Council had not had any prior involvement. Should the Council's bid be successful, a trial would be launched and this would test local demand for e-scooters. Should there be considerable demand then there was the possibility that the scheme could be extended to a wider geographical area.

RESOLVED that

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- 1) should the Council's bid to participate in the national e-scooter trial be successful, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should receive an update on the trial six months after the launch of the scheme in Redditch; and
- 2) the report be noted.

24. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES AND SCRUTINY OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday, 4th August 2020, were considered. Officers explained that during that meeting the Suicide Prevention Task Group's final report had been considered and all of the group's recommendations had been approved. Due to the importance of the evidence gathered in this investigation, an additional proposal had been added by the Executive Committee in respect of this matter, which called for a copy of the group's report to be shared with Worcestershire County Council and the MP for Redditch.

During consideration of the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 4th August 2020, Members noted that there had been a discussion of an updated Amenity Standards Policy for the Council. This policy applied primarily to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the private rented sector. Members commented on the importance of HMOs as a source of housing for residents and the need for these to be managed appropriately. A request was made for an update to be provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of HMOs at a later date.

The content of the Executive Committee's Work Programme for the period 1st September to 31st December 2020 was considered. Members noted that the Housing Strategy item, that had been scheduled for the Executive Committee's consideration in September and for pre-decision scrutiny in the same month, had been postponed. Clarification was requested in respect of the reasons for this delay.

RESOLVED that

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- 1) an update report in respect of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) should be provided at a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- 2) the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 4th August 2020 be noted;
- 3) Officers to clarify the reasons why the Housing Strategy report had been postponed from September to October for the consideration of the Executive Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and
- 4) the content of the Executive Committee's work Programme for the period 1st September to 31st December 2020 be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.33 pm