



# Buckinghamshire Council

## Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee

### Minutes

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2020 IN VIRTUAL MEETING VIA MS TEAMS, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.36 PM**

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

S Broadbent, C Clare, A Cole, G Hall, A Hill, M Hussain, C Jackson, S Jenkins, D Lyons, P Martin, Dr W Matthews, M Smith, P Strachan and M Titterington

#### **OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE**

J Durkan, S Bambrick, B Chapple OBE, D Martin, N Naylor, S Turnbull, E Barlow and D Sutherland

#### **Agenda Item**

##### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP**

Mark Titterington had advised that he would be slightly late joining the meeting. Peter Martin advised that he would have to leave the meeting early due to a personal appointment.

##### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

##### **3 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

The Chairman thanked the members of the public for their interest in the work of the Committee. A number of questions had been received and the Chairman confirmed that the time limit for questions had been extended to 30 minutes to allow for three questions to be asked and responses to be provided. Written responses to appropriate questions not included in the agenda would be provided to members of the public if requested, and these would also be circulated to the Members.

Three public questions were considered at the meeting as attached to the agenda, and verbal responses were provided by the Cabinet Member for Transport, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change, and the Cabinet Member for Logistics.

##### **4 MINUTES**

The Chairman noted that regarding the Transport Infrastructure-External Providers item officers from HS2 would be invited to the next meeting, however this was to be confirmed. A member

raised concerned that the next meeting would not be early enough due urgent issues to be considered. Nick Naylor confirmed that a recent meeting with HS2 had taken place with the council and at the meeting it was outlined the importance of engagement with local members. He would speak to Cllr Martin regarding this matter separately to address any immediate issues.

It was requested that the comments in the minutes be confirmed by the Cabinet Member for Transport regarding 20mph limits; regarding that 20mph limit reduction did not make a significant difference. The Chairman noted that this subject was an item in the agenda and could be considered later in the meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 11 June were agreed as a correct record.

## **5 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

The Chairman updated Committee Members on the following issues:

- The Chairman, Sandra Jenkins, Andrew Cole and the Chairman of the Children's and Education Select Committee, Dev Dhillon, had met with Sara Turnbull and the Cabinet Member for Logistics, David Martin, during the summer. This was to challenge and support the home to school transport team ahead of the new term on the school transport arrangements. The Chairman confirmed this had been a useful meeting and a letter was attached to the agenda in relation to this matter.
- Discussions had taken place regarding setting up a working group to support the development of the Climate Change Strategy. This would be discussed as an item on the agenda.

## **6 HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT - UPDATE**

David Martin, Cabinet Member for Logistics and Sara Turnbull, Service Director Transport Services, provided an update on home to school transport following the start of the school term. The following points were as follows:

- Majority of children were now back in school and learning.
- The children that the council had a duty to take to school were doing so.
- Mr Martin thanked the Chairman and sub-committee for their support and guidance.
- The Council were providing free transport for students that were legally entitled and eligible, as per the Home to School Transport policy as available on the website.
- Some children that purchased spare seats from the council were also being provided with transport.
- 7500 students were receiving school transport arranged by the council.
- Over 4000 travelled mainly on buses, and over 2000 travelled in taxis, these were mainly SEN students.
- A small number of eligible children travelled on school coaches run by private companies and on public bus routes
- A few parents claimed a mileage payment and took the children to school themselves. This was an option that had been promoted since the start of the COVID pandemic,

numbers were low but increasing at the start of term.

- There were difference COVID safety arrangements around the difference vehicles. The Council followed Government guidance and it was noted that this differed in relation to a public or school bus.
- 130 bus networks ran on council contract buses. A majority were council eligible students however some included spare seat sales. Some students travelled on public buses and operators have been supported in relation to COVID requirements.
- As Buckinghamshire was a large rural county there was a network of commercial firms that supplied private transport to 5,000 students.
- During the summer term some schools were still open for key worker and vulnerable children. Officers worked with head teachers and the education department in providing school transport for over 1000 children and this had created additional workload over the summer period.
- Software and data systems had been updated as part of an improvement programme.
- A restructure of the service and staffing appointments had been undertaken. The new Head of Service would begin in role during the autumn.
- Planning for the service had been difficult due the changes in government regulations. These were responded to on a daily basis and included updates to the website and suppliers about safety measures that need to be taken.
- Notification from the government had been received in August regarding funding for home to school transport. This had created 35 additional buses to be available for the start of the school term to support social distancing.
- Timetables were published on the website for all the different bus routes and communicated to parents.
- Improvement had been made on the clarity of information provided to parents.
- Bus passes were issued at the start of term with some temporary bus passes. This was normal practice due to changes in details regarding some schools and colleges.
- There were significantly lower number of complaints in comparison to last year.
- A grant had been provided to commercial coach operators to provide support for students to get to school.
- There had been successful council led lobbying to government to ensure that school coaches would be legally able to run at the start of term.
- A Client Transport Improvement Programme board had been set up in February to provide excellent and value for money in the service.
- Next steps to improve the service would include improved data management, communications, bus network, and consideration of parents' feedback.

In response to questions the following points were noted:

- Private bus operators were legally obliged to give notification if they intend to cancel or reduce a bus route. Officers would contact the providers and discuss with them the

issues. Dependent on the circumstances some providers would continue with the service or another company could step in and successfully run school only routes.

- Regarding environmentally friendly vehicles officers were preparing a bid to request government funding for tendering of these type of vehicles. It was noted that the entire service would need to be recommissioned to be PSVAR compliant, however commercial viability would have to be considered.
- It was understood there was considerable disruption last year, complaints were significantly down this year in comparison and the service was on a journey of improvement.
- Regarding any further lockdown there was a live business continuity plan updated regularly in relation to government guidance.
- Concern was raised regarding children using seatbelts in taxi vehicles. It was requested if any specific information could be provided then officers would investigate the matter.
- Regarding the expansion of areas and the provision of schools it was noted that work was undertaken with officers and bus operators to consider new opportunities.
- Active travel had been promoted by the council and parents were encouraged to be involved. Parent and councillors were requested to contact the Cabinet Member with suggestions on how to improve sustainable and active travel.

The Chairman noted that home to school transport had been of concern to members and following the work of the team the situation was now much more positive. He thanked Sara and David for the update and thanked the officers for their hard work during these difficult times.

## **7 CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY - UPDATE**

### **Climate Change Strategy**

Mr Bill Chapple, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change, Ed Barlow, Head of Energy, and David Sutherland, Head of Climate Change & Environment, provided an update on the Climate Change Strategy.

Bill explained that the Climate Change Motion approved by Council on 15 July directed the Council to reach zero for emissions by 2050, potentially by 2030. The adoption of the Climate Change Strategy to support this work would be considered by Cabinet in February 2021. Work had been undertaken throughout the summer months and various council policies were also being reviewed to incorporate environmental issues. The council was successful in applying to be part of a pilot scheme for a Local Nature Recovery Strategy; this scheme was launched at a farm in Great Missenden. Habitat banking was also being considered, where land would be purchased to help diversity. Bill had also advised that he was Chairman of the Rural Forum and that there was a section on bio diversity in the new planning consultation document. Bill noted that the work of climate change affected all parts of the council.

Ed Barlow provided a presentation on the development timeline of the Climate Change Strategy. It was noted that it would be a challenge to bring the new Strategy to Cabinet in February due to the broad nature of the subject. The key areas were for public engagement and consultation early on in the process, and to ensure internal council departments were engaged. In order to develop the work external stakeholders such as community boards, parish council and interest groups would also be consulted.

A Carbon Audit had been undertaken to establish a new emissions baseline and then to develop

options for reaching net-zero by 2050. Further work would then be undertaken to consider bringing this forward to 2030. It was requested that a Select Committee working group be created to support and act as a 'critical friend' during the development of the Climate Change Strategy.

David added that there were also wider issues related to the role of the natural environment and addressing climate change, and the role the loss of species have in the natural environment. Work was being undertaken regarding the Environment Bill that was currently going through Parliament, as from this there would be two statutory duties, one regarding biodiversity net gain in the planning system and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. A Supplementary Planning Document would be consulted on in how the council delivers the biodiversity net gain in the planning system. Regarding the Local Nature Recover Strategy a local habitat map would be produced and to identify where to deliver priorities for nature recover and creation areas. Work was also being undertaken with the Forestry Commission on tree planting across the county.

The Chairman noted there were two formal committee meetings scheduled before the February Cabinet meeting. The working group would meet in between these meetings to act as a 'critical friend' and to ensure the process for the Climate Change Strategy was as robust as possible. An email to request volunteers for a working group on a cross party basis would be sent out following the meeting.

In response to questions the following points were noted:

- The Committee were assured that Cabinet Members would have due consideration to the climate change agenda during the budgeting process. There was commitment across all the council to achieve zero emissions.
- Regarding recruiting staff to help with the strategy it was noted that there were experienced officers in the areas of work required working at the Council and recruitment would take place when needed. It was noted that two posts had been appointed to support the Head of Energy in developing the strategy and gathering information about energy efficiency of the council. The Strategy was being led internally however external support had been brought in regarding the Carbon Audit.
- Members were informed that both Ed and David were part of the ADEPT network which supported officers with best practice across councils with regards to climate change.
- Regarding tree planting a member noted that a reLEAF project had been undertaken in Haddenham and a tool kit had been developed to enable parish and town councils to increase tree cover. It was suggested that the council could adapt this tool kit to support tree planting.
- The Carbon Audit was focussed on the council's operations and did not include leased out buildings. There was government data available for the wider county emissions. It was noted that this was a complex process due to various data sources to gather, measure and model based on various assumptions.
- Parish and town councils would be involved in the consultation process through local council associations and the community boards and consideration would be given on the best way to support their work with regards to climate change. The Chairman noted that members had a duty to work with their local parish and town councils with regards to the Climate Change Strategy.

The Chairman thanked the officers and Cabinet Member for the update.

## **8 UPDATE ON FLY TIPPING**

Mr Bill Chapple, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change, provided an update report on fly tipping as requested at the last meeting to track the trends and impact with regards to COVID 19, and charging at waste recycling centres.

In response to questions the following points were noted:

- To tackle fly tipping officers work with the police, highways and Environmental Agency. There had been delays in court convictions due to the pandemic however there were now 40 cases going through the courts system.
- It was noted that a majority of fly tipping was brought in from outside the county or through commercial fly tipping.
- 42 groups had been out collecting litter across the county and PPE had become a problem with regards to littering.
- Work was being undertaken across social media to access fly tipping information and issues.
- The maximum fixed penalty notice was £400 for fly tipping.
- Council officers had been in discussion with Slough Borough Council to deal with fly tipping being brought into Buckinghamshire. There was an active fly tipping team at Buckinghamshire Council and it was reported that up to March 2020 every 1 in 38 offenders had been caught, in comparison to the national figure of 1 in 168.
- With regards to drivers littering at the sides of the road it was requested that registration details be taken and reported to the council for investigation. The Cabinet Member for Logistics informed the Committee that a review of the parking services was being undertaken to enable Civil Enforcement Officers to issue on the spot fines for problems such as littering. The Chairman requested that an update be provided to a future meeting on this matter.
- It was noted that waste vehicles from the recycling centres should be provided with netting to avoid rubbish escaping. It was requested that the company name of the vehicles involved should be reported to the council for investigation.
- Regarding take away food boxes it was noted that this could be dealt with via the emerging Environment Bill to legislate private takeaway companies to deal with the litter created by their products.

The Chairman thanked Bill for the update.

## **9 20MPH ZONES - UPDATE**

Cllr Nick Naylor, Cabinet Member for Transport provided a verbal update on 20mph zones. The following main points were noted:

- The Council did not have a policy for permanent 20mph speed limits.
- In accordance with Department for Transport (DfT) guidance the council did not support implementation of 20mph limits if the current traffic was over 24mph, unless traffic calming

was installed as part of the scheme.

- DfT guidance notes that research into signed only 20mph speed limits showed these led to small reductions in traffic speeds, therefore these would be most appropriate where speeds are already low. Request for speed limit changes would only be consulted upon and implemented by the Council if they complied with DfT guidance.
- Following the countywide speed review any changes to speed limits were required to be funded locally unless it is part of a developer funded scheme.
- Successful 20mph zones and limits should be self-enforcing. There should be no expectation on the police to provide additional enforcement unless explicitly agreed.
- Currently in Buckinghamshire there was seven 20mph speed limit orders covering a wide number of roads and three 20mph limits installed on the Buckinghamshire road network. There were six roads under one 20mph speed limit order in Haddenham, which came into force in September 2020.
- Transport for Buckinghamshire were not currently progressing requests for 20mph limits where existing speeds are in excess of 24 mph unless traffic calming was also proposed.
- Monitoring would continue with regards to 20mph limits including; research with neighbouring local authorities on variations on policies in line with the DfT guidance, seeking police views, monitoring the success of recently installed 20mph limits in Haddenham and the 2015 five year signed only 20mph pilot scheme trial at Ascott.

In response to questions the following points were noted:

- It was requested the speed data from Hadenham and Ascott be provided to the committee at a future meeting.
- Regarding the Haddenham scheme the speed was monitored just before implementation of the 20mph limit and the second was measured recently. It was noted that the measurements had been requested to provide information on where speeding was closer to 20mph and not above 24mph.
- With regards to reduction in speed limits from 60mph to 40mph it was confirmed that the police could enforced 40mph but they did not enforce 20mph limits.
- If local members would like to investigate or implement 20mph schemes in an area these would be investigated, however there was no council policy as previously explained.
- A member noted 20mph limits around primary and secondary schools would be investigated in their area and a survey would be brought to local communities and residents.
- Individuals should limit their speeds and this was a challenge. The police had limited resources and catch offenders when possible.
- It was noted that the work could be undertaken with residents, local communities and councillors in areas where 20mph could be implemented. These schemes would need to be generated and funded locally.

The Chairman thanked Nick for the update.

**10 WORK PROGRAMME**

The draft work programme was noted and confirmed. Regarding the Transport Infrastructure – External Providers item, the Chairman explained that he would write to members ahead of the meeting in November regarding this matter.

**11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would take place on Thursday 12 November 2020 at 10am. It was expected that this meeting would be via MS Teams.

The Chairman thanked members for their input and conduct at the meeting.