

Submission to Cabinet

13 December 2016

From Robert Sharp CC,
Labour Leader

**Item 4 – MTFS 2017/18 – 2020/21****Why no action on establishing a Unitary structure?**

This report highlights the considerable financial pressures facing the County Council and the difficult service cuts that lay ahead.

With such known pressures, the public will find it inconceivable that we are still failing to tackle the waste and duplication that has been identified by Ernst and Young in their strategic review of establishing a Unitary Authority.

Replacing the current two-tier system could save over £30 million, money that will stop cuts to vital care services for children and adults.

At the Council meeting of 17 February 2016, the Labour Group submitted a Motion seeking an urgent review to be undertaken to underpin the early establishment of a new Unitary Authority structure to:

1. Deliver a saving of at least £20m per annum;
2. Provide strong, effective and accountable strategic leadership for Leicestershire; and
3. Better engage with local communities

The Conservative Administration failed to act upon the initiative and have simply added it as a holding note in this current report without any explanation as to why the estimated savings would not provide financial aid to the chronically underfunded Adult and Children's social care services.

We urge that the matter be reconsidered and a project established with immediate effect, tasked with delivering a new Unitary structure for Leicestershire that achieves points 1-3 above.

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CABINET – 13TH DECEMBER 2016**HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE POLICY AND STRATEGY REVIEW****COMMENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE****DRAFT MINUTE EXTRACT**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which:-

- i) outlined the outcome of consultation undertaken to support the review of the highway maintenance strategy and policy;
- ii) set out a draft Highways Asset Management Policy and a draft Highway Asset Strategy which have been developed having regard to the outcome of the consultation referred to in (i) above and which the Cabinet would be asked to agree for consultation.

A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

The Director of Environment and Transport in introducing the report highlighted the following points:-

- a) a review of the existing policy was necessary to deliver the savings required in the MTFS and to ensure that the County Council was aligned to the Government's new Code of Practice thereby being in a good position to secure maximum funding from the Government's Incentive Fund;
- b) the review would enable the Council to provide clarity on the standards of service that it would provide going forward.

In response to questions the Director advised members as follows:-

- i) the response rate had been limited and that although there was an engagement process with parish councils it was interesting to note that 61.5% of respondents from the public consultation were from urban areas;
- ii) that District Council and the Highway Forums would be consulted on the Policy and Strategy documents;
- iii) the revised strategy sets out how the County Council would seek to ensure that it can access funding from the Government's Incentive Fund and therefore it was not necessary to include this matter on the Corporate Risk

Register as the risks were recognised and being managed. The engagement of an external consultant to assist the Council in securing government funding was necessary as the Council did not have expertise in-house.

With regard to the possible introduction of a 'Lengthsmen Scheme' the Director advised that this would be done in discussion with those Parish Councils who had expressed an interest. There were a number of issues that needed to be addressed in terms of their scope and responsibilities, the training and support to be provided and on-going resilience recognising that the Scheme would be run by volunteers. In progressing such a Scheme the Council would seek to ensure it was cost neutral. Members were supportive of the Director working with interested Parishes to develop a pilot scheme.

RESOLVED

That comments made be forwarded to the Cabinet and that the Cabinet be advised that the Committee would support the draft Highways Asset Management Policy and draft Highways Asset Management Strategy being approved for consultation.

Cabinet Tuesday 13th December 2016

Comment from Max Hunt, Labour Spokesperson on Environment & Transport

**Item 6: Appraisal of options for the treatment/disposal
of residual waste post 2020**

We support the proposal for Option 3: Medium Term merchanting up to 2028 and also recommend Option 4: Alternative Treatment to EfW is developed for post 2028 invitations to tender. Option 4, however, is restricted to a single alternative treatment site.

As we approach tendering for 2028 solutions further attention should be given to this but not necessarily on a single site. Smaller plants and more local alternative treatment are a further option and one that would comply with the Waste & Minerals Local Plan (which we understand is still under consultation).

We hope also that by that time considerable progress will have been made to unify collection methods across the county creating further efficiencies, minimising residual waste collection and increasing recycling to approach EU standards.

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Local Member Questions to Cabinet regarding the plans for the Snibston site 13th December 2016

Cllr Terri Eynon, County Councillor for Coalville

It is 16 months since the closure of the Snibston Main Gallery. It is nearly three years since that closure was proposed in the 2014/15 Medium Term Financial Strategy. I am pleased that Councillors are, at last, being allowed to see a rudimentary strategy for the development and ongoing use of the Snibston site and adjoining Country Park.

SUMMARY

The closure of Snibston Discovery Museum has left Coalville with a town centre blighted by buildings at risk and derelict former industrial land. This is a risk to the people who live in the town, the businesses who wish to attract visitors to the town, the District Council who need to see development in the town centre and, ultimately, a risk to the landowner, Leicestershire County Council, who are responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Residents in my Division and representatives of the local heritage societies do not, on the whole, object, in principle, to the proposed development and ongoing use of the Snibston site. They are concerned that this document promises much, fails to address the risks and misses the opportunities for the site. They are concerned that this plan will fail to deliver.

As a Local Member, I am concerned that Cabinet Members, well aware that 'something must be done' about the Snibston site, may believe that this plan is 'something'. I realise that Cabinet Members have many more important issues on their agenda. I would like to suggest that this small but irritating issue is a microcosm of some greater principles.

If this Authority cannot work hand-in-hand with *one* District Council and the volunteer groups of *one* town to build an integrated strategy for *one* derelict building site, what hope is there for bigger projects such as the 'Lightbulb Project', 'Recovery Hubs' 'Help to Live at Home' and the NHS 'Sustainability and Transformation Plan'?

My comments and questions below have been informed by local residents and heritage experts. I hope Cabinet Members will recognise my comments and questions below as a genuine cross-party attempt to alert them to the risks and avert further embarrassment for this administration.

RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

I note and am concerned by the *known* risks that may jeopardised this so-called master-plan: -

- The financial sustainability depends on generating £1M from selling part of the site for housing, being the events arena, coach park and site of the former Gallery building.

Will the sale of the land be ring-fenced for this proposed capital development? If not, where will the £1.4M come from?

- The Snibston land has not been put forward to NWLDC Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) for housing. It has been submitted as employment land. It is not in the NWLDC draft Local Plan, currently under inspection.

When will the proposal be submitted to NWLDC SHLAA as housing land?

- The land was gifted by the NCB to the people for leisure purposes and has an existing covenant in place.

Will the 'commercial view' taken by the NCB include the possibility of selling the land for housing, not ring-fencing the money for local leisure development and allowing the Authority to use the capital receipts for other priorities? What legal challenge might ensue in such a case?

- The site includes a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). Leicestershire County Council has a statutory responsibility to maintain the SAM.
- Snibston is one of the five most significant sites in the UK associated with the coal mining industry. The overall site contains some extremely important individual buildings. Snibston is one of a very small number of former mining sites that stand apart because they represent complete or more or less complete collieries. See http://www.leics.gov.uk/snibston_colliery_cmpfinal.pdf p34
- The closure of the Museum was planned three years ago. Historic England has not yet been assured of the acceptability of the Plan.

This document makes scant reference to this Authority's statutory responsibility for the SAM. There is no strategy for managing this responsibility and its attendant risks. There is a complete lack of operational management or access information. What is the visitor centre? Where is it for? Who will visit it? Who will manage it?

I am even more concerned that a number of major risks, liabilities and responsibilities have not had so much as a mention:-

- A Report of the Director of Museums and Art Galleries (6 Jan 1984) held at the records office (document DE7971/37) refers to the 1984 "Development Feasibility Study into Snibston Museum" conducted by Colin Buchan and Partners. The Director refers to this Feasibility Study on pages 356-380 regarding "the principal event area on the Rexco site" (para 1.2.9). The Director notes (1.2.10) that:-
"The Rexco site is contaminated with phenols and tars from earlier processing: the consultants recommend that the site be back filled with 1.5m of clean colliery waste and surfaced. This will render the site acceptable for events, but buildings and services which would disturb the backfill and the contaminated ground should be avoided."

Has the original survey report been relocated by this Authority? If not, will the proposed housing land been re-surveyed for stability and contamination prior to sale? Does the expected income from sale take these problems into account?

- The Scheduled Ancient Monument is on Historic England's 'buildings at risk' register. On its website, Historic England note that "Leicestershire County Council has completed a major scheme of repairs under Scheduled Monument Consent. However, further repairs are necessary and the future management of the colliery is uncertain."

How does this Authority intend to budget for these 'further repairs'? What repairs are still required?

- The Heritage zone includes the Scheduled Ancient Monument, Sheepy Magna Wheelwrights Shop and the Century Theatre. It arbitrarily excludes the mineral line, museum stores, workshops, offices and buildings adjacent to Ashby Road including the control room, medical centre and lamp room. These buildings are integral to the historic mine. There is no mention of the Coalville Signal box at all.

Will these contextual buildings be retained as part of the Colliery Heritage Area? Are the costs of maintaining these buildings included in the budget? How and when will these buildings be accessed by visitors?

- The Heritage Zone includes the Century Theatre.

What future does this Authority envisage for the Century Theatre? Will it continue to be developed as a living, breathing arts venue? What is the potential income? What future liabilities might need to be anticipated?

- The strategy forecasts an income of £160,000 from the car-park and visitor centre. This is a net income of £438 a day. The former Museum café did not bring in such sums. The strategy does not include any reference to access into the historic buildings, even on a special event basis. Coalville Park already includes a free-to-use exercise area with outdoor fitness equipment. Coalville Urban Forest Park provides free-to-use adult adventure play equipment. The Country Park is already crossed by cycle trails and, for visitors arriving by car, is not far from Hick's Lodge, also in the National Forest.

What is the unique selling point of this attraction? How will this Authority market the SAM as a visitor attraction? Why else will visitors come and how much will they be willing to pay? Will visitors, currently using the park, fishing lake, golf-range and theatre, now be expected to pay to park? How much of this income will be ring-fenced for the maintenance and development of the 'Heritage zone/country park'?

Who will be the operator of this site? LCC Property, LCC Museums or an external operator?

- The "Play Area" is referenced on the Plan.

Do the Council intend reinstating the Snibston Discovery Museum play equipment?

- The proposed access through the SAM from Ashby Road may cause congestion and safety issues by conflicting with the existing road calming features. Public safety of traffic running through the site was a concern in 1987 – 1991. There is a risk of anti-social behaviour on the SAM/heritage zone if these gates weren't be open at night for Century Theatre use. Highways have not been consulted regarding the proposed access via the SAM but only regarding the residential access.

There appear to be two accesses - the existing and the new Ashby Road access across the SAM. What are the risks, benefits and costs of adding the new Ashby Road access compared with retaining the existing access (Chiswell Drive) as the sole access?

- The access along the mineral line is something the local community have wanted to see for a long time. Security issues have not been addressed in relation to this (or any other) access.

The mineral line access is marked as 'potential'. How could this popular town-centre improvement be made more likely?

- This document includes no reference to engagement with local stakeholders.

Will the County Council be working with local heritage organisations including the Coalville Heritage Society and the volunteer Snibston Mine and Park Guardians (formerly Friends of Snibston) to develop the heritage trails and interpretation displays?

How will these heritage trails connect with the work being done by the NWLDC 'Choose Coalville' team to promote town centre heritage?

- NWLDC is currently engaging with residents on a plan to relocate the Hermitage Leisure Centre to Coalville town centre.

Has this Authority considered offering to relocate the NWLDC Hermitage Leisure Centre in Coalville on the Snibston site as a means of increasing footfall and creating heritage, leisure and cultural zone close to the town centre?

- The grassed cricket/football area at Coalville Town Football Club lies adjacent to the Snibston site but is only accessible via Owen Street.

Has this Authority considered connecting the Snibston site to the Coalville Town football ground? This would provide easier access for visiting team fans, retain the land for recreation purposes and provide regular customers for the car-park. What institutional barriers stand in the way of such a plan?

- The Scheduled Ancient Monument, a Building at Risk, blights the physical development of Coalville Town Centre. NWLDC are currently working to improve its townscape heritage.

If officers seriously believe this is a sustainable master plan, could this administration go forward with the Visitor Centre, interpretation work and Heritage Area first? This would make the housing land more attractive and could even increase its value for sale.

What institutional barriers prevent LCC and NWLDC from working together on a fresh bid for heritage lottery funding for this scheme?

I thank Members of the Cabinet for being prepared to answer these questions.

Terri Eynon CC



Cabinet Meeting 13 December 2016

Agenda Item 8

Healthwatch Leicestershire Board (HWL) Position Statement

Dear County Council Cabinet members,

We would like to specifically address our comments to the recommendations as follows:

- a) The outcome of the review to support the recommissioning of a Healthwatch service for Leicestershire be noted;**

Whilst noting the full report, the Board is concerned that it has not accurately reflected our achievements with other local Healthwatch, our work with under-represented groups and the impact of our Evidence and Insights patient reports e.g. we were highly commended by Healthwatch England for our 'A week at LRI' report and these findings were used to win the A&E Vanguard submission. Our Enter & View reports have also been showcased as exemplars of good practice for other local Healthwatch.

We have achieved this and much more against reduced financial resources with tight control and strategic oversight with a focus on community driven local priorities. We have attracted and retained high calibre Board volunteers, staff team, and managing expectations on where we can make a difference and bring added value to commissioners and providers.

Both HWBB and HOSC members have praised the quality of our work and reports.

- b) It be noted that the recommendations of the review report will be considered by Leicester and Rutland Healthwatch commissioners to explore opportunities for increased collaboration and joint working;**

We would like to remind members that Voluntary Action Leicester (VAL) won the contracts for Healthwatch Leicester City and Healthwatch Rutland so that all 3 local Healthwatch were under 'one umbrella.' It was the decision of respective commissioners to 'break up' this joined-up model to reflect the distinctive voice of very different patients and service users across LLR that has impacted on the collaborative working.

With the changing health and social landscape as envisaged by the STP LLR, we recognise the importance of partnership working and are already doing this as evidenced by our most recent joint Healthwatch LLR statement of the draft STP.

We also have tripartite representative arrangements in place on key stakeholder bodies. HWL lead and co-ordinate the quarterly meetings with the CEO's of UHL and LPT on behalf of neighbouring Healthwatch.

We will continue to explore further opportunities for co-operation and collaboration.

c) The Chief Executive be authorised to –

(i) procure a new provider of the Healthwatch Leicestershire service which will be a freestanding social enterprise;

The Board of HWL would like to collectively be involved in shaping the future model that serves the interests of Leicestershire residents against a changing health and social care landscape across LLR.

We ask members NOT to pre-determine a delivery vehicle at this stage.

As respected Board members and partners working with County Council officers and elected members we want to offer and share our extensive expertise and experience gained through many years of patient and public involvement to be actively consulted so that a co-produced model is designed from the outset ahead of any procurement - as we were with the transition from LINKs to the establishment of Healthwatch.

(ii) extend the current contract with Voluntary Action Leicestershire as necessary, potentially up until 31 March 2018, if this is required for market development and/or in order to align procurement timescales with other local Healthwatch services.

The Board is extremely concerned based on previous experience that there is continuity and stability to ensure patients don't suffer when there is organisational change, uncertainty and transitional arrangements. Even with the best will in the world – plans and timescales change. This is particularly important as we enter the next phase of the STP.

Healthwatch was created with the purpose of understanding the needs, experience and concerns of service users and to speak out on their behalf under the Health and Social Care Act 2012. We want to ensure that the Leicestershire residents are fully engaged to discuss and shape proposals.

An early extension of the contract to March 2018 is crucial to NOT destabilise HWL or jeopardise the relationships and partnerships we have worked so hard to build as a critical friend with those involved in the commissioning and delivery of health and social care.

Dear County Council Cabinet Members,

Healthwatch Leicestershire Review and recommissioning

As the current provider of Healthwatch Leicestershire we support elements of this paper presented to the Cabinet. We agree there should be greater collaboration and joint working as we recognise that, in particular, the 'Health community' crosses local authority boundaries. In fact this is where we started with Voluntary Action Leicester (VAL) successfully winning the tenders for the set up and delivery of all 3 local Healthwatch schemes.

We believe, however, that the County Council Cabinet should **not** limit itself to only procuring a freestanding social enterprise as a future provider in recommendation C (i) for the following reasons:

- VAL, who currently provide the very successful scheme, will be excluded from the procurement process. The current arrangements have provided an excellent Healthwatch Leicestershire using a managed, 'arms-length', model for the last 3 years. In our view this model isn't broken.
- At this point there are no identified 'freestanding social enterprises' to procure from – especially as the Cabinet paper adds the caveat the future provider should have a "...remit focused on delivery of Healthwatch services."
- The financial climate is severe and the extra costs of maintaining a freestanding organisation will impact on frontline delivery of Healthwatch functions.

Although we are asking for this recommendation to be reconsidered you can be assured that VAL will support the next phase of Healthwatch Leicestershire whatever the decision of the County Cabinet. As we did with the setting up of Healthwatch Leicester as an independent organisation, we will ensure there is as smooth a transition as possible.

Yours sincerely

Kevan Liles

Chief Executive, VAL.

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