

ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone. on Thursday, 19 May 2022.

PRESENT: Mr S Holden (Chairman), Mr N J Collor (Vice-Chairman), Mr N Baker, Mr M Baldock, Mr T Bond, Ms M Dawkins, Mr M Dendor, Mr A R Hills, Mrs S Hudson, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr B H Lewis, Mr A Sandhu, MBE, Mr M J Sole and Mr D Watkins

ALSO PRESENT: Mr D L Brazier (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport) and Miss S J Carey (Cabinet Member for Environment)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr S Jones (Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport), Mr M Smyth (Director of Environment and Waste), Mr P Lightowler (Interim Director of Transportation) and Mr M Dentten (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

76. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda (Item 3)

No declarations were made.

77. Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2022 (Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2022 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

78. Verbal Updates by Cabinet Members and Corporate Director (Item 5)

1. Mr Brazier gave his verbal update. He informed the committee that he had recently ridden the Thameside electric bus service in Dartford; had met with the Leader of Canterbury City Council to discuss their local plan and infrastructure; and worked with officers on communication improvements and community central live labs improvements. He reassured members that he had been monitoring the lack of highway capacity, as a result of recent ferry disruptions, meeting with the Port of Dover, National Highways and local stakeholders in Dover. He noted that interviews for the position of Director of Highways and Transport had take place and that the successful candidate would be announced in due course.
2. Miss Carey gave her verbal update. The committee were directed to the quarterly environment and waste member briefings which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. She informed members that Allington Household

Waste Recycling Centre had won Best Use of Design and Technology in a Waste Management Facility at the Letsrecycle Awards for Excellence on 18 May. She invited members to visit the site. Miss Carey introduced Matthew Smyth as KCC's new Director of Environment and Waste. Mr Smyth summarised his professional background in waste and environmental services, set out his commitment to progress the Council's environmental commitments and lead a solutions-based service.

3. Mr Jones gave his verbal update. He updated the committee on the following: the conclusion of the Plan Tree public consultation; facilitating the Queen's Green Canopy, with a tree planted for each child in KCC's care; collaboration with districts on town centre improvements; traffic volume; the number of serious and fatal accidents over the past year, at 145 and 4 respectively; the bike ability team's work training 4,100 children; and the walking bus campaign, which members were encouraged to promote locally.

RESOLVED to note the updates.

79. Traffic Management Act Part 6 Verbal Update *(Item 6)*

Tim Read (Head of Transportation) was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Read gave a verbal update on recent developments related to the application for Part 6 Traffic Management powers, since the previous update in November 2021. He confirmed that a six-week public consultation was ongoing and included detail on the types of restrictions and suitable areas. He informed members that, as part of the application process, the Leader of the Council had written to the Department for Transport. He reminded members that the timeframe was dependent on the parliamentary timetable.
2. The chairman asked why there had been delays in enacting the powers. Mr Read recognised that the Department for Transport had had a series of additional priorities, including EU transition which had delayed guidance and the imposition of powers.
3. In response to a question from Mr Watkins, Mr Jones confirmed that the pricing structure for fixed penalty notices, issued under the powers, were set nationally.

RESOLVED to note the update.

80. Buglife and Kent Wildlife Trust Bugs Matter Report *(Item 7)*

Paul Hadaway (Director of Conservation at Kent Wildlife Trust) and Elizabeth Milne (Natural Environment and Coast Manager) were in virtual attendance for this item.

1. The chairman set out the reasons the Kent Wildlife Trust Bugs Matter Report had been brought to the committee. He shared his concern at the steep

decline in insect numbers in Kent over the past 17 years and recognised the importance of the issue in relation to Kent's Plan Bee.

2. Mr Hadaway gave a presentation. Topics covered included: research into invertebrate decline; citizen science methods; the bugs matter app (www.bugsmatter.app); key survey results, including a 58.5% decline in insect numbers since 2004; stakeholder engagement; future solutions and funding requirements. He confirmed that the methodology used in the 2021 Bugs Matter Citizen Science Survey was identical to that used by the RSPB in 2004, aside from the use of an app.
3. In response to a question from Mr Sandhu on the national organisation of Wildlife Trusts and their communications networks, Mr Hadaway confirmed there were 46 federated wildlife trusts nationally, with 12 having been involved in the recent Bugs Matter programme. He noted that insect numbers in Kent were below the national average. He stressed the importance of multi-agency biodiversity planning.
4. Ms Dawkins asked whether KCC used pesticides. Miss Carey confirmed that pesticides were not used on the KCC and that herbicide use was minimised, where possible. She reminded members that, to support Kent's Plan Bee, tiered rural swathe conservation cuts had begun across the county. Mr Jones gave further reassurance that KCC used DEFRA approved products for weed clearance. He told the committee that the Soft Landscaping team had embedded input from Kent Wildlife Trust into their operations.
5. Following a question from Mr Watkins, Ms Milne reassured members that a revised plan for monitoring the impact of Plan Bee was expected for Autumn 2022.
6. In response to a question from Mr Lewis on the scope of cross working between KCC and Kent Wildlife Trust, Ms Milne confirmed that she met and consulted with the Trust regularly.
7. Members thanked Mr Hadaway for his presentation, the responses given and invited further collaboration between the committee and Kent Wildlife Trust.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

81. Plan Sea

(Item 8)

Elizabeth Milne (Natural Environment & Coast Manager) was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Hills, as Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment, gave a verbal overview of the report, addressed its scope and emphasised the importance of Kent's coastal environment. He outlined existing responsibilities and work undertaken by partners including the Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority.

2. Ms Milne addressed the key elements of the report which included: the current picture of multiple agencies working on coastal environment in isolation; minimising duplication; statutory responsibilities; Local Nature Recovery Strategies; future risks; and opportunities.
3. Mr Baldock asked that coastal communities be directly involved in the development of the strategy and its proposed actions, in order to ensure local support and awareness.
4. Mr Baker stressed the importance of forming precise desired outcomes, to maximise impact and prevent mission creep.
5. Following a question from Ms Dawkins, Ms Milne agreed to circulate information on coastal land ownership following the meeting.
6. Mr Dendor emphasised the need for KCC to act as the local lead on coastal environment, given the numerous organisations involved and current lack of a clear champion.
7. The committee supported the development of a Plan Sea coastal and marine strategy.

RESOLVED to comment on the considerations laid out by the report in respect of Kent County Council taking forward a coastal and marine strategy.

82. Environment, Net Zero and Section 31 Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Update

(Item 9)

Helen Shulver (Interim Head of Sustainable Business and Communities) was in attendance for this item.

1. Miss Carey introduced the report, reminded members of the £20.6m Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme grant received from government, projects delivered and planned, and challenges faced delivering projects against strict central deadlines. She informed members that the extended deadline to complete all projects was 30 June 2022. She explained the projects' significant role in achieving KCC net zero by 2030.
2. Ms Shulver explained the future decarbonisation ambitions, which included continuing to achieve against the Council's net zero plan, which was on track, with the 2021-22 target exceeded. She advised that further funding would be required to achieve the 2030 and 2050 net zero targets.
3. Mr Baldock asked that the Cabinet Member lobby central government for a long-term national decarbonisation programme in order to sustain funding. He raised concern at the future funding challenges mentioned in section 9.4 of the report and asserted that further external funding was important for the Council achieving organisational net zero by 2030.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) note the considerable progress towards KCC Net Zero 2030 target achieved in 2021 despite the challenging operating environment;
- 2) discuss the changes to external funding that impacts on KCC's ability to deliver the Net Zero by 2030 ambition and wider programme beyond 2023/24;
- 3) note the risks associated with the Net Zero and Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Programmes as outlined in section 6.

83. Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure in Kent

(Item 10)

Tim Middleton (Transport Innovations Programme Manager) was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Brazier introduced the report which updated the committee on national and local electric vehicle charging infrastructure developments. He highlighted that government had published its 'Taking charge: the electric vehicle infrastructure strategy' in March, which expected KCC, as a local highways authority, to develop its own strategy outlining how the Council would meet the national ambitions. He noted that government's strategy recognised that the required combination of high powered and slower chargers was unclear as the market was still developing. He recognised that private enterprise would play an increasing role with the expansion of electric vehicle infrastructure.
2. Mr Middleton gave further detail on local government's role within government's strategy, which included the development of local charging infrastructure, facilitating infrastructure planning, maximising public accessibility to charging points and ensuring timely installation.
3. In relation to sections 2.14 and 2.15 of the report, Mr Middleton agreed to provide members with updated figures following the meeting.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

84. 22/00039 - Pothole Programme

(Item 11)

Andrew Loosemore (Head of Highways Asset Management) was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Brazier explained the key decision to fund an annual pothole and patching programme of £7m per annum, totalling £21m over 3 years. He informed members that the impetus for the decision had been a £9m reduction in the Department for Transport's highways grant, which had impacted the budget available for asset management, including pothole and patching work. He explained that
2. Mr Jones explained the decision's funding arrangements, which constituted a re-profiling of existing borrowing, which would not increase borrowing for the

current financial year. He confirmed that the contract base would be reassessed in years 2 and 3 of the programme.

3. Mr Loosemore outlined the impact of previous pothole blitz programmes, which formed a proactive approach to asset management. He stated that the previous programmes had reduced the volume of public pothole enquires over the previous 5 years. In relation to price materials and resulting increase in contracts costs, he noted that there had been increases over the previous year of 6-10%. He confirmed that the proposed pothole programme would be in addition to the existing asset management operations.
4. Following a question from Mr Lewis, Mr Loosemore confirmed that the reduction in Department for Transport grant funding represented a 20% overall reduction in highways asset management funding.
5. Mr Dendor asked what was done to hold utility companies to account on the quality of their works, given the impact on the highway network and possibility of increasing the number of potholes. Mr Loosemore confirmed that all works were inspected and that contractors were liable to pay if works were substandard.
6. Mr Sole asked how much previous pothole blitz programmes had cost and whether the categorisation of a pothole had changed. Mr Jones confirmed that there was no change in the pothole requirement and that previous programmes were £10m per annum.

RESOLVED to endorse the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on the proposed decision to fund an annual pothole and patching programme (Pothole Blitz) of £7m per annum totalling £21m over 3 years;

delegation of authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport and the Corporate Director of Finance to agree funding mechanisms to support the programmes; and

delegation of authority to the Director of Highways and Transportation to award and enter appropriate contractual arrangements for the provision of the Pothole and Patching programme (Pothole Blitz) contracts.

85. Supported Buses Consultation Update

(Item 12)

Mr C Simkins (Member for Ashford Rural West), Mr R Lehmann (Member for Swale East) and Stephen Pay (Transport Integration Manager) were in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Brazier gave an update on the Bus Funding Reduction public consultation which closed on 20 April. He explained the function of bus subsidisation, current provision, cost and that there was no statutory requirement for the Council to subsidise bus services. He reminded members of the desire to make savings to balance the Council's budget, with a service saving of £2.2m required, which represented an overall reduction of £3m. He confirmed that an

Equalities Impact Assessment had been carried out and reviewed. Members were informed that the key decision on the issue would come to the committee's July meeting for consideration.

2. Mr Lightowler explained the eight-week public consultation process, including the incorporation of locally organised surveys and noted that 2,562 responses were received. Mr Pay outlined the common responses given by residents, which included concerns that a future reduction in bus services would impact wellbeing and increase isolation.
3. Ms Dawkins asked that the feasibility of cross directorate funding for supported bus services be investigated, in order to mitigate any impact on home to school transport.
4. Mr Jeffrey asked that Public Transport work with operators to review timetabling following any service changes, to maximise public access.
5. Mr Lehmann warned that bus services withdrawals could negatively impact the climate and increase the volume of journeys on Kent's roads.
6. Mr Simkins shared his concerns that a withdrawal of subsidised services would disproportionately impact elderly residents, school children and communities without local amenities.

RESOLVED to note the paper and initial consultation outcomes.

86. 22/00046 - Environmental Remediation Works at North Farm Closed Landfill Site

(Item 13)

David Beaver (Head of Waste Management and Business Services) and Charlotte Beck (Infrastructure Project Coordinator) were in attendance for this item.

RESOLVED to endorse the Cabinet Member for Environment on the proposed decision to provide approval to spend and award a Contract for environmental remediation works at North Farm Closed Landfill Site.

87. Performance Dashboard

(Item 14)

Rachel Kennard (Chief Analyst) was in attendance for this item.

1. Ms Kennard gave a verbal summary of the performance dashboard up to March 2022. She confirmed that of the 19 key performance indicators within the remit of environment and transport, 15 had been RAG rated green, 3 amber and 1 red. She acknowledged that this reflected good overall performance. In relation to the red rating, WM03: Waste recycled and composted at Household Waste Recycling Centres, she noted that an Environment Agency directive that household waste wood could no longer be recycled had meant that more non-recyclable waste was taken to Centres. Ms

Kennard outlined the proposed indicators and targets for the 2022-2023 Performance Dashboard.

RESOLVED to note the Performance Dashboard and proposed indicators and targets for 2022/23.

88. Work Programme
(Item 15)

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.