



# Buckinghamshire Council

## Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee

### Minutes

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 30 MARCH 2023 IN THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY HP19 8FF, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 1.00 PM**

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

B Chapple OBE, R Carington, P Brazier, M Caffrey, C Cornell, E Gemmell, M Rand, G Smith, D Watson, W Whyte and A Wood

#### **OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE**

S Broadbent, D King, P Martin, R Newcombe, R Stuchbury, G Williams, S Bambrick, R Barker, R Black, S Browning, B Coakley, K Goad, C Ward and C Williams

#### **Agenda Item**

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

Apologies were received from Councillors M Collins, E Culverhouse, S Guy, A Poland-Goodyer and L Sullivan. Councillor S Guy had been substituted for Councillor G Smith.

Apologies had also been received from Daniel Clancy (EA), Gary Moreira (HS2), Ian Thompson and Dr Laura Leech (Buckinghamshire Council).

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

There were none.

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2023 were confirmed as an accurate record.

Councillor S Broadbent, Cabinet Member for Transport, provided an update to the Committee on Public Transport. Since the last meeting, a trial would commence from 1 April – 1 August 2023 whereby concessionary travel fares would now be applicable before 9am.

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

One public question was considered at the meeting as attached to the agenda and a verbal response was provided by the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment. The question and answer are appended to the minutes.

## 5 HS2

The Chairman welcomed representatives from HS2 Ltd and Matthew Wales from the Environment Agency to the meeting and invited the Cabinet Member for Transport, Councillor S Broadbent, and the Deputy Cabinet Member for Transport, Councillor P Martin to introduce the officer report. The HS2 project continued to have a significant impact in Buckinghamshire and the Council worked to mitigate the project's impact by holding HS2 Ltd to account on its activities. In the last 12 months, there had been a significant increase in works as the project entered the first of its envisaged three-year peak. The Cabinet Member highlighted the project's effect on the Highways asset, notably through diversionary routes and HGV movements which had caused deterioration of roads. The Council had been able to access an annual HS2 pothole fund of £93,000 however it was felt this value was insufficient. Additionally, the Council was required to bid for extra funds for road repairs which had been a protracted process; one example being King's Lane which was unresolved one-year after the Council's bid. Nonetheless, dialogue had improved recently which the Cabinet Member welcomed.

The Cabinet Member highlighted the importance of preventative works to ensure that roads did not deteriorate so that road closures caused by safety concerns could be avoided; a recent example was the five-week closure of Station Road, Quainton, around Christmas 2022. The Cabinet Member was optimistic through his upcoming attendance at a roundtable discussion with Ministers and the Department for Transport in Parliament on 24 April and would continue to reiterate the project's impacts on Buckinghamshire residents and businesses.

The Cabinet Member highlighted the importance of collaborative and open working on issues such as flooding which required information from HS2 e.g. works to woodlands and hedgerows and flooding impacts. It was acknowledged that positive steps had been taken to reduce HGV movements through the use of rail access and the A413 conveyor which was welcomed.

The Deputy Cabinet Member for Transport, Councillor P Martin, underpinned the importance of collaborative working and planning applications. The Council found it challenging to make timely decisions on planning applications due to a lack of supporting information. Monthly meetings on forthcoming applications had been helpful however these were now three-monthly. The last planning application was received on 6 January and Deputy Cabinet Member was concerned that the planning service would receive an influx of applications for urgent decisions.

The Chairman invited David Emms, Aaron Heer and Alasdair Hassan to give their presentation to the Committee. Prior to the presentation, David Emms acknowledged the importance of the A413 to Buckinghamshire residents and that whilst there was collaborative working with the Council, elements of it could be improved. The following points were noted during HS2 Ltd's presentation:

- Align was responsible for the Colne Valley Viaduct and the Western Valley Slopes, HS2's Chiltern Tunnel, five shafts along the route of the tunnel and the north portal of the tunnel (located near Great Missenden). EKFB was responsible for HS2 between Great Missenden and Turweston which included key design features such as Wendover Green Tunnel and Small Dean/Wendover Dean viaducts, interfacing with EWR and the Stoke Mandeville Relief Road.
- All shafts had been excavated to their full depth with earthworks and concreting completed. The Little Missenden shaft was currently being waterproofed. At Amersham, Schedule 17 was now in place for the headhouse which would feature a flint wall.
- The 10km-deep tunnel boring machines had now passed Amersham. Access for materials in and out was through the portal located inside the M25.

- A 600m section of the Colne Valley viaduct had now been completed which passed over the A412. This had involved two months of night closures which had been well coordinated with the Local Authority.
- Around 70km of internal site access roads had been completed in Buckinghamshire and utility diversions were underway.
- The cumulative effect of the HS2 and EWR projects on communities was recognised. HS2 Ltd had developed tools to help communicate following feedback from community engagement activities. Examples included detailed lorry movement figures, video route mapping with annotations, road closures and diversions, and the mobile visitor centre.
- The primary remit of the Traffic Team was to facilitate construction with the least possible impact to the Highways network. Under Schedule 4 Part 2 Consents, which referred to temporary Highway interference, there were currently 206 live and planned consents on the county's network with only around 50% impacting the roads.
- The Traffic Liaison Group (TLG) met monthly with Council officers, emergency services and neighbouring Local Authorities. Teams were embedded to engage with community groups and forums regularly.
- EWR shared their programme of works with HS2 weekly which HS2 imported into their mapping system for clash detection and forward planning.
- The Road Safety Fund had allocated Buckinghamshire £3.95m which would be allocated by tranches up to 2026; 17 road safety schemes had been approved for delivery since the first tranche launched in 2021.
- The pothole fund of around £98,000 was designed to be quick access for the Council to drawdown funds for repairs related to HS2 construction traffic. Under a Highway Damage Claim the Council could apply for contributions towards specific maintenance treatment due to HGV traffic which was assessed in-part by the vehicle management system that analysed traffic data. Examples of contribution to schemes included 31% contribution for the reconstruction of A40/A412 junction in Denham and 100% of £280,000 resurfacing scheme of Quainton Road. Other schemes included Moorfield Road (circa £180,000 from Align) and Station Road (circa £160,000 from EKFB).
- Fortnightly meetings with Council officers took place to specifically consider damage to Highways. A pilot scheme was under discussion to consider preventative maintenance, which would be a first for the project, following instances of road failures.
- HS2 monitored its baseline traffic count along the A41 and A413, noting that it was a small percentage of total traffic.
- The Quainton Railhead gave the ability to deliver 3m tonnes of aggregate into site by rail which would have been equivalent to 300,000 HGV movements up to 2025. In the past two years, over 800 trains delivered 1.4m tonnes of which prevented an estimated 13,100 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> in Buckinghamshire.
- The Engineering and Environment Team held designers and contractors to account on the quality of submitted designs towards the project's sustainability vision.
- HS2 had a Net Zero Carbon Plan which aimed to be net zero carbon by 2035 and carbon-free construction by 2029. In 2022, the project had:
  - Achieved Carbon Literacy Project silver accreditation
  - Adopted science-based targets
  - Had the first diesel-free HS2 construction site (19 across the project)
  - Integrated carbon performance into supplier relationship management scorecards
- EKFB's carbon footprint was estimated to be 2,216,111 tCO<sub>2</sub>e which was a 23% decrease compared to the baseline. Key carbon hotspots included materials (42%), construction activities (23%) and transport (22%).
- Designs of tunnels and pre-cast segments had been optimised to reduce the volume of materials required. Action towards carbon reduction on sites included use of renewable

energy, switching from diesel to HVO biofuel and railhead transport.

- Calcareous grasslands were planned on the south portal construction site in future with the planting of 65,000 trees and around 3.5km of hedgerows. It was estimated this would provide a localised biodiversity net gain and carbon sequestration of 52,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.
- Across Phase 1, 845,000 trees had been planted and 15ha of ancient woodland had been translocated. Grassland translocation had been carried out at Grendon and Doddershall Meadows Local Wildlife site.
- 32 wildlife sites had been created in Buckinghamshire and 66 new ponds were planned in the county. A Sheephouse Wood Bat structure was being introduced near Calvert to protect the Bechstein bat and flight lines around Bernwood Forest. Construction had also commenced on multiple green overbridges.
- The majority of tree removals had taken place in Buckinghamshire. Enabling Works Contractors had planted 230,000 trees in mitigation sites, Align would plant 85,000 trees and plants and EKFB planned to plant 2.25m trees and plants.
- The HS2 Woodland Fund had provided grant funding to help landowners restore Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) and create new native woodland.
- Flood risk received early consideration through specialist input at all stages of design development. HS2 continued engaging with the Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authorities for consents.

Following the presentation, Mathew Wales, Environment Agency, outlined his team's role in relation to HS2 consents and compliance in Phase 1 (Schedule 33). Flood risks were considered along main rivers water courses, groundwater impacts and water quality. Meetings took place with the Council monthly to ensure collaborative working and ensure no cross-over on responsibilities.

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

- One non-Committee Member attended to question HS2 regarding the impact of the construction of the Wendover Green Tunnel and associated works on the Chiltern aquifer. There were a number of concerns in the Wendover area on consequential impacts such as increased water flow in Stoke Brook, drying up of Hampden Pond and decreased water flow to the Weston Turville Reservoir and the Wendover arm of the Grand Union Canal. In response, HS2 advised that:
  - Planning applications had been made under Section 17 and further approvals were necessary under Schedule 33 of the HS2 Act to address impacts on waterbodies. Groundwater around Wendover and its flow towards Aylesbury was complex and the EA had been engaged in an updated groundwater model of the green tunnel and the north cutting in the Special Scientific Interest (SSI) area.
  - The EA had been consulted during the development of a water framework directive assessment and was now being reviewed by the EA. The assessment found that flow to Stoke Brook would be minimal and would be mitigated through SuDS, and that the flow impact to the Wendover arm would also be minimal.
  - Hampden Pond had been investigated three years ago by HS2 with the Parish Council and found there was little impact caused by the works as the pond was fed by a spring from groundwater.
  - Monitoring would ensure that the assessment was adhered to which was part of the EA's role. Subject to EA's consent, excavations were planned this year and HS2 were confident in the model.
  - An engagement plan was developed around stakeholders interested in

groundwater around Wendover, including residents, Members and community groups, who would be informed as works progressed. Stakeholders would also be updated on groundwater monitoring.

- A more detail answer would be circulated and appended to the minutes.

**Action: Simon Matthews - EKFB**

- Numerous Members had experienced the increase in HGV movements on Buckinghamshire Highways and noted instances of poor driver behaviour (e.g. extended engine idling in laybys, ignoring compound access turn instructions, not following correct routes or displaying HS2 signage in the cabin when on non-HS2 business). HS2 outlined its expectations of driver behaviour and being a 'good neighbour' and worked closely with Tier 1 and 2 contractors to ensure compliance. Cascading the expectations to Tier 3, 4 and 5 contractors had taken longer and there had been instances of drivers and contractors being removed from the project based on their behaviour. All instances of poor driver behaviour, including engine idling and parking in laybys, should be reported to the [HS2 helpdesk](#) for further investigation.
- Members noted the intentions outlined by the senior leadership team on contractor and driver behaviour but felt there may be a disconnect between this intention and the day-to-day reality in and around site compounds. HS2 felt this had improved and did inspect compounds for compliance but appreciated there was more to be done.
- A number of Members felt that the £98,000 pothole fund was not enough, with one Member noting his ward alone had a pothole top-up amount of £60,000. Additionally, the pothole fund should be re-adjusted to account for inflation and increased cost of materials given its value was set 1.5-2 years ago. Members also noted a disparity of figures reported on the pothole fund (£93,000 vs £98,000) and suggested this be clarified between the Council and HS2 as soon as possible. HS2 acknowledged that while the fund may seem small, it was designed for swift interventions caused by HGV traffic and that a separate process was in place to access more extensive funds for resurfacing.
- Members commented that it would have been beneficial to receive a copy of the presentation in advance due to the amount of information it contained. This would be taken into account for next year's meeting.
- Extensive repairs to the A41 heading into the county near Westcott had been required. One Member attributed this to the loaded HS2 HGVs as the opposite carriageway had not needed repairs. The A41 may be suitable for the proposed preventive pilot and the independent HS2 road network had helped alleviate pressure.
- Figures on tree survival and re-planting would be investigated. The dry summers had caused some dieback and re-planting activity in the spring, and HS2 reiterated their commitment to returning the environment post-construction.

**Action: Alasdair Hassan - HS2**

- An updated figure on trees removed since last year would be circulated to the Committee.

**Action: Simon Matthews - EKFB**

- Of the trees left to be removed, opportunities would be considered in their relocation rather than felling however a commitment could not be provided on this.
- There was an example of four road closure permits on Quanton Road that had all subsequently been cancelled and Members reiterated the importance of traffic management to residents. HS2 had been disappointed in these cancellations and explained this had been caused by non-contestable utility works by the Statutory Undertaker. The Chairman suggested HS2 advise local Members on road closures and cancellations so that accurate information could be circulated to local communities. Another Member suggested HS2 expand their communication of road closures to neighbouring wards and parishes. Communication beyond the line of routes was raised at the Communities & Localism Select Committee in January 2023, and one of the actions

was to work with the Deputy Cabinet Member for Transport to improve this.

- HS2 had a significant network of temporary drainage and water management systems on site which can be seen in aerial footage: <https://vimeo.com/747836661/7836b9194d> Further information specific to the River Great Ouse catchment would be provided outside the meeting.

**Action: Simon Matthews - EKFB**

- The Calvert Infrastructure Maintenance Depot (IMD) Schedule 17 had been submitted last year and was under discussion with the Council's Planning service. One Member requested a more detailed update on the Calvert IMD.

**Action: Simon Matthews - EKFB**

- The Council decided on allocation of the £4m road safety fund through submissions to HS2 for review; it was noted that all submissions to date had been approved. HS2 would investigate and advise on funds spent on their site access roads but did note this was an investment to alleviate pressure on Council highways.

**Action: Aaron Heer – HS2**

- Spoil from the tunnel was designed to be deposited around the north portal valley slopes to achieve biodiversity gain. Material re-use was planned in situ across the length of the route via cutting arisings, forming embankments and earth bunding. One of the current challenges was ensuring material was moved once only. Additionally, discussions were ongoing on the use of some materials from HS2 being utilised by Council contractors during construction of the South East Aylesbury Link Road.
- EWR attended the monthly TLG meetings which included information on forthcoming works and forward plans.
- A number of examples were given on use of the HS2 Woodland Fund to support ancient woodland sites and combined sites.
- Recent announcements about re-phasing of works meant HS2 needed to look at delivering the project with its budget however the impact within Buckinghamshire was expected to be minimal.
- In response to safety concerns raised by the Chiltern Society, HS2 advised that the Chiltern Tunnel would have two bores with cross-passages every 500m as well as intervention shafts along the length of the route. The use of a third bore was for tunnels without surface access (e.g. under mountains or seas).

The Chairman reiterated the great concern and interest that all Members and residents have in the HS2 project and its impact in Buckinghamshire, and hoped that the issues raised would be noted by HS2 Ltd. As this was the principal Select Committee where HS2 attended annually, consideration would be given to the March 2024 meeting being a single item on the project. The Chairman thanked all representatives from HS2 for attending and advised that a follow-up letter would be drafted in due course.

## **6 NEW HIGHWAYS MODEL**

The Cabinet Member for Transport introduced the report and highlighted a number of key points:

- There were a number of organisations involved in the new model which allowed the Council greater control of programmes. Residents should see the benefits of improved works and service response as the alliance format intended to work together to deliver 'right first time'. The Cabinet Member was confident that the service was ready to be launched.
- A schedule of rates also ensured value for money for residents.
- Project Teams and Project Boards had overseen the transition to the new arrangements.

Leaders from the main contractors had been involved in the Board.

- Performance levels were graded which included Acceptable and Desirable. Funds would be withheld for non-acceptable performance until a fix reached the required standard.
- Parish and Town Councils were being engaged on the upcoming arrangements.
- The Atkins Design Team would ensure the new programme would be delivered from the model's commencement on 1 April.
- Work was underway to shift the staff culture.
- An informal review of the contract would take place after three months. Cabinet would receive an update report after 6 and 12 months which the TECC Committee may also want to consider.

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

- A number of Members commended the new arrangement and the communication to Councillors during the contract's progression. Members recommended that should any performance issues be identified, all Councillors be advised so that resident queries could be answered.
- The Local Area Technicians (LAT) were vital in identifying local needs and ensuring a service response particularly during post-winter pressures. Members would receive an updated list of LATs.
- Balfour Beatty offered local social value by attending local job fairs and offering apprenticeship schemes.
- Works scheduled to be carried out by Transport for Buckinghamshire (TfB) that had not been completed would not be paid for. Instead, these works would be identified and carried out under the new model e.g. painting white lines in Market Hill, Buckingham. It was hoped that most of the outstanding works would be completed within six months.
- Communications would be improved to ensure accuracy e.g. temporary repairs would be identified as such on Fix My Street rather than being marked 'completed'.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for the report.

## **7 AIR QUALITY MONITORING IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Environment, Councillor G Williams to introduce the report. The Cabinet Member noted the following points:-

- Local Authorities had a legal obligation to review and assess air quality. All the nine AQMA sites in Buckinghamshire were currently reporting below the annual mean nitrogen dioxide national objective of 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup>.
- Introducing further AQMAs required engagement with DEFRA and air quality improvement action.
- Around 40% of poor air quality in Buckinghamshire was due to vehicles so the Council focused activities in this area e.g. promoting electric vehicles (EVs) and Euro 6 engine upgrades.

The following was noted during the Committee's discussion:-

- One non-Committee Member attended to query the lack of air quality monitoring in Buckingham West particularly given the amount of current and upcoming developments along the A421. The Cabinet Member advised that DEFRA provides guidance on AQMA monitoring and parameters and that assessments were undertaken on a risk basis as to where pollution levels are expected to be at their highest. Consideration had been given

previously to installing a monitoring point along the A421 at Buckingham however after assessment the A421 did not meet concern criteria as it was a relatively open space with extensive vegetation. By comparison, Buckingham town centre had been monitored, due to airflow being more constricted by narrow streets with high walls, and found no exceedances of air quality standards. Each Community Board would soon receive DEFRA-funded monitoring equipment which could be utilised to monitor specific areas.

- Members noted the reduction of pollutants over time, particularly during the Covid lockdowns.
- One Member was concerned by East West Rail's planned use of diesel rolling stock which would impact air quality. Consideration would be given on whether air quality data in the line's vicinity could be monitored.
- Members considered the benefit EV expansion would have on Buckinghamshire's air quality. One Member noted that Char.gy was seeking to install fast EV chargers in Hazlemere, whilst another Member noted that Gerrards Cross wanted to expand its public EV infrastructure. The Cabinet Member advised that Hannah Joyce, Head of Transport Strategy & Funding, was leading a working group on EVs which was considering EV expansion (e.g. EV car-pooling and appropriate charger type and location). Challenges included Distribution Network Operator (DNO) costs.
- On-road EV charging solutions were still in development with one gully trial to commence in Wendover. The process for using lamp posts and bollards for EV charging would be investigated and circulated to the Committee.

**Action: C Ward**

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for the report.

## **8 SCOPING DOCUMENT FOR RAPID REVIEW - STREETWORKS AND STATUTORY UNDERTAKERS IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

The Committee received a scoping document to carry out a rapid review on streetworks and statutory undertakers. It was felt that this was topic was of great interest to the public due to works being carried out on the Highway asset.

The Chairman advised that he would lead the review group and asked Members to write to him if they were interested in being on the group.

RESOLVED –

That the rapid review scope document be agreed.

## **9 WORK PROGRAMME**

A work programme for the next municipal year would be drafted in due course. Members were asked to advise the Chairman and scrutiny officer of items they wish to be considered for the future work programme.

## **10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting date was to be confirmed.