



Buckinghamshire Council

Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee

Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 2 FEBRUARY 2023 IN THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY HP19 8FF, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.30 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

B Chapple OBE, R Carington, P Brazier, M Caffrey, M Collins, P Cooper, C Cornell, E Culverhouse, E Gemmell, M Rand, L Sullivan, D Watson and A Wood

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

S Broadbent, G Williams, D King and P Martin

Agenda Item

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors M Knight and A Poland-Goodyer. Councillor P Cooper had substituted in for Councillor A Poland-Goodyer.

Councillor M Knight had replaced Councillor S Guy as a Member of the Committee.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S Broadbent declared a personal interest in Item 5 as the Chairman of the East West Main Line Partnership.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2022 were confirmed as an accurate record.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Two 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 Cabinet Member for Environment. The questions and the responses are appended to the minutes.

5 EAST WEST RAIL

The Chairman welcomed Mark Cuzner (East West Rail Alliance) and Peter Hume (Network Rail) to the meeting and invited the Cabinet Member for Transport, Councillor Steven Broadbent, to introduce the item. The Cabinet Member noted that activities on the project had increased over

the last year which was heavily impacting local communities (e.g. road conditions and closures, and traffic management). A team of officers was in continual dialogue to manage road closure applications and community engagement, and the Council was supporting residents where possible. The work of the Deputy Cabinet Member for Transport, Councillor Peter Martin, was acknowledged as was the work of local Ward Members to support their communities.

The Cabinet Member announced that the Council had secured an agreement with EWR to carry out permanent repairs to 12 roads in the north of the county over the next 12 months. The first road in the programme, Queen Catherine Road, had already been repaired. The Cabinet Member hoped the programme reassured residents and that EWR would effectively communicate the closures required for the repairs to occur. The plans are appended to the minutes.

Prior to the presentation given by East West Rail, Mark Cuzner noted apologies from Jez Baldock and Kate Campbell. The following points were highlighted during the presentation:-

- The Alliance acknowledged the disruption the project caused residents and businesses and apologized for this impact. The Alliance had tried to mitigate the disruption and thanked Members and the community for its engagement.
- The infrastructure ready date was on target for its scheduled delivery of July 2024. Currently, work was underway on Sections 2A and 2B which involved HS2 carrying out the civil works.
- 54% of track laying was complete and materials were brought in via the rail network. Substantial work at Bletchley Station had completed whilst Winslow Station was underway. 9 footbridges (7 in Bucks) had been completed which aimed to reconnect community footpaths over the railway. 5 new bridges (3 in Bucks) were completed and open to traffic.
- The Alliance briefed HGV drivers on routes and expected behaviours (e.g. wheel-washing) in order to alleviate pressures caused by traffic movements to and from EWR compounds. Winter had been particularly challenging. Acoustic barriers had also been installed to protect the community during construction.
- There were three discussion workstreams with HS2 on traffic management which aimed to coordinate road closures and avoid joint-closures.
- EWR's 10% biodiversity net gain commitment required the provision of compensation sites adjacent to the railway. The intention was to minimise removal and protect vegetation where possible. The Alliance worked with Natural England on environmental mitigations and key species e.g. badgers and great crested newts. One example of vegetation retention was a cutting west of Salden Wood Bridge.
- The project considered climate resilience by being built to withstand a 40% rainfall increase and 65-70% river flow increase.
- Upcoming future works had a RAG rating to measure its impact on the community. Notable red items were 'Compound & Temporary Land Reinstatement' and Permanent Highway Repairs & Reinstatements' which would require traffic management and use of HGVs.

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

- Road repairs were carried out by EWR and were inspected by the Council. During the handover process, officers assessed the repair prior to being returned to Highways. The repairs were covered by a defect period of 12 months.
- Members were disappointed to note that mud on the roads was still an issue having been raised last year. The Alliance reiterated the measures in place to monitor and

control the problem (e.g. use of road sweepers) and reassured that areas of concern were followed-up by onsite inspections.

- The Alliance followed design standards for work to bridges and their associated signage. There were historic issues related to Sandhill Road bridge. The completed footbridges were located in rural areas did not have step-free access but did have handrails and tactile paving. The Chairman reminded the Alliance of the importance of accessibility for all Buckinghamshire residents.
- One Member raised concern regarding the height of the Marsh Gibbon railway bridge which was causing problems for local business. EWR advised they had replaced the bridge to the agreed specifications and understood there was a signage issue however the Council was actively challenging this position.
- The Alliance was confident in delivering the project on time however this was subject to the risk of HS2 suffering delays. An example of recent joint work was HS2 handing over the western fringe of an integration area of 3km. EWR did have ability to recover time in its programme if required.
- Members expressed significant concerns regarding the plans for the usage of diesel rolling stock on the line. Members also noted that electrifying the line would likely be more cost-effective during construction rather than retrofitting and requested figures on these estimated costs.

Action: EWR Alliance / Network Rail

- The legacy Buckinghamshire County and Aylesbury Vale District councils had supported the project's initial electrification plans. Network Rail advised that electrifying was de-scoped by Government before consent was granted for the project and that Government policy was to investigate decarbonising options which may use battery, hydrogen, or hybrid technologies in future rather than electricity. However, none of these options would be available until after the line was scheduled to open. Due to commercial sensitivities, an end date for the 'short-term' use of diesel rolling stock could not be provided however Network Rail would share information on this in future once publicly available.

Action: Network Rail

- EWR would also share information regarding the evaluation of different rolling stock options within the timescales which had considered capital outlay vs running costs e.g. engine maintenance and fuel.

Action: EWR Alliance / Network Rail

- The line would be closed daily between 12:30am – 5am for engineering works. The demand for freight, running at one per hour in accordance with the planning permission, would be better understood over the next 12 months when the new timetable would be created. It was estimated each freight train contained around 20 wagons.
- Network Rail viewed the Aylesbury Spur as a priority however it currently did not pass the central Government affordability test. The Cabinet Member for Transport continued working towards achieving the line's link to Aylesbury and all Members reiterated the importance of working together to this goal.
- Buckinghamshire Council held its £15m towards the project and release funds for works in agreement with EWR. One example was funding allocation towards the car park at Winslow which would enable access to the railway.
- Non-statutory consultation had been carried out 18 months ago regarding the line's development between Milton Keynes and Cambridge. Statutory consultation was planned this year with planning permission applications to follow.
- Areas of site access were on the list of reinstatement works but would be carried out last. The Spinney, Winslow, was one such area and aimed to be reinstated later this year.
- The Alliance's biodiversity 10% net gain would be supported by third parties and the supply chain, and currently the project was at parity for vegetation removal vs

replacement due to the number of compensation sites. The Strategy had been shared with the Council and further information on its implementation would be circulated to the Select Committee.

Action: EWR Alliance

- Over 150,000 trees and plants had been planted however Members would be advised of the number of trees lost to the project.

Action: EWR Alliance

- EWR had no requirement to produce an assessment of the project's carbon emissions however work was underway to look at its impact.
- The Cabinet Member for Transport reiterated the importance of the 12 road repairs over the next 12 months to impacted communities and the need to clearly communicate the timetable of works.

The Chairman thanked Mark Cuzner and Peter Hume for their attendance and reiterated the importance of the project's annual attendance at the TECC Select Committee due to its public interest and impact to Buckinghamshire residents. A follow-up letter from the Chairman would be drafted and circulated to members of the Committee.

6 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The Cabinet Member for Transport introduced the report and highlighted the following points:-

- There were 60 schools accredited by Modeshift Stars in Buckinghamshire which made the county the top performing large local authority nationally.
- 28 out of the 95 bus services in Buckinghamshire were entirely supported by the Council.
- By May 2022, passenger numbers had returned to 80% of pre-covid figures.
- The national £2 bus fare cap scheme would cease at the end of March. The Enhanced Partnership was considering replacement schemes to maintain passenger numbers.
- The Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) offer in High Wycombe was performing well with up to 250 journeys taking place daily from between 700-800 'virtual' bus stops.
- There was evidence of repeat DRT use with 20% of users having done so 5+ times. Reviews were vastly positive with most negative reviews referring to wanting greater geographical coverage. This had been fed back to Department for Transport (DfT) who had funded and outlined the DRT area.
- After one year of usage, consideration may be given to developing the offering to cover evenings and weekends.

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

- One Member expressed interest in the High Wycombe DRT scheme being extended to Flackwell Heath and Little Marlow, whilst another Member encouraged a DRT in the Ivers following the trialling of a dial-a-ride scheme and the opening of the Elizabeth Line.
- The DRT scheme in Aylesbury may assist in the rural bus offering once it commenced later in the year.
- It was statutory for the Council to provide a concessionary fare offer which the Council chose to commence from 9am.
- Members considered the overall quality of bus services including engine quality. This would be addressed through the Enhanced Partnership and fleet upgrades in service contracts. Through the Enhanced Partnership, one operator in Ivinghoe would soon be expanding its timetable to include a last bus returning from Cheddington at 7pm.
- The High Wycombe DRT was not used for school buses but children aged 13+ could use the service. The DRT's operating area was based on a bid from 2020 that considered destinations such as the hospital and business parks with the intention of being reliable.

Terriers and Hazlemere had not been included due to this requirement and current usage-data supported this decision. Expanding the service times beyond 7pm or including weekends would need to consider its costs against demand.

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

7 WASTE OPTIONS APPRAISAL & STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Environment introduced the report and advised that this was an update on the Council's activities regarding the waste strategy. Currently waste collection in the north was in-house and outsourced in the south at a total annual operational cost of around £18.2m (£7.2m north, £11m south). The southern waste collection service had improved since last coming to TECC.

All options for the service provision were open and any decision would be subject to the decision-making process and timelines, and would factor in costs, customer experience and the climate change agenda. Clarity was also required on the proposed Government schemes, such as packaging waste and free garden waste, which could add variance to future service provision.

The following points were noted in the Committee's discussion:-

- The Cabinet Member agreed with the principal of a gully clearance being followed by a street sweeper however town centres had a key focus for street sweepers.
- Members noted that satisfaction of residents by the waste collection service may be more important than cost due to the reputational harm of a poor service. The in-house service in the north ran effectively and was highly valued by Members.
- The outsourced Veolia contract had a five-year contract break clause which was being explored as part of the overall options appraisal.
- The Government's scheme regarding producer responsibilities for packaging waste varied between devolved nations e.g. glass would not be included in England. The update from Government on 20 January 2023 was being assessed by Local Authorities who had raised inconsistencies. The commencement of the scheme in England had been delayed until October 2025.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for the report and welcomed a future update on the development of the strategy.

8 WORK PROGRAMME

One Member requested that the Select Committee consider the Cycle Ways Strategy in its future work programme.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 30 March at 10am.