

MINUTES of a meeting of the COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Abbey Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on THURSDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2023

Present: Councillor T Eynon (Chair)

Councillors M Blair-Park, M French, K Horn, S Lambeth, E Parle, L Windram and J Legrys
A Barker, P Moulton and D Everitt

Portfolio Holders: Councillors K Merrie MBE and M B Wyatt

Officers: Mr J Arnold, Ms E Marquez, Mr P Wheatley and Mr T Devonshire

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor P Lees, M Ball and A Morley.

20. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no interests declared.

21. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions received.

22. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2023.

It was moved by Councillor S Lambeth, seconded by Councillor E Parle and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2023 be approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

23. IVANHOE LINE

The Chair welcomed the representative from the Campaign to Reopen the Ivanhoe Line (CRIL) and advised the Committee that the discussion to follow would contribute to a future report, and that she welcomed points for further inquiry from the Committee. A second session, she added, was planned, and would incorporate other stakeholders.

The representative from CRIL spoke to the Committee. He advised the Committee that the CRIL was a non-partisan campaign group to reopen the Ivanhoe Line between Ashby and Leicester. He set out what CRIL had done so far, procedurally, in their campaign to reopen the Line, including how they had attempted to work with various local stakeholders as well as with Central Government, who invited them to present a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC). This SOBC was submitted to the Central Government; it received strong feedback and was passed onto the next phase of the process, and Network Rail were invited to get involved.

The representative praised the work of Network Rail. He clarified for Members that so far, the planned work was more focused on the section of the Line from Derby to Coalville. He was very confident that national approval for this would be attained.

Further work was planned to campaign for the phase between Coalville and Leicester. He outlined for the Committee the prospects of success in this aspect of the campaign. He advised the Committee on the various potential financial and practical hindrances to the second phase of the project. Furthermore, and further down the line, there was also various issues associated with connecting the envisaged Leicester South station to the main station at Leicester. In summary, the easy phase was Burton to Coalville, the harder phase was Coalville to Leicester, and the trickiest phase was developing the Line within Leicester city centre. Strategically, it was advisable to be pragmatic about what was on offer, even if it was an imperfect option at the moment, as it would provide immediate benefits and portend further development in the future.

A Member congratulated CRIL and concurred that the strategy of CRIL to campaign for the rest of the Line in tandem with the construction of the first phase of the Line was sensible. The representative from CRIL said that whilst it was always likely to have happened in phases, it would be better if the whole thing had been authorised simultaneously. As this had not happened, the campaign must continue to present a measured and united front to Central Government. CRIL hoped the Council would begin campaigning for phase two to begin as soon as possible.

A Member welcomed the work of CRIL and agreed with the suggestion that what was so far on offer was something that the Council should not turn down, and that the phased strategy was eminently sensible.

The Chair asked what other support CRIL required. The representative said the Council should reaffirm their wholehearted support for the project to whichever Government was in power after the next General Election. More practically and more immediately, the Council could also investigate how transport could be more holistically integrated if the entire project was completed, so to maximise use of the railway; they should also investigate how to incentivise and encourage the use of the railways amongst people who did not live within easy distance of the proposed stations.

A Member asked Officers how this project was coordinated by the Council, and whether there was an officer responsible for overseeing it, and the Head of Planning and Infrastructure advised Members on the role he played.

The Chair inquired how the best way to produce a holistically integrated transport network could be produced given the fragmentation of who was responsible for what, and the Head of Planning and Infrastructure assured the Committee that they would closely liaise with the County Council on this matter.

The Chair expressed some resident concerns that the proposed line might actually drive economic activity out of the district, inadvertently. In response, the Head of Property and Economic Regeneration advised that it would be important to highlight the improved transport links to potential businesses, therefore potentially expanding employment. His team would examine how the line could be best utilised to the benefit of the district.

The Chair asked if Members were satisfied that the second phase of the project would not be abandoned. CRIL advised the Committee that presenting the successes of the first phase of the project would be the greatest argument for the continuation of the second phase of the project.

A Member asked if the Ivanhoe Line could be considered within the Local Plan process and the Head of Planning and Infrastructure said that he would raise it with the Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager.

The Strategic Director of Place reminded Members that this was a discussion of great value which would contribute to a paper which would be brought to the Committee at a later date.

The Portfolio Holder for Infrastructure thanked the Chair for inviting him and CRIL for presenting the Committee with a thoroughly detailed case. He noted the strong support of the Alliance, the Labour Group, and cross-party at Leicestershire County Council. He broadly echoed the pragmatic strategy advocated by both CRIL and the Committee and suggested that the Council had already been following the proposed strategy of continuing to campaign ardently for phase two. It was also important to consider the Ivanhoe Line beside the Freeport and EMDevCo. He implored the representative to contact him from CRIL whenever he had any concerns or queries.

A Member welcomed cross-party support and suggested that the Portfolio Holder update the Committee on a regular basis on how the project was proceeding. The Portfolio Holder was happy to do so.

The representative from CRIL thanked Members for their time.

The Chair noted that this was an ongoing piece of work, and then thanked the representative from CRIL for his time and Members for their comments.

24. KEGWORTH PROJECT

The Head of Property and Regeneration presented the report.

He invited the Senior Economic Development Officer to present part of the report to the Committee.

The Chair read a statement from the relevant Ward Members, Councillors R Sutton and C Sewell. They noted the history of the proposed project, that it had been somewhat contentious, and that roughly a third of the work had already been done. Communication with residents had been enhanced and the ward Members hoped to see the project completed by May 2024.

A Member welcomed the support of the ward Members and the work of Officers in what had historically proved a tricky project. He did query about the two hour parking restriction and how it would be enforced. In response, the Head of Property and Regeneration advised that it was the County Council's responsibility to enforce where the District Council would work as the agent.

A Member remained concerned that people would abuse the car-parking and hoped that there would be regular enforcement. The Head of Property and Economic Regeneration concurred.

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

RECOMMENDED THAT:

The following recommendation be added to the report to be presented to Cabinet: 'after the scheme is completed, this authority ask Leicestershire County Council to review parking enforcement in the area so maximum benefit from the scheme is attained.'

25. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the inclusion of any item on the Work Programme.

Chairman's initials

The Strategic Director of Place advised the Committee on various changes to the plan and why these changes had occurred.

The Chair updated Members on the work of the Scrutiny Work Programming Group and implored Members to contribute.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.14 pm