

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee held Online on Tuesday, 18 January 2022.

PRESENT: Mr S Holden (Chairman), Mr R C Love, OBE (Vice-Chairman), Mr Baker, Mr M Baldock, Mr C Beart, Mr T Bond, Mr I S Chittenden, Mr N J Collor, Mr D Crow-Brown, Ms M Dawkins, Mr M Dendor, Mr A R Hills, Mrs S Hudson, Mr B H Lewis, Mrs L Parfitt-Reid and Mr D Watkins

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P J Oakford (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services), Mr D L Brazier (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport), Miss S J Carey (Cabinet Member for Environment), Mr M A J Hood, Mr H Rayner and Ms L Wright

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr S Jones (Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport), Mrs S Holt-Castle (Director of Growth and Communities), Mr P Lightowler (Interim Director of Transportation) and Mr M Dentten (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

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

No declarations were made.

47. Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2021 (Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2021 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

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

1. The chairman informed the committee that Barbara Cooper, formerly Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, had been awarded an MBE in the New Year Honours, for services to Transport and the Covid-19 Response.
2. Mr Brazier gave a verbal update. He informed members that he had visited the newly renovated Swanley and Maidstone East train stations, which KCC secured funding for through the South East Local Enterprise Partnership. He confirmed that Ashford Truckstop had opened in December 2021 and accommodated overnight lorry parking facilities. He noted that he had attended the ADEPT Live Labs Expo in Derby. Regarding the London Gatwick emergency runway consultation, he informed members that KCC had submitted its strong opposition to the proposal.

RESOLVED that the verbal update be noted.

49. Petition Scheme Debate - Proposed cycle lanes in Cheriton

(Item 7)

1. The chairman informed the committee that the lead petitioner would no longer be addressing the committee.
2. Mr Love, as a local member, provided a verbal overview of the petition statement and outlined the anticipated impact of the proposed cycle lanes, which included a negative impact on local businesses as a result of decreased roadside parking. He acknowledged the significant level of public support and confirmed that two public meetings involving himself and Mr Jeffrey were held in October 2021 to understand the possible local impact of the proposals.
3. Mr Brazier responded to the petition. He confirmed that a public consultation had taken place and that following the local response the scheme would not proceed. He noted that there would be further investigations into other ways to facilitate active travel in the area and that these proposals would be brought to the committee in due course. He made a commitment to work with local members on future schemes of a similar nature.
4. Mr Love proposed and Mr Holden seconded a motion that **“the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee:**
 - a) **note the petition and thank Mr John Baker, the lead petitioner and proprietor of County Hardware, Cheriton, for taking the time to submit his petition;**
 - b) **join with the petitioner in recommending to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation not to proceed with the current Cheriton active travel scheme; and**
 - c) **recommend that the Cabinet Member works with the local Members to consider the feasibility of alternative proposals which safeguard the economic vibrancy of Cheriton High Street.”**
5. The motion was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED to:

- a) note the petition and thank Mr John Baker, the proprietor of County Hardware, Cheriton, for taking the time to submit his petition;
- b) join with the petitioner in recommending to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation not to proceed with the current Cheriton active travel scheme; and
- c) recommend that the Cabinet Member works with the local Members to consider the feasibility of alternative proposals which safeguard the economic vibrancy of Cheriton High Street.

50. 21/00118 - Active Travel Capital Projects

(Item 9)

Nikola Floodgate (Schemes Planning and Delivery Manager) was in attendance for this item.

1. Mrs Floodgate gave a technical overview of the proposed executive decision and related scheme, which included scheme timelines, public consultation results and reference to previous projects of a similar nature endorsed by the committee.
2. Mr Chittenden highlighted the improved arrangements for the Active Travel Tranche 2 schemes in comparison to Tranche 1. He noted that greater time for consultation and assessment of each scheme's impact were the main reasons for the improvement. Mr Brazier reminded members of the tight time constraints set by the Department for Transport in Tranche 1 which impact the ability to hold a full scoping and public consultation process.
3. Ms Dawkins thanked the officers involved in the proposed scheme for cooperating with her as the local member and noted the significant level of public support.
4. Mr Watkins reminded members of the important benefits related to active travel, which included: health, environmental and economic improvements.
5. Mrs Wright asked that disabled access be considered in all future schemes and that electric charging points for mobility scooters be investigated, if within the funding guidelines. Mrs Floodgate agreed to investigate the request with the Department for Transport.

RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to proceed to the detailed design and then construction of the Canterbury: Littlebourne to City Centre Active Travel scheme.

51. 21/00116 - National Bus Strategy and Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan: Next Steps and implementation of Kent Enhanced Partnerships

(Item 10)

Stephen Pay (Public Transport Planning and Operations Manager) and Dan Bruce (Policy, Infrastructure and Community Transport Manager) were in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Brazier explained the reasons for the proposed executive key decision and informed members of the deadline, set by the Department for Transport, of April 2022 to form Enhanced Partnership Agreements with bus operators. He gave a summary of developments to that point. He confirmed that KCC had not yet received confirmation of its funding allocation from the Department for Transport. Mr Lightowler further explained that a function of Enhanced Partnerships was to act as a mechanism for funding bus service investment.
2. Mr Bruce gave an overview of the National Bus Strategy. A number of key points were highlighted and included: that local authorities were enablers of

bus service improvements; that incentives in ticketing infrastructure were required; that £1.2bn had been allocated to the strategy nationally; and that public feedback had been used to inform the contents of the strategy. He confirmed that the Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan included 47 proposals, which would be open for public consultation. He informed members that confirmation of the funding allocation was expected in February 2022. He noted that bus usage in Kent stood at 60% of its pre-pandemic level, with Government subsidising operators to March 2022.

3. Mr Baldock raised his concerns that the deadlines set by the Department for Transport would lead to a hurried allocation of funding, which could impact transport links across Kent. Mr Lightowler reassured members that the service planning process took account of usage, geography, service patterns and operators.
4. Mr Love commented that bus operators were capable of engaging customers and making service improvements without KCC oversight. He asked that digital displays at bus stops be installed to the greatest possible extent.
5. Mr Bond observed that there had been a trend of falling bus use before the pandemic. He asked what could be done to encourage car users to use public transport. Mr Lightowler confirmed that increasing bus usage was a core principle of the strategy, with a dual focus on pandemic recovery and medium term growth.
6. Members asked that the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport write to the Department for Transport highlighting concerns related to the deadlines associated with the National Bus Strategy and the possible impact they could have on delivery.

RESOLVED to endorse the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on the proposed decision to support the proposed next steps and specifically the Executive Decision to form Enhanced Partnership Schemes.

52. Draft Ten Year Capital Programme, Revenue Budget 2022-23 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2022-25

(Item 8)

Peter Oakford (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services), Zena Cooke (Corporate Director of Finance), Dave Shipton (Head of Finance Policy, Planning and Strategy) and Cath Head (Head of Finance Operations) were in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Oakford introduced the Draft Ten Year Capital Programme, Revenue Budget 2022-23 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2022-25 proposals. He addressed the financial context that the budget had been drafted in, which included continued costs related to the pandemic, changes in work practices and increases in service demand. He confirmed that the Ten Year Capital Programme had been drafted to prevent project slippage. Regarding borrowing, he reassured members that it would only be used if required to fulfil statutory duties. He stated that whilst central government funding and the tax base had increased, that they would not cover costs increases without

savings. Further reassurance was given that future savings would go out for public consultations and involve individual executive key decisions.

2. Mr Jones provided a technical overview of the £173.8m Growth, Environment and Transport portion of the draft revenue budget, which represented a £3.7m reduction from 2021-22. He addressed the key financial challenges faced by the directorate which included scarcity in supply, price increases, asset investment requirements and increased service demand. He reassured the committee that the directorate's financial position was sustainable. Addressing the £1.5bn capital budget, he confirmed that most of the programme was funded through government grants and external funding. He raised concerns at the reduction in Department for Transport highways asset management grant funding from £73m to £59m.
3. Mr Brazier addressed key budget developments within his portfolio. He explained the cost pressures and acknowledged the complexity of the revenue budget. He confirmed that a reduction in the subsidy of the Kent Travel Saver scheme was included in the draft budget, which necessitated a price increase in the pass from £370 to £450 per academic year. The committee were informed that a separate key decision would be taken following the approval of the budget at County Council on 10 February. He highlighted a proposed £300,000 investment in rural swathe maintenance, which sought to support KCC's commitments to biodiversity. He added that in excess of £500,000 had been allocated to fund Active Travel and Vision Zero projects.
4. Mr Baldock commented that given recent increases in population and service demand it was difficult to provide the same levels of service without further Government grant funding. He raised his concerns at the impact of the reduction in highways asset management grant funding on the network.
5. Ms Dawkins shared her concerns at the possible impact of the Kent Travel Saver price increase on families given the additional financial burden. Mr Brazier recognised the impact and acknowledged the difficulty faced in setting a balanced budget. He added that the subsidy of the scheme was non-statutory. He addressed alternative options which included withdrawing the scheme altogether and stated that the proposed change represented a lesser of two evils.

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

53. Decisions taken between Cabinet Committee Meetings

(Item 6)

1. Miss Carey explained that key decision 21/00109, Kings Hill Solar Park, was taken between meetings of the Cabinet Committee due to related Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding deadlines and the associated land purchase involved in facilitating the project. She made members aware that future key decisions funded through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme may need to be taken in accordance with urgent decision protocol, given the time constraints.

RESOLVED to note that decision 21/00109, Kings Hill Solar Park was taken between meetings of the Cabinet Committee in accordance with the process set out in the Council's constitution.

54. Ash Die-back Annual Report

(Item 12)

Tony Harwood (Resilience and Emergency Planning Manager) was in attendance for this item.

1. Miss Carey introduced the report, stressed the importance of ash trees to Kent's environment and acknowledged the threat posed by ash die-back.
2. Mr Harwood provided a technical overview of developments. He noted that it had been almost 10 years since ash die-back had been identified in the UK and that members had previously agreed to take an evidence based approach. He confirmed that European ash was the most widespread tree species in the county, with significant prevalence in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and along the Greensand Ridge. Regarding tree removal, he reassured members that this only happens for health and safety purposes and that surveyors monitor areas year on year. Further reassurance was given that the containment policy enacted in Kent ensured good biosecurity. Concerning the severity of the disease, he recognised that it has not proved as destructive in the county as originally forecast, with urban trees seemingly better protected from infection than trees growing in woodland.

RESOLVED to:

- a) note the significant threat Ash Dieback poses to the environment and economy of Kent;
- b) acknowledge the local and national leadership role of the County Council in its response to the pathogen and the resultant environmental and financial benefits that have accrued from the science-led response; and
- c) endorse the planning, monitoring and response contingencies outlined within this report.

55. 21/00123 - Household Waste Recycling Centre Booking

(Item 11)

David Beaver (Head of Waste and Business Services) and Hannah Allard (Waste Business Development Manager) were in attendance for this item.

1. Miss Carey introduced the proposed key decision and explained the intention to permanently operate a booking system for customers accessing KCC's Household Waste Recycling Centres. She highlighted that the public consultation had received the largest number of responses of any KCC consultation in recent years.
2. Mr Beaver gave an overview of the temporary booking system and the operational benefits of using the system permanently. He confirmed that the

system had been developed by bookinglab, that there were no booking limits and that bookings could be amended and cancelled. He informed members that a £1.3m saving was expected as a result of the proposed decision. He noted that whilst the number of trips made to sites had decreased since the adoption of the temporary booking system, that the volume of waste received had increased by 10%. Addressing site traffic, he confirmed that queuing on high speed road network has been eradicated as a result of the system.

3. Hannah Allard gave a presentation. Topics covered in the presentation included: the booking system offer; environmental, customer, operational and financial benefits; and the public consultation process and results.
4. Mr Hills shared his positive experience using the same day booking arrangement at the New Romney Centre and that there was significant local support for the proposal.
5. Mr Love stated that he would be unable to endorse the proposed decision on the basis that he believed it constituted a continuation of Covid-19 emergency measures.
6. Mr Lewis proposed and Mr Baldock seconded a motion that **“the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee recommends that the Cabinet Member for Environment considers the adoption of a hybrid Household Waste Recycling Centre booking system, comprised of a Wednesday to Saturday booking arrangement and Sunday to Tuesday non-booking arrangement.”**
7. Members voted on the motion. The motion was lost.

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

- a) the Waste Management service to permanently operate a booking system for customers to access Kent County Council’s Household Waste Recycling Centres: and
- b) the Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport to keep progress of the booking system under review and to inherit the main delegations via the Officer Scheme of Delegation to make any further operational changes to the booking system to maximise customer service.

56. Presentation from Southern Water

(Item 13)

Dr Toby Willison (Director of Environment and Corporate Affairs, Southern Water) was in attendance for this item.

1. Dr Willison gave a presentation. Topics covered in the presentation included: the Environment Agency Court Case and £90m fine; investments in Kent, 2020-2025; 2040 targets; the water challenge; nutrient neutrality; combined sewer and overflow operations; reducing storm overflows; Combined Sewer

Overflows Task Force; Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans; work with developers; and areas for cooperation with KCC members.

2. Mr Lewis explained that residents in his division had been affected by wastewater releases and asked whether executives at Southern Water had received bonuses during the period. Dr Willison apologised and confirmed that a review of the company's bonus system had been overseen by its remuneration committee, with the CEO not taking a bonus for the previous 3 years.
3. Mr Baker, who's division included the Swalecliffe facility, gave an overview of developments over the last year including the negative impact of untreated wastewater releases on the local population and business. He shared his concerns with the infrastructure in place and stressed the need to increase resilience within the water treatment and storage system. He asked that investment in a rapid testing and response mechanism be undertaken. Dr Willison highlighted the Beachbuoy system which provided a simple real-time water monitor and was set for deployment in Herne Bay. He added that new features would be ready for the 2022 Bathing Water season.
4. In response to a question from Ms Dawkins, Dr Willison confirmed that ultraviolet solutions were used at the Swalecliffe facility as a treatment measure.
5. Mr Hills asked for further information on Southern Water's strategy to address increasingly frequent extreme weather events. Dr Willison agreed to provide the request information in a future update.
6. Mr Baldock asked that Southern Water's ability to accommodate planned residential developments be included in future updates.
7. Following a question from Mrs Parfitt-Reid, Dr Willison confirmed that the £90m fine had been paid to HM Treasury.
8. Mr Hood stated that Southern Water needed to improve communication with residents affected by future developments and mitigation measures.
9. The chairman asked for examples of KCC-Southern Water cooperation opportunities. Dr Willison spoke on the importance of collaborating to reduce the impact of surface water runoff, aligning infrastructure investment was highlighted, with the importance of the relationship between KCC Highways and Southern Water noted.
10. The chairman thanked Dr Willison for his attendance and commitment to update the committee later in the year.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the presentation and ask that Southern Water report back to the committee in autumn 2022.

57. 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 October 2021. She confirmed that of the 19 key performance indicators within the remit of environment and transport, 15 had been RAG rated green, 4 amber and 0 red. She acknowledged that this reflected good overall performance.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

58. Work Programme

(Item 15)

1. The chairman confirmed that the following items had been added to the work programme:
 - a. Traffic Management Act Part 6 update
 - b. Southern Water update
2. Ms Dawkins asked that an update on Kent's cycling network be added to the work programme.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.