

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 Tuesday, 14 January 2025.

PRESENT: Mr S Holden (Chairman), Mr N J Collor (Vice-Chairman), Mr M Baldock, Mr T Bond, Mr C Broadley, Mr T Cannon, Mr I S Chittenden, Mr D Crow-Brown, Ms M Dawkins, Mr M Dendor, Mr A R Hills, Mr M A J Hood, Mr H Rayner, Mr D Robey and Mr A Sandhu, MBE

ALSO PRESENT:

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms H Chughtai (Director of Highways and Transportation), Mr M Smyth (Director of Environment and Waste), Mr P Lightowler (Head of Public Transport), Mr L Burchill (Major Capital Programme Manager), Mr D Joyner (Transport & Development Manager), Ms S Reddick, Mr D Shipton (Head of Finance Policy, Planning and Strategy), Ms H Shulver (Head of Environment) and Mr M Wagner (Chief Analyst)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Ms Kelly Grehan.

2. Declarations of Interest

(Item 3)

No declarations of interest were received.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 14/11/24

(Item 4)

- a) It was highlighted that the resolution on item 10 of the meeting on 14 November 2024 should include a specific recommendation to the Cabinet Member regarding Bus Franchise Model options for Kent, rather than it being referenced in the general records of the discussion. It was confirmed that this could be corrected.

RESOLVED that, subject to the correction being made, the minutes be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

4. Draft Revenue Budget 2025-26 and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2025-28 Update, and Draft Capital Programme 2025-35

(Item 5)

Peter Oakford, Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services presented and Kevin Tilson, GET Finance Business Partner were in attendance.

1. Mr Oakford introduced the Budget report, setting out the report's pathway and updates since the Committee's last report in November 2024. He invited the Cabinet Members to add any areas specific to the portfolios of environment and transport, and these were:
 - a. Funding received for the Extended Producer Responsibility was being held in an earmarked reserve.
 - b. Confirmation of a further year's funding for the Bus Service Improvement Plan Funding
 - c. Confirmation of the Highways Maintenance funding.
2. The Committee were invited to ask questions and provide comment.
3. A Member shared their frustrations about an ongoing lack of information provided to Joint Transportation Boards around which highways schemes were to be completed or not, along with what would happen to agreed schemes were local devolution to be agreed. Mr Oakford explained that the priority and delivery of individual schemes was outside the scope of the Budget item. He did note that highways projects would still be a responsibility of authorities in Kent and it was not clear what role the Mayor would play in this. Ms Chughtai offered to speak to the Member outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED that the administration's draft revenue and capital budget proposals be noted.

5. Verbal update by Cabinet Members and Corporate Director
(Item 6)

Neil Baker, Cabinet Member for Transport and Robert Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment, presented their updates. Haroona Chughtai, Director of Highways was also in attendance.

1. Mr. Baker stated that on the 28th November, Louise Hague, the former Secretary of State for Transport, launched a call for ideas for the new integrated National Transport Strategy. This was to be a new transport strategy for England that aimed to achieve an coherent and integrated network to give people choice to meet their needs and underpin economic growth and planning. The Transport Strategy team had drafted a response with input from across Highways and Transportation, Public Rights of Way, which sat under Mrs. Bell, and Public Health under Mr. Watkins, as well as from members through the all-member briefing that was held on the 8th January. The draft response was to be finalised, and Mr. Baker's approval was to be sought before submitting it by the deadline, which was the 30th January.
2. From the 10th December to the 7th March, Transport for the Southeast was running a public consultation to help inform its new draft transport strategy. The new draft transport strategy set out its vision for the Southeast region, highlighting plans to use transport to grow the economy and connect communities for the decades ahead. The draft strategy included five missions

to make life better for everyone: strategic connectivity, resilience, inclusion and integration, decarbonisation, and sustainable growth. It included plans to improve key railways and roads across the Southeast, as well as local public transport and access to major ports and airports. The transport strategy team was preparing a response and was seeking input from members in the coming weeks.

3. Public transport was entering a busy time of year, when the team would be processing the renewal of 20,000 expiring Older People with Disabilities passes between January and the end of March. A process of smart renewal had been in place and used for the past seven years.
4. BSIP funding had been used to defer the need to reintroduce the membership fee on Kent Karrier. Officers were writing to members to advise them of this. Members of the scheme were to be asked to confirm their details, but the charge would not be introduced again for the upcoming year, as had been first suggested. The £2 fare cap was to be retained on the Kent Thameside fast track until the introduction of their electric fleet in April 2025. This reflected the interim nature of the service at that time.
5. The Rennie Drive bus priority scheme for Kent Thameside had been operational. Mr. Baker officially opened it, and it was already showing that journey time reliability had improved. The interim service on Dover fast track had been launched, currently using specially branded low-emission Euro 6 diesel buses. Development work continued regarding the introduction of electric charging buses, which were expected in late 2025 and were developing on schedule.
6. Mr Baker noted that in response to a poor safety record, officers had been working closely with the county member and parish council representatives and had completed the installation of safety cameras at three sites along the A20 main road and in Farningham, Sevenoaks to enforce the 40-mile-an-hour limit. Since the cameras went live on the 18th November and the 6th December, Kent police had issued 231 notices of intended prosecution, and a reduction in post-scheme speeds of around five miles an hour was being observed, which was notable in terms of safety and risk.
7. The permanent traffic signals at the Sandwich toll bridge had recently been refurbished using wireless technology. A control cabinet had been installed on each side of the river to coordinate the traffic movements without the need for cables across the riverbed, which were a large maintenance liability. While this was new to Kent, the arrangement had been used elsewhere in the UK, and thanks were given to the expertise of the maintenance contractor for delivering this scheme, which could be very beneficial.
8. There had been two staff awards. The Kent Safer Road Users team had been recognised with the 2024 Prince Michael International Road Safety Award. The award was for the team's work in boosting road safety awareness among young drivers and passengers. Mr. Baker added his personal congratulations to Ross Dorman in the Highways and Transport Strategic Resilience team for being awarded the King's Police Medal in the New Year's honours. This was very well deserved for Ross' dedication to keeping Kent moving during times

of disruption over many years. Ross had played a key role in helping prepare the county for the impact of the new border controls following the UK's exit from the European Union and in helping partner agencies respond to new rules on freight drivers being introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent closure of the French border in December 2020. Mr Dorman was considered by many partner agencies responsible for highways management as a national expert.

9. Mr Baker and Ms Chughtai responded to questions of detail and noted comments, which included the following:
 - a. The use of AI to predict pothole repair locations would depend on funding from central government.
 - b. Members were updated on the progress of the Galley Hill cliff collapse. KCC worked with Thames Water to ascertain the cause of the collapse. In conjunction, work was undertaken with affected businesses and consultants to develop options to present to the government to secure funding. Updates and details were to be brought to the Committee as soon as possible. Businesses affected by the collapse were kept informed by the local member.
10. Mr. Thomas started his update by commenting on the passing of Matthew Balfour, who had been the chairman of the Kent Nature Partnership and a former Member at KCC. He paid his condolences to his friends and family. KCC continued to work hard with the Kent Nature Partnership to ensure that it was a supportive initiative for our environment agenda in Kent.
11. In regard to waste and recycling, there had been changes in the way that soft furnishings with Persistent Organic Pollutant (POP) were managed for Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs). There were three HWRCs that were unable to accept POPs: Tovil, Dartford, and Sittingbourne Church Marshes. The situation at both Tovil and Sittingbourne was temporary, and once necessary work was completed, these sites would be compliant and able to accept soft furnishings. This was a result of changes nationally.
12. Concerning the textiles and shoe recycling contract, KCC had recently re-procured this contract, and despite the significant downturn in the global market for textiles, KCC achieved a good outcome with a two-year contract with SAIT Recycling, a world-reputed textile recycling company based in Queenborough. SAIT Recycling specialised in the reuse and recycling of textiles, footwear, and accessories, ensuring that 100% of textile waste they handled was diverted from landfills. They worked with Kent-based charities, schools, and clubs from around the Southeast.
13. The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) zero-cost contract was due to be extended from April 2025 for a further 12 months, to ensure that KCC had a collection off-taker in place to take waste electrical and electronic equipment from HWRCs across the County. REPIC was a leading non-profit organisation that helped KCC comply with WEEE regulations. They provided

collection, treatment, and recycling solutions for electronic waste, ensuring KCC could meet its environmental responsibilities efficiently.

14. In regard to updates on the environment, the recent weather and flooding incidences in the County led to the River Medway flooding its banks on the 6th January, causing the car park at Teston Bridge Country Park to be closed for one day before reopening to the public. The flood water backed up the pipes in the toilets, causing the pump to fail. The toilets remained closed to the public while repairs were organised, he apologised to the public for any inconvenience.
15. The public consultation on the draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy was soon to be launched, running for eight weeks until 12th March. This was a consultation with Kent and Medway residents and other stakeholders, giving them the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft strategy. The responses to the consultation were to be analysed, and a consultation report outlining the feedback received would be published. The feedback would be used to help finalise the strategy, prior to publication in summer 2025.
16. A member suggested the electric waste collections scheme be promoted more widely and Mr Thomas welcomed ideas on ways to achieve this.

RESOLVED that the verbal updates be noted.

6. Performance Dashboard

(Item 7)

Matt Wagner, Chief Analyst presented the report. Neil Baker was also in attendance.

1. This was the fourth performance dashboard for the 2024-25 financial year and included data up to the end of October 2024. There were 17 key performance indicators (KPIs); 13 were rated green, 4 were rated amber and 1 was rated red. The red rating related to emergency incidents attended to inside of two hours.
2. Mr. Baker assured members that all incidents were addressed. During recent cold weather, several pedestrian crossings had become stuck on green or red. The challenge was reaching all locations within the two hour emergency window, leading to the red KPI rating.
3. It was agreed that regular updates on length of road works and utility company permits, would be brought to future meetings.

RESOLVED to note the Performance Dashboard.

7. Energy Performance Certificates

(Item 8)

Item deferred

8. 24/00114 - Environment Policy Refresh - Key Decision
(Item 9)

Helen Shulver, Head of Environment was in attendance.

1. Mr Thomas (Cabinet Member for Environment) presented the report, setting out the background for the key decision.
2. A Member commented that the strategic nature of the Policy may not be relatable to residents. Mr Thomas explained how residents were kept informed including through a newsletter and publicising the work of the Team. Ms Shulver added that the policy was supported by other strategies that set out plans for resident engagement.

RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision by the Cabinet Member for Environment to:

- i. Approve the revised Policy for adoption and implementation through ISO14001 Environmental Management Standard framework; and
- ii. Delegate authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy to take necessary actions including but not limited to entering into relevant contracts, or other legal agreements to implement this decision

9. 24/00125 - Countryside Partnerships SLA - Key Decision
(Item 10)

Helen Shulver, Head of Environment was in attendance and Kate Boorman, Head of Country Parks and Partnerships was in attendance virtually.

1. Mr Thomas introduced the report, setting out the background to the Key Decision. There were nine partnerships across the county, and this Decision was to approve the signing of the relevant Memorandums of Agreement. The paperwork also set out proposals to increase the annual contributions, the cost of which would be met within existing resources.
2. In response to a question, Mr Thomas confirmed the Agreements were valid for 4 years.
3. Members of the Committee offered their praise to the work of the partnerships.

RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision of the Cabinet Member for Environment to agree to:

- i. signing of the two expired Kent Countryside Management Partnerships Memorandums of Agreement, and the signing of other Memorandums of Agreement when they expire;
- ii. hosting through the MoA for the four Countryside Management Partnerships;

- iii. increase annual contributions for the four hosted Countryside Management Partnerships in line with KCC's pay strategy annual pay award.
- iv. increase annual contributions for the Countryside Management Partnerships in line with inflation; and
- v. delegate responsibility for the negotiation of any annual increase to contributions to the Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

10. 24/00110 - Vehicle Parking Standards - Key Decision

(Item 11)

David Joyner, Transport and Development Manager was in attendance and Tim Read, Head of Transportation was in attendance virtually.

1. Mr Baker introduced the report, setting out the background to the Key Decision and updating KCC's vehicle parking standards. KCC was required to balance the rules under the National Planning Policy Framework with the reality and wishes of residents and businesses.
2. Mr Joyner responded to questions of detail and noted comments, which included the following:
 - a. A Member questioned the number of parking spaces required for new residential areas, as set out in Table 1 of the Appendix to the draft Standards. They noted that KCC were requesting 0.2 visitor spaces per unit (i.e. 20 visitor spaces per 100 units). The Member felt this should be a minimum of 0.5 per unit so there was more flexibility for residents. The Committee were in agreement that this should be recommended to the Cabinet Member.
 - b. A Member added that limited parking provision in new estates often created challenges for residents. They provided the example of those with work vans, as there was often no provision for residents to park an extra vehicle at their home.
 - c. Residential parking standards were part of the Kent Design Guide and it was intended to host these within a web-based version which was under development.

RESOLVED to:

- i. Recommend to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport that on page 118 of the agenda pack, the reference in the proposed policy of 0.2 vehicles per unit be amended to 0.5;
- ii. Subject to consideration of the specific recommendation change above, endorse the proposed decision of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to:
 - a. ADOPT the Kent County Council Vehicle Parking Standards 2024 as an approved policy; and

- b. DELEGATE authority to the Director of Highways and Transportation to take necessary actions including but not limited to entering into relevant contracts, or other legal agreements to implement this decision as shown at Appendix A.

11. 24/00111 - Network Management Framework - Key Decision

(Item 12)

Remmy Laporte, Senior Network Performance Manager presented the report virtually. Andrew Loosemore, Head of Highways, Chris Beck, Network Manager and Mr Thomas were also in attendance.

1. Mr Baker introduced the report detailing the planned activities of the Highways and Transport departments to ensure they reflected the current legislative requirements. He highlighted that there would be no financial implications of adopting the plan.
2. Mr Baker and Mr Thomas responded to questions of detail and noted comments, which included the following:
 - a. Although the report only touched upon air quality, it was noted that the Environment team would be bringing the Net Zero report to the Cabinet Committee at the meeting in February, which would cover net zero emissions. The Environment and Transport teams would be working holistically on this issue.

RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to:

- i. endorse and adopt on behalf of Kent County Council the updated Network Management Plan produced by the Network Management Team in accordance with the Traffic Management Act 2004; and
- ii. delegate authority to the Director of Highways and Transportation to take necessary actions including but not limited to entering into relevant contracts, or other legal agreements to implement this decision as shown at Appendix A.

12. Waste reforms and IAAs

(Item 13)

Matthew Smyth, Director of Environment and Waste and Susan Reddick, Head of Resource Management and Circular Economy were in attendance.

1. Mr Thomas introduced the item, followed by a presentation delivered by Mr Smyth. The presentation is appended to these minutes. The presentation covered the legislative changes, the subsequent impact on the Council and next steps.

The meeting was adjourned at 11am due to a fire alarm. The meeting reconvened at 11:45am.

2. Following the presentation, officers responded to questions of detail and noted comments, which included the following:
- a) Different boroughs had different levels of challenges with regard to recycling. Through the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), communications and support could be offered individually to help areas with lower levels of recycling. From March 2025, Simpler Recycling would be enforced, making it a requirement for all areas to recycle to a certain level.
 - b) It was confirmed that paper and cardboard lost some of their value if they became wet from the rain.
 - c) There was a trial campaign running in Dover, Folkestone and Hythe aimed at increasing the levels of food waste capture. The communications campaign included stickering bins and increasing awareness through social media to increase awareness. There had been a 10% rise in food waste collections. The trial would be extended to Canterbury.
 - d) The capacity of twin Materials Recovery Facilities (MRF) in Kent was currently sufficient to cope with a new law which would stop the co-mingling of paper.
 - e) All districts and boroughs in Kent were meeting or exceeding their statutory responsibilities to collect two recyclable materials separate from the general waste, as per the government system put in place in 1990. The new legislation provided an opportunity to increase recycling rates significantly.
 - f) There were several factors behind the national decline in recycling rates. For example, packaging companies were incentivised to make their packaging lighter, which affected recycling rates, as they were based on tonnage. Although the same volume of waste was being collected, the actual weight was reducing. In addition, the legislation had changed for wood recycling, meaning that the quality of some of the wood did not meet the recycling standards which led to it being incinerated. However, new trial schemes were blending recyclable and lower-quality wood to improve recycling rates.
 - g) Behavioural change was a hugely complex area to deal with. Enabling people to recycle easily was an important area to focus on. It was suggested that an annual survey would help understand the barriers people faced when it came to recycling and how they changed over time.
 - h) It was important to demonstrate the benefit of investing in recycling schemes by evidencing an increase in recycling rates.

RESOLVED to note the report.

13. A229 Blue Bell Hill Update

(Item 14)

Lee Burchill, Major Capital Programme Manager and Victoria Soames, Major Capital Programme Manager were in attendance.

1. Mr Burchill introduced the report which provided an update on the delivery of the Improvement Scheme. A further public consultation was due shortly. Mr Baker noted the increased cost of the Scheme due to inflationary pressures but considered the importance of its completion.
2. Members of the Committee agreed on the need for the improvements.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

14. 24/00123 - Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Funding

(Item 15)

Phil Lightowler, Head of Public Transport was in attendance.

1. Mr Lightowler introduced the report, setting out the planned use for the BSIP funding. This included the protection of the current bus network and new fare initiatives alongside service enhancements and bus shelter improvements.
2. Mr Baker and Mr Lightowler responded to questions of detail and noted comments, which included the following:
 - a) A Member commented on the need to replace some bus shelters which were not fit for purpose.
 - b) A Member remarked on the need for rail and bus companies to work together to enhance public transport for Kent residents. Mr Lightowler shared that officers had discussed new technology for integrating bus and rail ticketing with Southeastern Railways' new integration manager.
 - c) A Member commended the officer's work on this report, highlighting their support for the improvements to accessibility and punctuality improvement partnerships.

RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to:

- i. accept Kent's BSIP and BSOG Government funding allocations for financial year 2025/26. This consists of £10,120,289 Revenue and £11,926,302 Capital BSIP and £1,087,788 BSOG funding.
- ii. delegate authority to the Council's Corporate Director of Growth Environment & Transport, and the Section 151 Officer to formally accept this funding and related terms and conditions through the completion and return of anticipated formal award documentation from Government.

- iii. delegate authority to the Council's Corporate Director of Growth Environment & Transport, and the Section 151 Officer to agree and submit Kent's Delivery Plan in response to the funding offer, working to the principles of Value for Money (VfM) and consistent with the principles and potential initiatives in Kent's 2024 BSIP.
- iv. delegate to the Corporate Director of Growth Environment & Transport to take necessary actions including but not limited to entering into relevant contracts, or other legal agreements to implement this decision

15. Work Programme

(Item 16)

RESOLVED to note the Work Programme.

- (a) **FIELD**
- (b) **FIELD_TITLE**