



**Chair -
Councillor Matt
Rogers**

Annual Report of the Place Scrutiny Committee

2020/2021 Muncipal Year



**Vice-Chair –
Councillor Alan
Finch**

Our role involves the scrutiny of matters falling within the functions of the former Place Directorate and currently the Directorates of Public Realm, Regeneration and Enterprise and Housing and Community Services and the Cabinet portfolios of appropriate Cabinet Member(s).

Amendments to the process and spend for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Neighbourhood Funding

The Committee considered a report on the proposed approach to the spend of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Neighbourhood Funding.

Outcome of the Place Scrutiny Committee held on 9th July, 2020

- *A presentation be provided to all Members of the Council on the proposed approach to the spend of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Neighbourhood Funding with a view to considering and discussing further options.*

That the Cabinet, at its meeting held on 23rd September, 2020, recommended

- *That the rolling forward of remaining CIL monies for consideration of spend be approved.*
- *That the transfer of up to £60,000.00 Capital and Revenue Infrastructure CIL receipts to Shell Corner Partnership following receipt of costings and completion for public realm improvements to Shell Corner, be approved, and if work is not completed by September 2022, the monies be made available to alternative projects.*
- *That the transfer of £8,367.91 Capital and Revenue Infrastructure CIL receipts to Black Country Radio, following receipt of detailed costings and completion of works for studio equipment relating to the new digital studio, be approved, and if work is not completed by September 2022, the monies be made available to alternative projects.*
- *That the revised CIL Instalments Policy (September 2020) be approved.*
- *That the revised CIL Instalments Policy (2020) be adopted with effect from 24th September 2020.*

The Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension

Members considered an update on the progress with the delivery of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension (WBHE).

At the meeting held on 29th January, 2020, it was agreed that a six monthly update on the WBHE project be provided to Members.

Outcome:

Place Scrutiny Committee – 24th September, 2020

- *A report and presentation from representatives from organisations associated with the WBHE, together with “real life” examples of local residents that had already benefited from the project, engagement strategies, focusing on the more deprived areas of the Borough and key outputs and indicators of the project and how these would be monitored, be provided to the Committee in three months’ time.*

Place Scrutiny Committee – 28th January, 2021

- *A detailed response to the Ward Councillor for Castle and Priory be provided on details and plans of the new interchanges and re-routing of various bus routes associated with the project.*
- *Further information be provided to Members in relation to the economic benefits of the WBHE.*

Potential improvements to Smestow Valley Dis-Used Railway Line

The Committee considered a report on work undertaken to date and the potential for future improvements to the Smestow Valley dis-used railway line.

Outcome:

- *That the content of the report be noted and future opportunities for further development and improvement works to the route going forward be supported.*
- *That detailed designs and cost estimates for the improvement works to the Lines walk from Pensnett to Himley be provided to Members.*
- *That all potential funding streams, including Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and prudential borrowing be explored, to allow the improvement scheme to proceed timeously within the next twelve to twenty-four months.*
- *That relevant Scrutiny Committees be updated annually with progress, along with local ward elected members for Brockmoor and Pensnett.*

Air Quality Monitoring in Dudley Borough

Members considered a report on the current position with respect to air quality monitoring within Dudley Borough and compliance with the National Objectives for Air Quality.

Outcomes:

- *The continuation of air quality monitoring to show the general improvement in air quality across the Dudley Borough be supported.*
- *That enhanced air quality monitoring at locations where poor air quality was suspected and to demonstrate that measures to improve air quality had been successful, be supported.*
- *The measures being undertaken to improve air quality be supported.*
- *That data identifying air quality trends in Brierley Hill and other areas of improvement be circulated to Members.*
- *That the Environmental Health Manager be requested to make enquiries to identify what assistance was provided to self-employed taxi drivers/operators and circulate information to Members.*

Street Cleansing Service

The Committee considered a report on the Street Cleansing Service delivered by the Directorate of Public Realm.

Outcome:

- *The measures being undertaken to further improve the service and standards of cleanliness across the Borough be supported.*
- *That figures in relation to the associated and ongoing costs in relation to the Travellers Site at Budden Road be provided to Members.*

Housing Allocations Policy

The Committee considered a report on the Review of the Housing Allocations Policy.

At the Cabinet meeting on 31st October, 2019 it was agreed that a cross-party Member/Officer Working Group be established to consider the Housing Allocation Policy. The Working Group was established in November 2019, which included consultation with people on the housing waiting list. Consultation had recently completed on the proposals, which had been identified by Working Group, and would be considered further at Cabinet in February, 2021.

Outcome

- *That the information contained in the report, and as presented verbally at the meeting be noted and the proposals identified by the cross party Working Group be submitted to the February Cabinet for further consideration.*
- *That illustrations highlighting various housing options available based on housing stock and affordability be prepared and circulated to Members to inform them on how the system, in terms of purchasing properties, would operate.*

The following items to be considered by the Committee at its meeting on 31st March, 2021:-

- Homelessness
- Shortage of affordable homes and potential assistance to first time buyers to access the housing market
- Housing Board
- Housing Investment Strategy
- Review of the Council's Vehicle Fleet

Other Items Considered by the Committee in the 2020/21 Municipal Year

Scrutiny Committee

- *Medium Term Financial Strategy*
- *Review of Housing Finance*

Ongoing items for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee

Items requiring further scrutiny or to be included in the Annual Scrutiny Programme for 2021/22 are listed below:-

- *Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension (Six monthly reports)*
- *Medium Term Financial Strategy*
- *Review of Housing Finance*