

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### 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 Wednesday, 6 July 2022.

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

ALSO PRESENT: Mr D L Brazier (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport)

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

#### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

##### **89. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda**

*(Item 4)*

No declarations were made.

##### **90. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2022**

*(Item 5)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2022 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

##### **91. Verbal Updates by Cabinet Members and Corporate Director**

*(Item 6)*

*Susan Carey (Cabinet Member for Environment) and Simon Jones (Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport) were absent due to illness.*

1. Mr Brazier gave a verbal update. He confirmed that KCC's allocation of Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding had been approved by the Department for Transport. The funding requirements were summarised, with it noted that emphasis was placed on highways schemes to improve bus infrastructure, priority ticketing and fares initiatives to encourage bus use. He explained that the Council could not use any of the money to subsidise existing services. He informed the committee that National Highways had begun a new round of consultation on the Lower Thames Crossing, members were directed to KCC's position statement, which could be viewed on the Council's website at [www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/transport-and-highways-policies/lower-thames-crossing-position-statement](http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/transport-and-highways-policies/lower-thames-crossing-position-statement). An update was given on Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), which had since 2017 formed part of government's cycling

policy, he noted that several districts had created Plans and that these would be incorporated into future Local Transport Plans in order to include cycling within the wider transport system. Members were notified that the Council had been successful in its application for powers under Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004, with the Transport Minister signing a designation order which will allow KCC to enforce moving traffic offences, levying fines against those who stop in yellow boxes, make prohibited right turns or commit one of a range of offences prescribed by the legislation.

RESOLVED to note the update.

**92. 22/00052 - KCC Supported Bus Funding Review**  
(Item 8)

1. At the chairman's request, the committee were provided with a copy of a document which detailed the services impacted by the proposed decision on a cost per passenger journey basis.
2. Mr Brazier gave an overview of the proposed decision to withdraw funding support from 39 supported bus services. He summarised national bus operations, including subsidisation and explained that KCC had no obligation to subsidise or operate bus services. He addressed the wider budget context which the proposed decision was set within, which included a requirement to make savings from non-statutory services. Bus usage following the end of the pandemic was raised, it was noted that usage stood at around 70% of the pre-pandemic level, which coupled with rising fuel and staffing cost pressures had made services uneconomic. Members were reminded of the public consultation undertaken in connection to the proposed decision. He highlighted that the Kent Karrier service would not be affected by the proposal. An explanation of Bus Service Improvement Plan funding requirements was given with it explained that existing bus subsidies could not be funded. He addressed and acknowledged the negative impact the proposed decision would have on residents, including increased journeys and air quality.
3. Mr Rayner moved and Mrs Hudson seconded an amendment to the motion to add the wording "subject to the correction of information relating to the S4 bus service."
4. Members voted on the amendment. The amendment passed.
5. Mr Lewis moved and Ms Dawkins seconded a motion "that the Cabinet Committee recommend that the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport seek further legal advice and delay the decision until it is advised that the decision would not be liable to a judicial review."
6. Mr Brazier confirmed that legal advice had been received in relation to the proposed decision and related public consultation, with assurance given that the proposal was legal.
7. Members voted on the motion. The motion was lost.

8. Mrs Hudson spoke on the public benefit of bus services, the role they played in tackling social isolation in rural communities and the possible carbon impact of the proposal.
9. Mrs Hudson moved and Mr Rayner seconded a motion “that the Cabinet Committee recommend that the 502 bus service be removed from the proposed decision.”
10. Mr Rayner stated that traffic outside schools would increase to the extent that road safety would worsen, due to an increase in car journeys necessitated by a withdrawal of the 502 service.
11. Mr Baldock moved and Mr Lewis seconded an amendment to the motion to add the 332, 662, 664, 666 and 954 bus services.
12. Mr Brazier replied, noting that it would not be possible to fund the suggested arrangements within the budget.
13. Members voted on the amendment. The amendment was lost.
14. Members voted on the motion. The motion was lost.
15. Mr Baldock asked that the decision be reconsidered subject to further analysis of the anticipated impact on the Children, Young People and Education directorate budget. Mr Lightowler noted that the assessment of services had been shared with Children, Young People and Education.
16. In response to a question from Mr Chittenden on whether the withdrawal of unsubsidised services by commercial operators had been factored into the proposed decision, Mr Lightowler confirmed that Public Transport were aware of the withdrawals.
17. Ms Dawkins asked that the Cabinet Member lobby government to expand the Bus Service Improvement Plan funding criteria, to include service subsidisation.
18. Mr Brazier confirmed, following a further question from Ms Dawkins, that alternative government funding streams had been explored with none allowing the funding of bus subsidisation within their criteria.
19. Mr Hills commented that savings from non-statutory services were essential to help safeguard the Council’s statutory services, which were experiencing rising costs.
20. Mr Baker asked that the committee be consulted on future proposals of a similar nature as part of the budget consultation process.

21. The chairman moved the substantive motion “that the Cabinet Committee endorse the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on the proposed decision to withdraw funding support from 39 supported bus services as shown at Appendix C, subject to the correction of information relating to the S4 bus service.”

22. Members voted on the motion. The motion passed. The votes cast were as follows:

For:

Mr N Baker, Mr T Bond, Mr N Collor, Mr D Crow-Brown, Mr M Dendor, Mr T Hills, Mr S Holden, Mr A Sandhu MBE, Mr D Watkins and Mr A Weatherhead

Against:

Mr M Baldock, Mr I Chittenden, Ms M Dawkins and Mr B Lewis

Abstain:

Mrs S Hudson

RESOLVED to endorse the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on the proposed decision to withdraw funding support from 39 supported bus services as shown at Appendix C, subject to the correction of information relating to the S4 bus service.

### **93. Performance Dashboard**

*(Item 7)*

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

1. Ms Kennard gave a verbal summary of the performance dashboard to April 2022. She confirmed that of the 17 key performance indicators within the remit of environment and transport, 11 had been RAG rated green, 4 amber and 1 red, with 1 yet to be reported. She stated that this reflected good overall performance.
2. In relation to WM03 (Waste recycled and composted at HWRCs) Mr Smyth confirmed, following the Environment Agency directive which prevented the recycling of wood at household waste recycling centres, that in excess of 20,000 tonnes of wood had been used at a biomass facility in Kent. He noted that the directive had come in-year and that the target in the updated indicator would include a biomass element.

RESOLVED to note the Performance Dashboard.

### **94. Annual update on the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy**

*(Item 9)*

*Bethany Pepper (Environment Strategy Programme Manager) was in virtual attendance for this item.*

1. Ms Pepper gave an overview of the report which provided the first annual update on the implementation of the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy. She emphasised the role partnership working had played in meeting the Strategy's objectives and explained that a district officers climate change network had been established. She addressed the next steps and ongoing monitoring of implementation, noting that, though the review had highlighted successes, the pace of change would be dictated by the sustainability of long-term funding.
2. Mr Hood asked how much of the public sector decarbonisation fund was allocated to the Maidstone district heat network and whether that money could be reallocated, if it was not fully used. Ms Pepper agreed to share the requested information following meeting.
3. In response to a further question from Mr Hood, Mr Smyth assured Members that whilst the outcomes in Kent were unprecedentedly positive with the existing resources, that further funding would enhance the Council's ability to meet its net zero ambitions. He committed to working on the development of a pathway to county-wide net zero by 2050, which would be discussed with members. He added that investigations were underway into how private finance could contribute to achieving the 2050 target.
4. Ms Dawkins asked what had been done to encourage and facilitate community energy projects. Ms Pepper confirmed that a domestic retrofit strategy was being developed in partnership with districts.
5. The chairman asked whether there was any possibility that heat pumps could be installed in older properties. Whilst noting that heat pumps were an established technology, and therefore a key technology moving forward, Ms Pepper also noted that there were other heating solutions available, for example the potential to scale up hydrogen heating systems. Ms Pepper highlighted the challenges that could be faced with older properties and explained that further research was required on the best solution for older or less common property archetypes.

RESOLVED to note the first year of progress on delivery of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy for Kent and Medway and endorse the progression of the proposed areas for future delivery of the strategy.

#### **95. Transport for London Consultation on Extension of the Ultra-Low Emission Zone and Road User Charging**

*(Item 10)*

*Mark Welch (Principal Transport Planner) was in attendance for this item.*

1. Mr Brazier provided a verbal overview of his proposed response to the Transport for London consultation on their proposed extension of the Ultra-Low Emission Zone.

2. Members discussed the impact of the Ultra-Low Emission Zone on residents who would have to travel through it in order to visit other parts of Kent. They noted that the proposal would disproportionately affect small and medium sized businesses. Concerns were raised that Zone charges would lead to businesses passing costs onto consumers through service price increases. Mr Welch confirmed that the boundary did cut physically through communities. He explained that the Ultra-Low Emission Zone used the same footprint as the existing Low Emission Zone, with cameras already in place.
3. Mr Welch confirmed that Ultra-Low Emission Zone revenue collected by Transport for London would go into its general revenue, following a series of questions from Members on whether any monies would be ringfenced for environmental improvements.

RESOLVED to endorse the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation on the proposed response by Kent County Council, to the Transport for London consultation on their proposed extension of the Ultra-Low Emission Zone.

## **96. Work Programme**

*(Item 11)*

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.