



# Buckinghamshire Council

## Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee

### Minutes

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2022 IN THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY HP19 8FF, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.04 PM**

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

B Chapple OBE, R Carington, P Brazier, M Caffrey, M Collins, C Cornell, E Culverhouse, S Guy, A Poland-Goodyer, M Rand, L Sullivan, D Watson, W Whyte and S Wilson

#### **OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE**

S Broadbent, J Jordan, R Stuchbury, S Bambrick, R Barker, E Barlow, A Beckett, C Platts, L Vallis, C Ward and R Zierler

#### **Agenda Item**

##### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors E Culverhouse, E Gemmell, D King, G Williams and A Wood. Councillor S Wilson had substituted in for Councillor E Gemmell.

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

Councillor W Whyte declared a personal interest in Item 6 as the founder of the Bucks EVs Electric Car Club.

##### **3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2022 were confirmed as an accurate record.

##### **4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Four public questions were considered at the meeting as attached to the agenda, and verbal responses were provided by the Cabinet Member for Transport and the Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment. The questions and the responses are appended to the minutes.

##### **5 CLIMATE CHANGE & AIR QUALITY STRATEGY: ANNUAL REVIEW**

The Chairman welcomed the Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor J Jordan, to the meeting and invited her to present the report to the Committee. The Deputy Cabinet Member outlined the Council's important role in controlling and reducing its emissions, and that all the Cabinet Member portfolios were engaged in this process. The Council also had an

influencing role over its subcontractors and communities.

Compared to the 1990 baseline, the Council had reduced its carbon output by 70% and in 2021/22, the Council was responsible for 6,095 tonnes of greenhouse gas. The Council was on track towards its target of reducing its emissions by 75% by 2030. The Deputy Cabinet Member highlighted a number of Council actions and initiatives and outlined the success of the team in securing £10.3m funding from grant sources to progress initiatives.

The following points were noted during the Select Committee discussion:

- Although the Council was closing in on its 75% reduction in emissions by 2030, the progress on this could vary year to year, for instance by an excessively cold winter. To reach 100% by 2030 would require significant acceleration of expenditure.
- Funding of £7.4m that had been secured was split across three programmes:
  - Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme (GHGLAD) 1b – this completed earlier in 2022.
  - GHGLAD 2 – this completed in September 2022. The confirmed number of retrofits was being calculated.
  - Sustainable Warmth – currently active until March 2023.
- As per Government guidance on third parties, Veolia had not been included in the council's carbon emission calculations as they reported their own figures to national Government.
- Grant funding from Defra to create air quality toolkits for Community Boards would assist tackling the issue of engine idling in problematic areas. The toolkits would help by raising awareness of air quality locally and include an air quality sensor to record air pollution levels. Additionally, the service was able to assist with queries on any potential local schemes via [climatechange@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:climatechange@buckinghamshire.gov.uk) to ensure local organisations worked efficiently.
- Consideration would be given on how to maximise Member turnout of future education programmes planned by the service. Members agreed the importance of this and suggestions from the Select Committee included day and evening events as well as the possibility to make the sessions mandatory.
- The council's target and carbon budget were based on a carbon audit baseline that had been carried out during the council's unitary formulation to calculate the legacy councils' emissions. The target and budget needed to balance the need to be timely and deliverable with calculations taking into account assumptions on council buildings, the fleet and the tree planting programme. The Council followed the Government approach of having multi-year carbon budgets to take into account annual fluctuation.
- The Pension Fund Committee was best placed to consider and influence the environmental impact of investment funds.
- The Council engaged with Highways England regarding fund streams available on the strategic road network and both organisations wanted to reach net-zero by 2050. The Council was a consultee on upcoming schemes at Bisham Roundabout and Handy Cross which aimed to improve flow and ease congestion.

The Chairman thanked the Deputy Cabinet Member and the officers for the annual report and acknowledged the work that had been carried out under the Strategy.

## **6 ELECTRIC VEHICLE ACTION PLAN**

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Transport, Councillor S Broadbent, to the meeting and invited him to introduce the report. Before doing so, the Cabinet Member updated that, subject to contractual confirmation, the Council had received a provisional award in full for

its bid to install 128 charging bays. This would be a significant boost for the county's infrastructure. The Cabinet Member also reiterated that the Council had budgeted £800,000 to top-up Government funding on EV charging where necessary. The council's second bid would be focused on assisting Town and Parish Councils access charging points in publicly accessible car parks or spaces.

The Cabinet Member highlighted that under the new highways procurement, Balfour Beatty Living Places, as Buckinghamshire Highways, would have smaller EVs and EV chargers in depots by the end of the first year. Further opportunities for fleet electrification would be considered in future.

The following points were noted during the Select Committee's discussion:

- The Cabinet Member welcomed the suggestion that the team speak with Coldharbour Parish regarding its Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) Project which combined street lighting with on street charging.
- Various Members expressed concerns with the performance of BP Pulse particularly when compared to other providers. The Cabinet Member advised that the contract had been awarded based on a procurement exercise where providers had bid against the council's criteria. The Council had an improved relationship with BP Pulse and its service level agreement covered incident severity and response times which ranged between four hours and seven days. There was an overall agreement that 95% of the network would be working at all times. One Member's comment regarding issues with BP Pulse's Radio Frequency Identify Card (RFID) would be investigated.
- The wireless charging trial had been a Department for Transport (DfT) scheme in conjunction with the Council that had now ceased. The Council was awaiting the data from the Open University which would be available to TECC.
- Pavement channels required numerous considerations which included best practice, legal restrictions, parking and maintenance schedules.
- Plans for EV chargers at the Wycombe office car park would be investigated outside the meeting.

**Action: R. Zierler**

- Members reiterated the importance of ensuring the right charger was in the right place and took dwell time into account. Policy work was underway on parking reviews to consider where improvements were needed to better reflect dwell time and EV chargers. This policy would also consider aspects of enforcement to ensure a turnover of EV users.
- Power grid connections provided by Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) were proving challenging, with one quotation for installation being in excess of £50,000. Consideration of sites took into account potential DNO connection costs.
- The service was investigating contingencies for increased demand which included discussions with England's Economic Heartland.
- Car park viability was based on a threshold capacity of over 40 spaces as EV chargers took up around eight spaces. Beaconsfield featured in a number of potential locations due to the Council having large enough assets in the town and being densely populated. The Cabinet Member encouraged Town and Parish Councils with ownership of car parks to come forward for consideration in ORCS bid, 2 which would enable a greater spread of coverage, and advised that the service could help Town and Parish Councils with their own bids to Government. The Chairman noted that Members should relay this to their respective Community Boards.

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

## 7 SCHOOL TRANSPORT

The Cabinet Member introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- School Transport was subject to inflationary pressures from suppliers.
- The service was currently carrying out a three-year service review with re-procurements intended for financial and service efficiency.
- There had been an increase of 700 mainstream pupils and an additional 750 new SEND pupils in September 2022.
- The take-up of Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs) had been successful.
- A public consultation was in progress on the Spare Seats scheme which aimed to simplify the charging structure for customers.

The following points were made during the Select Committee discussion:

- The Cabinet Member was aware of recent correspondence regarding concerns of a bus service run by Carousel between The Chalfonts and Amersham and would be answered outside the meeting.
- SEND transport was protected under statutory provision so would continue to be delivered despite demand pressures. The Cabinet Member asked any specific cases of concern be referred to the service.
- Home to school transport and SEND transport were both funded by general council funding. PTBs required a needs assessment and agreement with parents where it was financially sensible and suitable for the child. The council's website contained clear, transparent guidance on PTBs; one example of PTB usage was hiring a child minder to monitor siblings whilst a parent took another child to school. PTB funding was only during term time and could be flexible to include micromobility measures, such as electric bikes or e-scooters, where appropriate.
- One Member commended the improvements in the service and the recent briefing on the spare seat scheme.
- To tackle emissions, the contracts for School Transport required suppliers to upgrade towards cleaner vehicles. The majority of buses needed to be Euro5 by September 2023. All new contracts for smaller vehicles, such as taxis and minibuses, in September 2022 needed to be Euro6. This policy was dovetailed with policies in taxi licensing which had requirements for newer Euro5 and Euro6.
- Further information regarding the benchmark category for a low-income family, the percentage that met this threshold out of the 7,850 pupils and the increase of this percentage would be investigated and provided outside the meeting. The Cabinet Member advised that this was complex and that people could be eligible across different criteria.

**Action: L. Vallis / C. Platts**

The Chairman thanked Members for their discussions, and the Cabinet Member and officers for their recent Home to School Transport briefing.

## 8 INQUIRY REPORT: POLLUTION IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE'S RIVERS AND CHALK STREAMS

The Chairman invited the Chairman of the Inquiry Group, Councillor R Carington, to introduce the report to the Select Committee. In his introduction, the Chairman of the Inquiry Group outlined the inquiry process timeline and the organisations that had been involved. The Chairman thanked the Group Members, officers, the scrutiny officer and external organisations for their input throughout the inquiry. Highlights of the recommendations in the report included the need for further investment by the water companies in Buckinghamshire, what the Council

could do to influence water quality and improvements required by the Environment Agency (EA).

The Chairman invited Councillor R Stuchbury to ask his pre-submitted questions which were as follows:

- i. *Has work begun to expand the Chesham Sewage Treatment Works and do we know its progress? Did the Inquiry hear of this as part of the report?*
- ii. *Will the same efforts that have been applied in the Chess catchment area be applied in the Thames and Great River Ouse areas?*
- iii. *Will the report be highlighted to the Buckinghamshire MPs in light of the legislation passed in Parliament in 2021?*

In response, the Chairman of the Inquiry Group, Councillor R Carington, answered as follows:

- i. The inquiry heard about progress at the Chesham Sewage Treatment Works from Thames Water when they attended a meeting in person as part of the evidence gathering. The site needed to increase its Flow to Full Treatment by March 2025, and Thames Water planned to deliver this scheme in 2023 to benefit the environment and resolve spills into the River Chess. Thames Water advised that the scheme would deliver an increased treatment capacity from 240 litres per second to 353 litres per second.
- ii. The Chess catchment had an active partnership that was selected by Thames Water to be one of three Smarter Water Catchment Programmes in their area. The inquiry group recognised the benefit of this programme and its report recommended that the Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change lobbied the water companies to invest in other programmes in the county.
- iii. It was intended that the report would be circulated to Buckinghamshire MPs in due course.

Members of the Select Committee considered the report and noted that:

- Engagement from the water companies, Thames Water and Anglian Water, had been positive and it was hoped the relationships could be maintained.
- Disappointment was expressed regarding the EA not attending a meeting either virtually or in person. One Member was encouraged to share his ward experience of a lack of EA engagement with the Leader as part of the linked recommendation in the inquiry report.
- Gully emptying was an important activity that needed to continue.
- It was suggested that the report be shared to the creator of a petition that the Council received that ran between November – December 2021.

**Action: C Ward**

- The report would be presented to Cabinet on Tuesday 15 November.

The Select Committee Chairman thanked his Vice-Chairman for leading on the report and thanked all Members of the Inquiry Group for their work.

## 9 WORK PROGRAMME

One Member raised that when HS2 attended Select Committee, an undertaking had been given that a Bailey bridge would be used over the A418. It was reported that this was now not being done due to costs and instead traffic lights would be used on the A418 for construction and staff traffic which would impact Aylesbury and Stone and be compounded by closures of the Marsh Lane crossing and Blackthorn Road at the same time. Concern was expressed over upcoming HS2 plans that may deviate from their original plans with the Council.

**10**     **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**  
Thursday 2 February 2023 at 10am.