

## 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, 15 November 2023.

PRESENT: Mr S Holden (Chairman), Mr T Bond, Mr C Broadley, Mr I S Chittenden, Mr D Crow-Brown, Ms M Dawkins, Mr M Dendor, Ms J Hawkins, Mr M A J Hood, Mrs S Hudson, Mr B H Lewis, Mr H Rayner, Mr D Robey, Mr A Sandhu, MBE, and Mr M Whiting

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### 1. Apologies

*(Item 2)*

Apologies were received from Mr Baldock and Mr Collor, for whom Ms Hawkins and Mrs Hudson were present.

#### 2. Declarations of Interest

*(Item 3)*

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2023

*(Item 4)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2023 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

#### 4. Initial Draft Budget 2024-25 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2024-27

*(Item 5)*

1) Mr Oakford outlined the report.

2) Members comments on the following points in relation to the report:

- Cabinet Members were asked to clarify what kind of recommendations or changes to the proposed budget they would be 'open to'. Advice was given to committee members that this was their opportunity to make suggestions on the budget but Members should bear in mind when making suggestions that largescale decisions such as bringing all SEND home-to-school transport in-house were not able to be undertaken 'overnight'.
- A Member suggested that savings should be made for home-to-school transport by 'stopping taxis ripping [KCC] off'.
- A Member suggested that KCC adopt the network of speed cameras in order to receive the revenue from Transport Management Penalties.

3) RESOLVED to note the initial draft capital and revenue budgets including responses to the consultation.

## **5. Southern Water presentation**

*(Item 6)*

Apologies were received from Southern Water. The presentation would be made to the committee at the January meeting.

## **6. Verbal Update by Cabinet Members and Corporate Director**

*(Item 7)*

*Simon Jones (Corporate Director, GET) was in attendance for this item*

1) Mr Baker said whilst Kent avoided the worst conditions from Storm Ciaran, KCC's teams planning and resilience during the storm and its aftermath ensured services continued as well as possible with the least disruption and impact on residents.

KCC's drainage team received over 400 enquiries between Wednesday, 1 November and Monday, 6 November, of which 100 were classed as emergencies. KCC had organised for all contractors to be available dealing with the aftermath of the storm to clear blocked drainage systems.

Tree surgeons were also deployed across Folkestone, Dover, Thanet and Ashford and West Kent surgeons assisted East Kent to clear fallen trees and branches.

There were also acts of personal assistance. Highways Inspector, James Pesad happened upon a fallen tree in St. Augustine's Road, Ramsgate. Mr Pesad pulled over and put his beacons on to allow him to make the site as safe as possible. He then called in to have the incident logged and requested the Operations team to get it safely removed. Luckily nobody was hurt, but a roof was lost from a nearby outhouse, as was featured on BBC News.

The work of KCC's highways maintenance teams continues to be noticed nationally:

- KCC won the Connected Parking award for our Park Map Project at the 2023 British Parking Awards, and;
- The Chestfield Tunnel Lighting Project had been shortlisted for the Caron and Sustainability Initiative of the Year 2023 and Innovation in Tunnel Fit-Out, Maintenance and Refurbishment 2023 at the New Civil Engineers Magazine Tunnelling Awards 2023. The results were to be announced on 7 December. The new lighting was to deliver energy savings of over 1m kWh per annum which is a 63.23% reduction in energy consumption; the equivalent to over 340 homes per annum.

Other completed schemes included:

- Preservation work on the A229 to avoid water ingress and oxidation which will extend the life cycle of the road by 5 years. The work was done using a new emulsion, Finaphalt-G which is less expensive, takes less time and is more environmentally friendly than traditional surfacing methods.

- The team also completed a 4km full depth road reconstruction at Morsham and a stabilisation of the carriageway reconstruction scheme at Boughton Hill Embankment.

2) Members responded to the update as follows:

- Officers were commended for their efforts during Storm Ciaran. Thanks were also given to Mr Baker for his communication and efforts during the storm.

3) Mr Hills said a newsletter had been produced and sent to Members regarding the environmental circular economy.

4) Members thanked Miss Carey for the work that she had done in the role of Cabinet Member for the Environment and had been undertaken regarding the environmental circular economy.

5) Mr Jones added to the update on Storm Ciaran, saying that while Highways were at the front end of the response, the Public Rights of Way team, County Parks team and Waste team had also responded to the challenges brought by the storm. The Waste team in particular were very proactive - all customers with bookings for HWRC sites were messaged to alert them to the potential for disruption due to weather conditions, with the possibility of site closures if weather conditions deteriorated. Fortunately, all sites remained open and fully functional.

KCC's Insight and Development team had reported back on the initial evaluation of the cross-border policy implemented at the HWRCs from April 2023. The policy had been in place for 6-months and to date had seen a reduction in usage by those living outside of Kent, of 67%

The winter service started on Friday, 20 October 2023 and was to run until Friday, 19 April 2024. This meant KCC was closely monitoring weather and road conditions to be ready to deploy our winter service fleet at any time. Demand on the network continued to be high for the time of year across the operational teams, especially considering the recent storms and wet weather. Unfortunately, there was an increase in reported potholes across the county, due to the fragile condition of the network. Contingency plans were being drawn up to deal the demand, going into the winter period.

Since the amended contract with Amey at the end of August, Amey continued to review their service and performance, along with implementing changes. This was to ensure they drove performance and operational efficiencies across the board. The review included workshops with both highway officers and the Amey team from operatives up to senior managers, to understand issues from both a client / contractor view and find solutions to benefit all. Any changes would take time to embed, but Mr Jones was hopeful with this approach that benefits would be seen.

Progress had been made in terms of recruitment to the positions of Road Closure Inspectors. KCC had been able to make three offers, out of the four available positions, (which were accepted). Due to notice periods, it was expected that the first three officers would start in December, with training to commence through until the end of February 2024. Recruitment had not been successful in West Kent, where KCC had not been able to appoint to the role. West Kent was considered to be a

particularly difficult area to recruit to, due to its proximity to London, which often attracted recruitment through higher pay scales. However, KCC was advertising for the role again and it was hoped a fourth Inspector would be appointed.

Although KCC did not have the designated road closure inspectors, work was still on going to ensure that opportunities were taken to drive efficiencies on the network. The work that was done with South-East Water in Leeds was a good example of what can be achieved. The project was completed 3 months ahead of schedule. KCC was able to bring a coordinated approach and allowed others to undertake works at the same time, to further reduce later closures. To undertake these levels of coordination and engagement, it had a huge impact on highways staff, which was not sustainable in the long term without additional resources and support. It was suggested that time be allowed for the team to embed and bring a full progress report to the March's meeting of Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee.

6) Members asked questions and the following points were noted:

- Utility companies were empowered under legislation to access the local road network.
- KCC was not informed until after work has started in the case of emergency road closures. However, emergency services should be informed. It was noted that disruption was expected for emergency works as unlike planned works, notifications could not be sent out in advance. KCC worked with utility companies to try to minimise the level of disruption.
- The new contract with Amey was being embedded so that service was improved but it was planned that lessons learned would be brought to a committee meeting in 2024.

7) RESOLVED to note the reports.

## **7. Performance Dashboard**

*(Item 8)*

*Matt Wagner (Interim Chief Analyst) and Simon Jones (Corporate Director, GET) were in attendance for this item*

1) Mr Wagner introduced the report for quarter 3 of the 2023/24 financial year. There were 19 key performance indicators (KPIs); 13 were rated green, 5 amber and 1 red.

The indicator rated red was under Highways and Transport: Priority (Member) enquiries completed within 20 working days.

2) Further to Members' questions, it was noted:

- The figures showed a 9-year high on reports of road defects and naturally, where service provision is scaled, there will be a delay where the volume of work is more due to exceptional events. The response to this had been encouraging and service provision was meeting the volume of work only months later.
- It was felt that quality of responses to highways related enquiries had improved. There had been some historic issues with how enquiries had been dealt with but the situation had since improved.

3) RESOLVED to note the Performance Dashboard.

**8. 23/00099 - Active Travel Schemes**

*(Item 9)*

*Simon Jones (Corporate Director, GET) was in attendance for this item*

1) Mr Baker introduced the report.

2) Members asked questions and the following was noted:

- It was hoped that more would be done in east Kent and broader geographical spread of schemes.
- Work needed to be undertaken with the district and borough councils as they had a great deal of influence on Active Travel Schemes.
- The schemes were welcomed but concerns were raised about funding of the schemes in the longer term and getting the best value for money from contractors, due to the funding arrangements of the schemes.

3) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations as outlined in the report.

**9. 23/00104 - Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) - Tranche 2 Grant Offer**

*(Item 10)*

*Stephen Pay, Planning and Operations Manager, was in attendance for this item*

1) Mr Baker introduced the report.

2) Mr Pay outlined the report.

3) Members asked questions and it was noted:

- There was some flexibility on how the funding was used in terms of bringing back services. Value for money needed to be demonstrated.

4) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations as outlined in the report.

**10. 23/00095 - Pencester Road, Dover - Northbound Bus Contraflow**

*(Item 11)*

*Stephen Pay, Planning and Operations Manager, and Barry Stiff, Senior Project Manager*

1) Mr Baker introduced the report.

2) Mr Pay and Mr Stiff outlined the report.

3) Members asked questions and the following was noted:

- There were additional on-street parking spaces available suitable for disabled parking in the immediate area. It was hoped that more people would use the buses.

4) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations as outlined in the report.

## **11. 23/00096 - Rennie Drive Fastrack Junction and Bus Lane**

*(Item 12)*

*Graham Killick, MCP Project Manager was in attendance for this item*

1) Mr Baker introduced the report.

2) Mr Killick outlined the report.

3) Members asked questions and the following was noted:

- The scheme was welcomed and it was felt that projects such as this would mean that there were fewer car journeys.

4) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations as outlined in the report.

## **12. Heritage Conservation Strategy - proposed change to Windmills policy**

*(Item 13)*

*Matthew Smyth (Director for Environment and Waste) and Lis Dyson, Heritage Conservation Manager were in attendance for this item*

1) Mr Hills introduced the report.

2) Mr Smyth outlined the report.

3) Members asked questions and the following was noted:

- It was clarified that there was to be one consultation but options to answer questions on the individual windmills.
- Concerns were raised about the placing of responsibility for the windmills on volunteers, how sustainable this was in the long term and the liability on cost for trustees. Also raised, was the concern that when in private ownership, other windmills in Kent were not all being well maintained.
- It was noted that when the windmills were acquired, the financial responsibilities of upper tier local authorities were different (particularly in the case of those acquired in the 1950s). It was felt it was important to consider the careful disposal of assets and take forward a consultation on the matter.
- The changes proposed were very specific to the divestment of the windmills and did not apply to wider heritage assets.
- Following a consultation process, a key decision would need to be made and therefore, the matter would be brought back to the committee.

4) Councillor Chittenden proposed and Mr Lewis seconded the following motion:

*To recommend that the Cabinet Member for Environment not undertake a consultation on the proposed change to the Heritage Conservation Strategy (Windmills policy).*

5) Upon being put to the vote, the motion was declared LOST.

6) RESOLVED to note the recommendations as outlined in the report.

**13. 23/00093 - Pre-Submission Draft Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2024-39 and Kent Minerals and Waste Development Scheme Update**  
*(Item 14)*

*Sharon Thompson (Head of Planning) was in attendance for this item*

1) Mr Hills introduced the report

2) Mrs Thompson outlined the report regarding the pre-submission draft of the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2024-39 and the Kent Minerals and Waste Development Scheme Update. It was clarified that what was being considered was the Minerals and Waste Local Plan. Members were not being asked to comment or consider the Mineral Sites Plan or, in particular, the nominated site at Oaken Wood, Aylesford. The Mineral Sites Plan work was not due to come before Members until the autumn of 2024 after detailed assessment work was completed.

3) Further to questions from Members, it was noted that:

- It was explained that in relation to the nominated site at Oaken Wood, which was designated as a PAWS site (Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites), it was the soils that are the vital component, rather than the trees themselves.
- The amount of aggregate based upon the government's calculations showed that there was a shortfall in hard rock, hence there was a need for a call for sites as part of the plan making process. How the need was to be met, was a matter for the Sites Plan work.
- There was a policy set out in the plan for circumstances where development was proposed for the Dungeness Nuclear Power site and for certain types of development at the site also required an environmental permit from the Environment Agency.

4) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations as outlined in the report.

**14. Work Programme**  
*(Item 15)*

RESOLVED to note the work programme.