



# Buckinghamshire Council

## Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee

### Minutes

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 11 JUNE 2020 IN VIRTUAL MEETING VIA MS TEAMS, COMMENCING AT 10.05 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.35 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, R Barker, B Chapple OBE, Mr M Dickman, D Martin, N Naylor, R Smith, I Thompson and S Turnbull

#### **Agenda Item**

##### **1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

The Clerk to the Committee requested nominations for the position of Chairman.

Councillor Peter Strachan proposed Councillor Steven Broadbent for the position of Chairman, this was seconded by Councillor Carl Jackson.

There were no other nominations.

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor Steven Broadbent be elected as Chairman of the Transport, Environment and Climate Change Select Committee for the ensuing year.

##### **2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman proposed that Councillor Sandra Jenkins be appointed as Vice-Chairman, this was seconded by Councillor Andrew Cole.

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor Sandra Jenkins be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Transport Environment & Climate Change Select Committee for the ensuing year.

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

There were no apologies for absence.

##### **4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## 5 COVID 19 UPDATE

Mr B Chapple, Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change, took Members through the presentation which was contained in the agenda pack. The following main points were made during the presentation:

- Waste services had been most effected by the pandemic.
- Staff had been absent due to illness or self-isolation and childcare. Up to 30% of staff had not been in work.
- Major effect of the pandemic was the closure of the household waste and recycling centres as per the government guidelines.
- To prepare for opening car parking spaces were removed, and signage and traffic management systems put in place to prepare for queues.
- Five sites had been reopened on the 6<sup>th</sup> May, then after three weeks four other sites were opened; now all sites were open. There had been 90,000 visits which was 20% down on the usual amount of people.
- As there were only half the parking spaces there had been queues however people in general had been patient. Proof of identity had been required so that only residents of Buckinghamshire could use the sites.
- Social distancing procedures were put in place across the sites.
- Garden waste had been suspended for seven weeks across the county.
- Food waste had been suspended in some areas for five weeks.
- The Cabinet Member praised staff for all of their work during this difficult time.
- Trailers were not allowed at the sites but everyone else were able to use the facilities from 9-6pm.
- Trade waste would be allowed from 15 June.

In response to questions the following main points were noted:

- Comments from residents were that staff were professional and courteous and thanks was given to the teams.
- Regarding fly tipping it was noted that all counties in the country were effected. Buckinghamshire was one of the best with 1 in 38 caught and taken to court. It was noted that the national figure for this was 1 in 638. Due to staff shortages it had been more difficult to collect fly tipping. Most was due to commercial waste and work was being undertaken to improve legislation.
- Takeaway boxes could be a problem regarding littering and officers were looking into adding the registration to the packaging. However this would need government help and support from companies to carry out.
- Concern was raised regarding traffic management and long queues at some sites. It was reported that an alternative site at Buckingham had been considered, and closure of the current site but this was not an option. A booking system had also been considered to reduce the number of people using the site but this would have created larger queues at later date.
- To keep up with the government guidelines and inform the public the website was kept up to date, waiting times at sites were displayed on the website. It was understood there would be queues and people were being asked to be patient.
- Some staff had been redirected to other roles and officers were praised for dealing with all aspects required of them.
- Refuse collection had been well managed however it was suggested that messaging could have been clearer.

- It was requested that charging a deposit on fast food containers be investigated. The Cabinet Member confirmed he was happy to investigate any suggestions via email from Members.
- Rules regarding social distancing on site were adhered to stringently with staff and the public. Staff did not help people physically with their waste and charging was made contactless. It was depended on government guidelines regarding future rules if there was a second wave and services would be kept open if possible.
- Cardboard waste had increased and household waste sites were open for public to use to get rid of cardboard. There were no figures available yet regarding food waste. The Chairman requested that the Committee be provided with a financial analysis in the future.
- Regarding recycling rates it was confirmed that these were around 56% across the county with a target of 60% before the crisis and there had been an increase in cardboard. Household waste was now over 70% with satisfaction rates at 98%, however not all stats were not yet available.

Mr Nick Naylor, Cabinet Member for Transportation provided information on his presentation. The main points were as follows:

- Some areas had been effected more than others and officers had been assigned to COVID activities.
- Highways maintenance continued as normal. Adjustments had been made for social distancing.
- Pot holes had been repaired and was up a third more than a year ago.
- Urban grass cutting had also increased.
- There were delays on some capital projects due to staffing illness and availability.
- There were also delays on feasibilities studies.
- Some HS2 Ltd activities had been reduced but applications had been received. HS2 Ltd had been not been engaging and there was further work to be undertaken.

In response to questions the main points were noted:

- Members were concerned regarding lack of engagement with HS2 Ltd and residents. There were major works in the Chilterns producing major traffic works which were not coordinated so there were large volumes of traffic. Issues are often ignored and they did not attend meetings. The Cabinet Member confirmed he was attending a meeting with HS2 Ltd and engagement had been reasonable good with parish councillors and councillors. He would pass on comments to HS2 and some councillors affected should be invited to the meeting.
- A member was concerned that HS2 Ltd staff did not adhere to the social distancing rules, and they had continued deforestation during the nesting season. The Cabinet Member confirmed he would take these comments to HS2 LTD.
- Concern was raised regarding the lack of policy on 20mph speed limits by the Council and that there was strong demand from communities for this speed limit in some areas. Mr Naylor confirmed that there was no policy currently for 20mph limits. Evidence did not support that this reduction made a significant difference and the work involved to support the changes in relation to the outcomes would need to be considered. He would work with councillors and communities on schemes if requested. The Chairman confirmed this would be discussed as part of the Committee's work plan. Work would need to be done as part of the overall Travel Plan.
- It was noted that other large projects were also creating issues, such as Crossrail accessing people's gardens without permission and cutting down trees. It was

understood that it was difficult to deal with these type problems and most large projects were legislated by the government.

Mr David Martin, Cabinet Member for Logistics provided his main points alongside his presentation as contained in the agenda pack. These were as follows:

- Regarding home to school transport in addition to 1,300 contracts commissioned there were also seven private suppliers that manage 75 routes. These were paid directly by parents but suppliers provided the service for the council and schools.
- The transport budget was £9.3mln and for home to school transport the budget was £17mln which was part of the education budget. It was noted that 5 years ago this was £19 million and progress had been made in reducing costs.
- Members and parents were advised to look at school transport policy and eligibility criteria on the website on how to apply for transport.
- There was still some uncertainty regarding school transport due to government changing guidelines, school policy regarding opening and parent's choices in travelling to school.
- Adult social care travel had mostly stopped except for important visits and appointments.
- The Council provided 75,000 concessionary bus passes, officers dealt with 2000 renewals per month and council tax payers support 60,000 journeys on buses.
- The Council also managed a fleet of 200 vehicles.
- At the date of the meeting 383 children had been provided with school transport and 266 children with special education needs. 78 key worker children had taken up the offer of transport to school.
- It was noted that two groups of suppliers were being provided with financial support. If not the companies could fold and then in September large amounts of children would not be able to get to school.
- Following the Government's announcement regarding some children returning to schools, there had been a number of applications for assisted transport. Officers had worked over the weekend so that transport would be provided on the Monday for those who had successfully applied.
- Regarding the 84 car parks the usual annual income of £12mln per annum had stopped. Since 27 March free parking has been provided in all car parks and on street paid parking. There has been no enforcement for illegal parking on single lines or restricted bays, to assist key workers. As of Monday 15 June enforcement would be reinstated, however free parking would continue in car parks and paid street parking, this would be reviewed by Cabinet at a later date.
- Income lost for on street parking was noted as just over £2mln over 2 months.
- Regarding inconsiderate parking at parks and beauty spots this had increased significantly due to government announcements and some areas had been overwhelmed, such as Dorney Park. As a consequence 20 roads had been provided with temporary parking restrictions, which would then be replaced by temporary urban clearway restrictions which were both enforced by officers.

In response to Member questions the following main points were noted:

- Planning to have a complete return to school in September and there were a number of issues around this regarding home to school transport for children that needed to be considered.
- Payments to suppliers for home to school transport had been retained so transport can be resumed immediately if needed.
- There was concern that advantages regarding free car parking could not be advertised by

local businesses as there was risk that this decision could be changed at any moment. It was noted that the council supported local business but parking would have to be managed and the lead in time for payments to commence will be considered by Cabinet.

- The Council has provided guidance regarding facemasks on transport. It was impossible to achieve social distancing on school transport, guidance to parents had been provided to avoid all public transport to drive, walk or cycle when possible.
- Guidance from the Council had been provided to residents regarding wearing facemasks on public transport and parents were encouraged to wear masks but children were not required to wear them.
- There were no plans to change any routes for rural bus services and financial support for rural bus routes would continue.
- There was a rigorous inspection regime on the bus fleet to make sure they were fit for purpose.
- It was suggested by a member that Cabinet members and officers should wear facemasks and to promote the use of cotton masks rather than disposal masks.

The Chairman thanked the members and officers for their presentations, questions and responses.

## **6 KEY PRIORITIES FOR 2020/21**

Mr Bill Chapple, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change highlighted the following priorities:

- Regarding climate change, work was being undertaken towards the Council being carbon neutral. Work was also being undertaken on the Carbon Audit based on 2018/2019 figures. Tree planting areas were being considered and a review of the agricultural policy.
- Household recycling centres would be reviewed and funding would be sought from the Capital Programme to upgrade some sites.
- The new Household Waste Contract would commence on 7 September and this was expected to be a seamless transition between the old and new contractor. Residents should not notice a difference initially but improvements would be made gradually.

In response to questions the following points were noted:

- The agreed Carbon Neutral date was 2050, any new date would need to be discussed and taken to a full Council meeting. Work would need to be undertaken first on the Carbon Audit with results to Cabinet and then to Council, there was no timescale available as yet.
- Regarding the COVID 19 crisis, work would be undertaken with regards to advantages regarding changes to working practices, supporting businesses, travelling, and cleaner air would be investigated to contribute to climate targets.
- Work was required on the Agricultural Policy due to government legislation.
- The Council aimed to be carbon neutral by 2050. Investment and work would be required for all of Buckinghamshire to reach this target.
- LED lighting for street lighting was suggested as well as solar panels on council buildings and change council and contractor vehicles to electric powered or compressed natural gas. It was noted that there would be cost implications and the Cabinet Member would consider all points made by members.

Mr Nick Naylor, Cabinet Member for Transportation highlighted the following priorities:

- Additional finance from the Government had been received for potholes, drains and road maintenance works and these were being undertaken to improve the roads in the County.
- The Highways Contract re procurement would be undertaken which would involve a large volume of work and time.
- Consideration was being given to improve services follow the COVID 19 crisis and it was understood that many changes could be made as a result of the crisis.
- In response to a query regarding the Highways Contract it was suggested that the Select Committee could support the work being undertaken. The timetable would confirmed within the next 6 months and the Committee would be able to contribute to the process.

In response to questions the following was noted:

- A first stage bid for funds from the Secretary of State for active transport projects such footways and cycle ways had been submitted. The timetable had not yet been confirmed and long term projects at the second stage would be considered. The money would be used effectively and efficiently.
- Consideration would be given to the types of vehicles using roads and reducing emissions with regards road maintenance objectives. Details would be discussed with officers regarding this issue.
- The Road Maintenance Programme could be circulated if required. It was noted weekly bulletin was issued outlining the works being undertaken.

Mr David Martin, Cabinet Member for Logistics highlighted the following priorities:

- Regarding home to school transport future costs and improvements would need to be considered.
- The process to bring the previous five parking authorities together was being undertaken to bring teams together. An interim manager of for off street parking had been appointed.
- Work would be undertaken to create a countywide parking policy, members were asked to volunteer to sit on councillor working groups to support the work.

In response to a question the following was noted:

- Mr Martin confirmed there would be a countywide parking strategy and this would inform and assist parking behaviours and would reflect the needs in local areas. There would be local consultation and with public and members to support the work.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Members and officers for attending the meeting.

## **7 WORK PROGRAMME**

Members of the committee discussed ideas for the work programme and made the following suggestions:

- A number of public questions and suggestions had been received and noted by the Committee.
- Home to School Transport –The Chairman suggested a quick review in partnership with the Children’s and Education Select Committee regarding home to school transport ahead of September.
- Travel Plan and consideration of 20mph zones.
- Transport for Bucks re-procurement.

- Climate Change emergency plans and the Carbon Audit.
- HS2 Ltd – Specifically considering flood mapping for the Chiltern run off.
- Garden Town Plan Update – It was noted an update had been provided to Cabinet at their meeting in June.
- Fly tipping update regarding enforcement.

The Chairman noted that work programme items should add value for residents and the council. Also, that time and resources would need to be considered to achieve best value for residents.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

## **8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would take place on 17 September 2020 at 10am.

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