



Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee held on Thursday 11 March 2021 in Via MS Teams, commencing at 10.10 am and concluding at 1.04 pm.

Members present

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

Others in attendance

J Durkan, S Bambrick, B Chapple OBE, Mr M Dickman, D Martin, N Naylor, S Turnbull, D Carroll and M Winn

Agenda Item

1 Apologies for Absence

The start of the meeting was delayed by ten minutes due to technical difficulties.

There were no apologies for the meeting.

2 Declarations of Interest

Cllr G Hall declared an interest as a member of the panel looking at the future of the highways contract.

Cllr S Broadbent declared an interest in Item 7 as a member of Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Cllr P Martin updated that following the last meeting, HS2 Ltd had sent him a letter and detailed traffic information. It was understood that traffic information was being updated further and a copy of this had been requested from HS2 Ltd.

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2021 were agreed as a correct

record.

4 Public Questions

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

5 Chairmans Update

The Chairman updated that an overview report had been produced which outlined the Committee's previous work and future work programme. This would be discussed later in the meeting.

6 Climate Change Air Quality Strategy

The Chairman invited Cllr B Chapple, Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change, to introduce the report to the Select Committee. The Cabinet Member was also joined by Ed Barlow, Energy and Climate Change Manager. The Council wanted to achieve net zero as soon as practicable but by no later than 2050; interim targets are for at least a 75% carbon reduction by 2030 and at least 90% reduction by 2040. The strategy contains 60 actions to reduce both the council's emissions and those across Buckinghamshire. It was noted that the Government's national plans would also reduce carbon emissions which include new homes not having gas boilers installed by 2025 and neither new petrol nor diesel vehicles purchasable from 2030. The Cabinet Member highlighted the next steps that were detailed in the report.

Central to the strategy was that the Council had different roles in addressing climate change. These roles were:

- i. Direct control: reduce emissions, for instance by installing renewable energy systems (e.g. solar panels).
- ii. Financial/Regulator: influences included using local planning powers to reduce emissions from new developments.
- iii. Enabling change: enable others to reduce emissions such as active travel plans and providing electric vehicle charging point infrastructure.
- iv. Inform & influence: raise public awareness of climate change and air quality.

The Council was addressing its emission sources by identifying and implementing renewable energy and energy efficiency measures across the operational estate. The fleet would be addressed as vehicles approached replacement and low carbon alternatives would be considered. There were a number of actions to address non-council emissions in Buckinghamshire. Of note was the approach to work with communities to identify and support local ambition to address climate change. The tree planting programme would last ten years and involved the planting of 543,000 trees across over 200 hectares of land. One hectare would then absorb 300-400 tonnes of CO₂ after 30 years. The scheme also had the added benefit of increased biodiversity, flood alleviation and amenity access for residents. Funds would be set aside for the trees to be maintained. It was estimated that the programme would

absorb around 1,500 tonnes per year by 2050. An outline capital programme was in the report which contained measures to reduce emissions. Building measures focused on LED upgrades in buildings, renewables on suitable roofs and improvements to heating systems. Solar car ports were planned which involved the installation of solar panels over open air car parks to provide shade to parked cars whilst generating renewable electricity. Engagement with Community Boards was ongoing, and there was planned engagement with schools after the local elections.

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

- £5m is available in the Climate Change Fund however if more funds became available then consideration would be given on how it would be spent.
- The Council was limited on asking developers to plant more trees on sites due to the current local plans. Instead, the Council was considering where else trees could be planted. There had been a recent agreement with Highways that any tree they removed would be replaced.
- One Member felt that the strategy needed more tangible and substantive actions to meet the 75% reduction target by 2030. The Cabinet Member advised that the strategy had been costed and did intend to meet the target.
- The Council was aware of the difference in carbon production in the manufacturing of electric vehicles compared to combustion engine vehicles. Electric vehicles would only be used if they were suitable for the Council's operational purpose. It was expected that the carbon impact of electric vehicles would reduce once their production became more efficient. There would also be value in used electric vehicle batteries to support the electricity grid as part of the balancing mechanism.
- Two Members had attended recent Community Board subgroup meetings where the Cabinet Member attended to discuss local need.
- Tree planting had focused on Council land for process simplicity and 20 sites had been identified. Planting would commence in the next tree planting season which was between December 2021 – March 2022. The Forestry Commission had been consulted to calculate the right level of planting. The right trees would be planted in the right places to assist with carbon absorption, flood management and biodiversity.
- Residents could be encouraged to plant trees in their own gardens however this may not be a suitable long-term solution as the trees needed to reach maturity for higher carbon absorption rates.
- One Member commended the spacing that would be used in the tree planting scheme which meant that the trees would mature.
- The alternative to using the energy from waste site at Greatmoore for residual waste was utilising landfill. Usage of the site enabled less than 1% of waste to go to landfill. The emissions from Greatmoore was a by-product of the generated energy which was enough to power 40,000 households. The development of carbon capture technology would be monitored with the potential to install this at Greatmoore by 2050.
- Following the carbon audit, the strategy did outline Council emission sources using tonnes per year and percentage of total as metrics.

- There would be annual reporting on the strategy to monitor it and it was expected to be seriously reviewed every five years due to technological advancements.
- Technical advice notes could be used to encourage developers to plant more trees and consider energy efficiency as planning policy could not be changed at this stage. These advice notes may be introduced within the next year. The Council was also considering further use of supplementary planning documents (SPDs) to expand policies within the local plan, with one recently being used in Princes Risborough. It would be investigated whether or not technical advice notes counted as a material consideration in planning.

Action: Mr Ed Barlow

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and Ed Barlow for attending, and expected that a strategy update would come to the Select Committee in future.

7 Opportunities for Cycling and Pedestrians

As this item had cross-cutting themes, the Chairman welcomed the Chairman, Cllr D Carroll, and Vice-Chairman, Cllr M Winn, of the Growth, Housing and Infrastructure Select Committee to the meeting. Cllr C Harriss, Cabinet Member for Sports and Leisure, introduced the report to the Committee. Active travel referred to using sustainable modes of travel such as walking and cycling, and also included scooting and running. If these active methods were to become a first choice for every day trips, they needed to be safe, attractive and easy to use. One of the benefits of active travel was that it improved the physical and mental health of users, and addressed physical inactivity which was a growing health problem in the UK. Active travel would also improve air quality in Buckinghamshire.

Recent successes were outlined which included the delivery of new walking and cycle routes (Waddesdon Greenway, A4 Taplow Cycleway and A413 Buckingham-Winslow Cycleway). Temporary 'pop-up' trial schemes had also taken place as part of the Emergency Active Travel Fund, and, in partnership with Chiltern Railways, high quality cycle parking had been installed at Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Princes Risborough railway stations. The Cabinet Member highlighted in the report the opportunities and challenges for Active Travel in Buckinghamshire. The Council would be developing a Council wide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan to identify and assess strategic and aspirational walking and cycling schemes through local engagement. New standards would need to be adopted following the Department for Transport's "Gear Change: A Bold Vision for Cycling and Walking" and supporting Local Transport Note 1/20.

In responses to questions the following points were noted:

- The proposed cycleway between Pine Trees and the Handy Cross Hub was being reconsidered and had the potential to extend to Hughenden Valley.
- Proposals for on road active travel provision would need to be appropriate whilst off road provisions needed to be joint up.
- Shift workers had been regular users of the new scooter scheme. The scooters

had their speeds restricted and would become deactivated in pedestrianized areas.

- Short term schemes and pilots had received feedback from residents and members following their implementation.
- 54 schools were signed up to active travel plans and the Council encouraged the school travel planning Walk Once a Week (WOW) scheme. Officers would investigate this further and encourage school participation further.

Action: Ms S Winkels

- The Greenway connecting Wendover and Great Missenden was scheduled to open this year. Funding had been applied for to extend this route past Great Missenden and its feasibility was being investigated.
- Transport planning initially tried to reduce the need for travel. The next step was then to make active travel a first choice such as through the walking to school plan. There were currently more opportunities for increased walking in Buckinghamshire rather than cycling.
- As part of the Aylesbury Garden Town project, a delegation from the Netherlands visited Aylesbury in 2018 to review overall cycling provision and suggest improvements for linking schemes together. Connecting of schemes was important to reduce the reliance on cars. Community Boards also had a role to play in highlighting local disconnects.
- There was an aspiration to link Dinton, Cuddington and Ford together via cycleways and footpaths that required cooperation from land owners.
- Any members with specific concerns or proposals were encouraged to raise these separately with the Cabinet Member.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for the report and their attendance.

8 School Transport Update

The Chairman welcomed Cllr D Martin, Cabinet Member for Logistics, Sara Turnbull, Service Director for Transport, and Neil Beswick, Head of Client Transport, to the meeting. The Cabinet Member updated that the return of children to schools in March 2021 had progressed well. During the lockdown, the service had continued operating to provide support for eligible children that were still attending school. A detailed process on obtaining transport requirements from schools had been developed to ensure transport was provided to all eligible students if needed. The service had improved its communications to parents, carers, schools and operators with the use of clear and consistent messaging. There had also been changes to online forms and back office procedures. Improvements to compliance had been made with robust assurance processes in place (particularly for SEND pupils), an annual audit of suppliers and regular spot checks of taxis at schools to ensure that vehicle standards were being maintained. The first phase of tendering had been completed with new contracts live for students attending all PRUs and post-16 SEND colleges.

There were three areas highlighted in the next steps. The first was the introduction of new service software which would integrate with education, therefore improving

information access and the parental journey. Secondly was the introduction of personal transport budgets for SEND students which would empower parents to have greater choice, control and flexibility. Thirdly, the Spare Seat Scheme was changing whereby parents would be able to apply for seats on specific buses where space was available. This would be implemented by September 2021 and make the application process clearer by quantifying how many seats were available at the point of application.

The following points were raised in the discussion by the Committee:

- Information and guidance about the Spare Seat Scheme would be on the Council's website in April. The scheme was part of the Home to School Transport Policy update going to Cabinet on 30 March. If there were more applications than seats then prioritization would be given, for instance based on seat renewal, siblings, children with SEND or looked after by the Council.
- All tenders stipulated that suppliers needed to meet current regulations that were in place. This would include the wheelchair accessibility of coaches if the Government passed this regulation as it was down to operators to ensure their fleets were compliant.
- Safe walking routes from home to school were suitable alternatives to supplying transport however this would require capital spend. One Member commented that increased school provision in development areas would increase local capacities and therefore lessen the need for transport to schools further away.
- Taking children to school was a parental responsibility and the Council only had a statutory responsibility for eligible children.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their attendance and for the work they had carried out to date.

9 Fly Tipping Update

The Chairman welcomed Cllr B Chapple, Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change, and Gary Slee, Enforcement Team Leader, to the item. Fly tipping had increased during the pandemic period with the Council noting that over 50% of dumped waste had been brought in from outside Buckinghamshire and often originated from Slough or London. More than 60% of this waste had been from commercial waste carriers. This pattern was similar nationally. The Cabinet Member had asked officers to investigate the use of new cameras that were able to capture the details of vehicles that had had rubbish and cigarettes thrown from them. The Cabinet Member invited questions and comments on the update from the Committee.

Discussion from the Committee was on the following themes:

- The feasibility of the new style cameras was being investigated, budgetary considerations would be looked at once this was done.
- The maximum amount that could be fined from a fixed penalty notice (FPN) was £400. The Council had a zero tolerance approach so FPNs were only used for

small scale offences if appropriate. Funds from FPNs went to the Council and were reinvested into the service. On average, one FPN per week had been issued since August 2020. Non-payments were chased and may lead to court proceedings. There was ongoing lobbying with Buckinghamshire MPs to strengthen enforcement powers for local authorities.

- Charges for household recycling were introduced in April 2019 for budgetary reasons. Fly tipping was evident all over the country even where household recycling centres were free of charge.
- There was no specific trade that fly tipped more than others.
- Buckinghamshire Council had close working relationships with neighbouring authorities to combat fly tipping. A recent enforcement case, which resulted in a prosecution and the crushing of vehicles, had involved working with Slough Borough Council. Officers were looking to broaden the prevention campaign by working with Hertfordshire County Council, and were trying to influence more London authorities and DEFRA to bring in measures to reduce the flow of waste into Buckinghamshire.
- The service had continued working throughout the pandemic. Officers had carried on fulfilling the policy and had been suitably equipped to investigate and search through fly tipped waste as normal.
- The Government had planned to introduce a paper in 2022-23 regarding littering of fast food packaging and how the industry needed to assist. The issue also lay with individuals disposing fast food boxes inappropriately. A day of action was planned to approach fast food establishments and encourage their participation in keeping surrounding areas free of litter.
- One Member suggested the development of a Parish Council toolkit to assist Buckinghamshire Council in fly tipping issues; the Cabinet Member saw merit in this idea.
- Evidence submitted by the public of fly tipping was done anonymously and if court action was required then officers discussed this in detail with potential witnesses.
- One Member highlighted the importance of educating perpetrators on fly tipping.
- Specific fly tipping concerns or suggestions on tackling site hot spots could be emailed to separately to the Cabinet Member for referral.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and officer for the update and their attendance.

10 TECC Work Overview for 2020/21

As this was the last meeting of the Select Committee before the elections in May, the Chairman had requested that the Members receive a summary of work they had carried out this year and a record of what the Committee had considered for future work programme items. The Chairman invited Members to email him and the Senior Scrutiny Officer any further work programme items idea that could be considered by the Committee when it next meets after the election.

The Chairman thanked all Members for their contributions throughout the year.

