



Buckinghamshire Council

Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee

Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2023 IN THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY HP19 8FF, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 11.50 AM

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

S Broadbent, G Williams, D Barnes, P Martin, C Ward, A Bond, R Dengler and D Sutherland

Agenda Item

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Culverhouse, Naylor and Sullivan. Apologies were also received from Steve Bambrick and Hannah Joyce.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Eight public questions had been received to be considered at the meeting. All the public questions were included in the agenda, however due to time restraints Questions 1-4 were answered at the meeting. Questions 5-8 would be answered in writing following the meeting.

All answers to the public questions would be appended to the minutes.

5 LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 5

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Councillor Steven Broadbent, introduced the item by advising that this was an interim report on the emerging Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5) and the approach the Council was taking. The LTP5 was being developed alongside the new Buckinghamshire Local Plan and would need to include specific policies on local transport such

as carbon emissions, road safety, highway maintenance and management, and active travel. LTP5 was also required in order to secure funding from Department for Transport (DfT) towards capital schemes. Further guidance on plan formulation was expected from DfT shortly. A consultation exercise had led to a number of changes to the wording of the objectives; the detail of which was included in the report.

Members considered the report and noted the following in their discussion:

- LTP5 would align with the Council's ambition to be net zero by 2050. Best practice on emission reduction would be sought as part of the Council's work with England's Economic Heartland.
- A key theme of LTP5 would be to offer transport alternatives to cars in order to reduce delays, connect economies and boost businesses and productivity. As part of this, the Council was part of a DfT trial in e-scooter usage which was scheduled to end in May 2024. Use of private e-scooters was illegal on the Council's Highways network so any future plans would be subject to Government legislation. Other work included investment into greenways and cycleways, and also demand response travel which had recently been expanded in High Wycombe to include Flackwell Heath.
- A city-style ultra-low emission zone (ULEZ) would not be suitable in Buckinghamshire.
- The Transport Strategy aimed to improve traffic flow along with funding bids for improvement projects (e.g. linked gyratory traffic lights) however temporary traffic lights from utility works did cause issues on the network. The link road projects around Aylesbury would also reduce through-traffic flow.
- Concerns regarding the impact of development on traffic in Buckinghamshire would be picked up in the emerging Local Plan, as well as at a local level with development planning applications and their associated traffic plans. The Council made funding representations to DfT regarding the growth in the county and the transport infrastructure required to support it.
- The Council had an enhanced partnership with bus operators through its Bus Service Improvement Plan however bus service providers operated privately. Proposed changes to routes would be published in advance by operators and the Council did make representations and suggestions on improving connections but ultimately had no control over business decisions.
- One Member noted that Thames Valley Police had not responded to residents that had reported concerns within the police's responsibility. The Cabinet Member advised that the Council's moving traffic offense powers alleviated some police resource pressure.
- Future consultation would involve engagement with all Community Boards and Members. Work at universities also aimed to increase the diversity in responses as well as improve youth engagement.
- The LTP5 would also link with the Council's emerging Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan which had identified key routes between the county's settlements.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for the report and welcomed a future update on LTP5's development coming to the Committee.

6 LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Environment, Councillor Gareth Williams, introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) would take around 12-18 months to develop and have a formal consultation at the end of the process. The Council had been one of five pilot authorities initially and was one of the named Responsible Authorities in the

country to lead on the LNRS production in the geographic area of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

- Development of the LNRS would be locally led with town and parish councils as well as local environment groups. The intention was to conserve and enhance biodiversity and local habitats.
- The Environment Act required the planning system to have regard for the LNRS as part of an enhanced duty in relation to biodiversity and the Local Planning Authorities were awaiting Government guidance on this.
- Development of the LNRS was at no cost to the Council due to Defra funding.
- Introductory webinars with stakeholders to raise awareness had been met positively and well attended. The Cabinet Member noted the importance of the emerging LNRS with Buckinghamshire residents.

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

- Further guidance from Defra regarding the weighting between the Local Plan and the LNRS was expected soon however LNRSs were designed to be compatible with Local Plans.
- Water supplies to new developments was outside the scope of the LNRS with responsibility lying with water companies and the planning system.
- The LNRS could prioritise the better management of existing woodland. The base line map would show the location of all habitats including woodland. Provision was made in the Environment Act to prevent the deliberate degradation of habitats ahead of the submission of a planning application; Schedule 14 Part 1 is the relevant section in relation to the pre-development biodiversity value of a site and sets how it is to be calculated and from what date. The Tree Preservation Order process was separate to the LNRS.
- The Cabinet Member acknowledged that landowners would have an important role in the LNRS and that proactive engagement was planned with existing networks such as the Rural Forum and the National Farmers' Union. Funding streams would be available for opportunities in the LNRS which landowners could decide to pursue, and information on this would be made as accessible as possible.
- The Council was aware of the current biodiversity baseline and would be able to measure netgains over time as part of the Government's audit process. The Council would have to provide evidence of what had been delivered.
- HS2's claim to be biodiversity neutral within 15 years of the project was outside the scope of the LNRS and may be an area for Members to question when HS2 attend in March 2024.
- Funding from Defra for the preparation of the LNRS would mostly be allocated towards officer time so could be closely monitored and managed.
- The Council had a close working relationship with Milton Keynes Council and Bucks Natural Environment Partnership, and a service level agreement had been formalized to outline roles and responsibilities. As part of being the Responsible Authority, Buckinghamshire Council had included mapping information and multiple datasets from Milton Keynes Council.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for the report and commended the work being carried out by the officer team.

7 STREETWORKS AND STATUTORY UNDERTAKERS RAPID REVIEW REPORT

The Chairman of the Review Group, Councillor Bill Chapple OBE, introduced the inquiry report to the Committee. The scoping document for the review had been agreed at March's TECC meeting

and evidence gathering sessions had been held in June and July. This included an in-person meeting with a number of Statutory Undertakers that operate in Buckinghamshire. Members noted the importance of enforcement, recruitment and the lack of deterrent fines offered.

The Chairman thanked members of the group for their work on the review and the Senior Scrutiny Officer for drafting the report and advised that he would be presenting it at October's Cabinet meeting.

8 WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the importance of parking enforcement, and that the Council was developing a Parking Strategy. The Cabinet Member for Transport advised that the service reported annually on parking and the parking enforcement vacancy rate had improved.

Consideration would be given to a report related to tree protection and Tree Preservation Orders.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 9 November at 10am.