

**North East Derbyshire District Council**

**Cabinet**

**10 May 2017**

**A61 Corridor Scrutiny Review**

**Report of Councillor Mrs C A Smith - Chair of the Growth Scrutiny Committee**

This report is public

**Purpose of the Report**

- To ask Cabinet to approve the recommendations of the Growth Committee's Review of the A61 Corridor.

**1 Report Details**

- 1.1 The Growth Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a review of the A61 Corridor as part of its work programme for 2016/17 as this was a key project that significantly impacted on several key development sites for the Authority.
- 1.2 The review aimed to consider the work currently being undertaken to secure transport improvements to support major housing and employment growth along the A61 corridor.
- 1.3 The review had commenced half way through the Committee's year so it aimed to take an initial look at how this complex project was progressing with a view to producing an interim report setting out the Review Panel's observations.
- 1.4 The Review Panel met on four occasions and considered a variety of information to gain an understanding of the subject area. The Review Panel interviewed key officers at North East Derbyshire District Council and Derbyshire County Council. The full report attached at **Appendix 1** sets out in more detail the evidence gathered and synopsis of the views expressed.
  - The recommendations are:
    - That the A61 Corridor Strategy be completed and published, which sets out the long term vision for the project, after it has been approved by Derbyshire County Council.
    - That an up to date map of the A61 Corridor Project be produced showing the areas identified for improvement along the whole route.
    - That further communications are made with the public to highlight progress with this project and the interventions it is making or planning to make and the amount of funding being provided.

- That the Council considers how it can ensure that relevant officers at all levels in the Authority can keep themselves up to date with the progress of this project

## **2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Review Panel recognised that this was a complex project which they had only had a limited time to review. However, from the initial look the Panel concluded that a great deal of work had already been undertaken and progress was being made.

## **3 Consultation and Equality Impact**

- 3.1 As detailed in the full report.

## **4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 4.1 Not applicable

## **5 Implications**

### **5.1 Finance and Risk Implications**

- 5.1.2 This will be determined if Cabinet decide to accept the Scrutiny Review recommendations as part of the Lead Officer response.

### **5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection**

- 5.2.1 This will be determined if Cabinet decide to accept the Scrutiny Review recommendations as part of the Lead Officer response.

### **5.3 Human Resources Implications**

- 5.3.1 These will be determined if Cabinet decide to accept the Scrutiny Review recommendations as part of the Lead Officer response.

## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 To ask Cabinet to consider the recommendations in paragraph 1.4 of the Growth Scrutiny Committee and if accepted ask officers to provide a response in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.

**7 Decision Information**

<b>Is the decision a Key Decision?</b> (A Key Decision is an executive decision which results in income or expenditure to the Council of £50,000 or more or which has a significant impact on two or more District wards)	No
<b>Is the decision subject to Call-In?</b> (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)	No
<b>District Wards Affected</b>	N/A
<b>Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework</b>	N/A

**8 Document Information**

<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
1	A61 Corridor Scrutiny Review
<b>Background Papers</b> (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
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**NORTH EAST DERBYSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

**A61 CORRIDOR**

**APRIL 2017**

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## **Chair's Foreword**

I am pleased to present this report on behalf of the Growth Scrutiny Committee. It details the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Committee from its review of the A61 Corridor

The review panel found this review very interesting and felt it was timely given the focus now on growth within the Authority. I would like to thank members of the Committee for their input and support during the review.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the officers, who took the time to speak to members of the Committee, for their advice, support and cooperation provided through the review process.

Finally I would like to say thank you to Sue Veerman, our Scrutiny Manager, for the planning and organising done on the Committees behalf. Thanks also to Democratic Services for the support they have provided.

Councillor C Smith

## **Review Panel**

The review panel comprised the following members:

Councillor C Smith	- (Labour) – Review Chair
Councillor S Boyle	- (Labour)
Councillor S Cornwell	- (Labour)
Councillor C Cupit	- (Conservative)
Councillor A Powell	- (Conservative)
Councillor B Rice	- (Labour)
Councillor R Smith	- (Labour)
Councillor K Tait	- (Conservative)
Councillor J Windle	- (Labour)

## **1. Recommendations**

- 1.1 That the A61 Corridor Strategy be completed and published, which sets out the long term vision for the project, after it has been approved by Derbyshire County Council.
- 1.2 That an up to date map of the A61 Corridor Project be produced showing the areas identified for improvement along the whole route.
- 1.3 That further communications are made with the public to highlight progress with this project and the interventions it is making or planning to make and the amount of funding being provided.
- 1.4 That the Council considers how it can ensure that relevant officers at all levels in the Authority can keep themselves up to date with the progress of this project

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1 At its meeting on 6th October, 2016 the Growth Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a review of the A61 Corridor. The A61 was a collaborative project with Derbyshire County Council funded through the Local Enterprise Partnership. Funding was being used to help identify a package of measures to deal with the consequences as a result of major economic growth developments on the A61 corridor. A bid for funding had been submitted to D2N2 in 2014 and £12.8 Million had been allocated to the project. This was supported by a further £3.2 million local contribution for Whittington Moor roundabout improvements in Chesterfield. The funding is provisional on the production of a robust business case which has to be approved by the D2N2 Infrastructure and Investment Board.
- 2.2 The Committee thought it timely to review this area because this was a key project that significantly impacted on several strategic development sites for the Authority.

## **3. Scope of Review**

- 3.1 The review aimed to consider the work currently being undertaken to secure transport improvements to support major housing and employment growth along the A61 Corridor. The review had commenced half way through the Committees year so it aimed to take an initial look at how this complex project was progressing with a view to producing an interim report setting out the review panel's observations.

## **4. Method of Review**

- 4.1 The review panel met on four occasions to consider the scope of the review, key issues they wanted to discuss and key people they wished to interview.
- 4.2 Evidence was gathered in a variety of ways including written sources and interviews with a range of officers. The Councils Assistant Director of Economic Growth attended the first review meeting along with the Project Officer and the Principal

Engineer, Development Control from Derbyshire County Council to provide a scene setting of the current position and answer questions from the review panel.

## **5. Evidence and Research**

- Scene setting presentation from Allison Westray Chapman, Assistant Director of Economic Development, Alan Marsden, Project Officer (Derbyshire County Council) and Graham Hill, Principal Engineer (Derbyshire County Council)
- Map A61 Transport and Land use Strategy
- Derbyshire County Council Cabinet reports 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2015 and 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2016

## **6. Key Findings**

### **6.1 Strengths**

- 6.1.1 Officers interviewed demonstrated their commitment to the project, especially their individual projects that they were working on. Several spoke enthusiastically about the developments taking place, the potential that it provided and progress that the Council had made. Whilst acknowledging that it had been a long process and there were still difficulties ahead it was felt that there was evidence of much more momentum now and that discussions were becoming actions.
- 6.1.2 North East Derbyshire officers also demonstrated that they understood the link between their priorities and the Councils Growth Strategy. Growth opportunities formed a key part of the Growth Strategy, including housing development. The A61 was a crucial artery that would support this development. The link between the Local Plan and the A61 project was also clearly set out. Transport infrastructure was a key piece required for approval of the Local Plan. The Councils planning policy unit had been working with Derbyshire County Council since 2008 to develop an approach to transport infrastructure. It was important to develop a model that provided an understanding of the collective impact of what the partners were doing. Work had also been undertaken with the Environment Agency to identify critical points and what interventions the Council could make and to consider what the developments should contribute.
- 6.1.3 Opportunities that could arise from electrification of the Midland Mainline were raised and the issues around Callywhite Lane. The development of a station at Clay Cross was also highlighted and the potential of park and ride facilities. Key strategic sites like The Avenue, Mill Lane development and the Biwater site were all raised by the interviewees including a discussion on their potential and possible impact on the A61. It was felt that these sites were being discussed seriously by the wider partnership and it was important to keep them high on the agenda with Derbyshire County Council.



- 6.1.4 The partner agencies are working well together to deliver the project and were working to manage expectations of such a complex project. This was clearly apparent at the senior level. Stakeholders commented that they felt they had impacted on the discussions and been able to push forward key projects for North East Derbyshire on the corridor.
- 6.1.5 Communication had been taking place across the different levels of officers, although some felt this had decreased recently and needed to be maintained. Officer meetings, cross boundary meetings and the A61 Strategy meeting were all mentioned and had met regularly. The steering group was made up of various partners such as Derbyshire County Council, North East Derbyshire District Council and Chesterfield Borough Council. The Council had also worked closely with the public health team to undertake a health impact assessment on the A61, which was now published. This had opened up more funding streams.
- 6.1.6 Consultation had been taking place both at member level and with the public. Derbyshire County Council had undertaken some community consultation. Mouchels, the consultants working on behalf of Derbyshire County Council had held a series of stakeholder events at the end of 2015, beginning of 2016. Various groups were able to give their views at these events. The Consultants also visited a number of local groups to gather their views. Press releases had been made over a period of time. Several officers thought to date this consultation had been good but some thought that still more needed to be done. These comments are included in section 6.2.2 of the report.

## **6.2 Improvements/Observations**

- 6.2.1 The review panel found it difficult to find a conclusive document that set out a clear long term vision for the A61 corridor. They were advised that a Strategy was being developed that would be considered by Derbyshire County Councils Cabinet in December 2016. However, this does not seem to be available yet. Several officers and the Committee felt it was essential to have a specific strategy that co-ordinates the project. Additionally an investment plan was being finalised based on a number of priorities which were being chosen from a long list supported by Mouchel consultants. Again the Committee were keen to see this document finalised. The impact of the HS2 spur through Chesterfield was also being assessed. The review panel had considered a number of documents that outlined various information regarding individual interventions, funding and potential difficulties. However, the panel felt that based on the information they had considered their view was that a number of key projects had been selected on a reality basis of what could be achieved, which was important but that this was not set in a longer scale vision of how some of the hard to solve issues might be addressed.
- 6.2.2 One of the key challenges for the future identified by several stakeholders was that the public would have to live with the process of implementation of interventions on the A61 which would cause delays and problems. Whilst it was acknowledged that a number of public/member consultations had taken place on the individual projects, there was scope for more on the wider strategic project to ensure that people's expectations were realistic and managed. The panel felt that it would be helpful for a comprehensive public map to be produced setting out the whole route and planned interventions once this information was available. Further publicity about what is happening and the amount of funding that is coming in should also be

communicated to the public. Equally it was important to acknowledge that some pressure points cannot always be changed.

- 6.2.3 Funding was raised by all interviewees. The £16 million funding identified to date was welcomed and acknowledged as an achievement. It would help mitigate many of the traffic issues that had been discussed during the review. However, it was felt that it would not be enough to fully address all the interventions needed on the A61 corridor. Further funding opportunities would need to be achieved.
- 6.2.4 Some comments had been made that whilst liaison with Derbyshire County Council had been regular and excellent in the past, more recently at some levels this had now decreased. It was understood that a number of issues were being worked through like the priorities list but it was felt that regular dialogue was still needed. A comment from one officer was also made on the communication between Derbyshire County Council Highways and Sheffield Highways Team and it was felt this could be improved.
- 6.2.5 It was felt that the Authority had the necessary skills in house for its areas of responsibility but acknowledged that many of the skills, especially engineering and highways, would be provided by Derbyshire County Council. However, North East Derbyshire could supply urban design, planning and strategic skills. Capacity was identified as a potential problem as the project progressed. Sections like Planning had received additional resource which was important. However, some concerns were raised for the future when the momentum of the project increased.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1 The review panel had heard views from a mix of officers at North East Derbyshire and Derbyshire County Council. It was recognised that this was a complex project and the panel had only a limited time to look at how it was working. However, from this initial look the panel had concluded that a great deal of work had been undertaken and progress was being made.
- 7.2 However, a couple of areas for improvement were identified around communication and more fundamentally the finalisation of some key strategic documents.

### **Stakeholders Engaged During the Review**

James Arnold	-	Assistant Director - Planning and Environment
Helen Fairfax	-	Planning Policy Manager
Martin Handley	-	Economic Development Project Officer
Graham Hill	-	Principal Engineer Development Control – Derbyshire County Council
Alan Marsden	-	Project Officer – Derbyshire County Council
Allison Westray-Chapman	-	Assistant Director - Economic Development