

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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, 7 March 2023.

PRESENT: Mr S Holden (Chairman), Mr N J Collor (Vice-Chairman), Mr T Bond, Mr I S Chittenden, Mr D Crow-Brown, Ms M Dawkins, Mr A R Hills, Mrs S Hudson, Mr B H Lewis, Mr H Rayner, Mr A Sandhu, MBE 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), Ms H Chughtai (Director of Highways and Transportation), Mr M Smyth (Director of Environment and Waste) and Mr M Dentten (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

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

No declarations were made.

138. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2023 (Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2023 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the chairman.

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

1. Miss Carey and Mr Brazier reminded the committee that their quarterly portfolio briefings, on Environment and Waste and Highways and Transport respectively, had been circulated to members ahead of the meeting and provided an overview of recent developments.
2. Mr Brazier provided a verbal update. Concerning the severe weather in December and January which had deteriorated the highway network, he noted that almost four times as many potholes had been reported in winter 2022/23, when compared to winter 2021/22, and assured the committee that all available resources had been deployed to repair the damage. He informed the committee that he had attended an event in Westminster along with members of parliament and members of East Sussex County Council who were keen to take forward plans to construct a high-speed rail route from Manston to Bournemouth, along the south coast, using in part the Marsh link to Brighton, it was noted that the plans were in their infancy and that no sense of how it would be funded had been

established. Concerning the Buses in Kent member working group, he told members that the group was now established, with Mr Chard as its chairman. Regarding Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding, he confirmed that the Department for Transport had begun payment of £19m of funding to KCC for delivery of agreed initiatives in 2023/24, members were reminded that the remaining £16m of KCC's full allocation of £35m was still to be secured and was in part subject to the delivery of the 2023/24 initiatives. Regarding the formal governance for accepting the funding, he explained that the proposed decision to accept the £19m funding had not come to the cabinet committee meeting as there was not time to accord with the constitution and an urgent key decision was required to accept the funding by the Department for Transport's deadline. He committed to keep members informed on the issue and had an all-member briefing scheduled for 17 March. Addressing community bus services, he confirmed that £425,000 had been made available for initiatives, with 25 bids received of which 19 were eligible and 13 were selected for awards. The committee were told that KCC had made it clear to the Mayor of London that the authority did not support his plan to extend the Ultra Low Emissions Zone (ULEZ) to the border with Kent and joined other home counties in refusing to enter an agreement to permit signage in Kent unless the Mayor agreed to a scrappage scheme for residents with non-compliant vehicles. He added that the Leader had subsequently received a response from the Mayor, which largely denied the requirements which KCC had set out. He concluded his update by noting that the local cycling and walking infrastructure group continued to meet and would soon be examining the final sift of schemes, to be submitted to the Active Travel England for approval and funding.

3. Mr Jones gave a verbal update. He provided a comprehensive overview of recent operational developments. Winter service was addressed, with it noted that 525 precautionary salt routes had been completed in February and that salt bins and jumble bags had been replenished, with 11,000 tonnes of KCC's 23,000 tonne salt stock having been used over the winter. Further information was provided on the measures in place to repair the high volume of surface defects on KCC's highway network, it was also explained that access to resources and the cost of materials was putting pressure on the service. He noted that work was also underway with the County Councils Network (CCN) to lobby government for additional funding. Concerning correspondence with members of the public, he explained that there had been a number of delays, with some of the expected times to reply not meeting the expected standards and apologised for the recent performance. Members were given assurances that additional resources had been allocated to improve performance. Regarding major projects, he confirmed that construction of the Bath Street contraflow bus scheme in Gravesend was due to start on 13 March, with Jackson Civil Engineering appointed as the contractor. He confirmed that KCC had submitted representations relating to the proposed Lower Thames Crossing, noting the Council's support and need for the local highway network to be upgraded should the scheme be approved. It was explained that the Planning Inspectorate was expected to start the examination stage later in the year, which would last for approximately six months before making a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport. He concluded by informing the committee that recent Household Waste Recycling Centre customer feedback had been overwhelming positive, with: 96% of respondents either satisfied or extremely satisfied with their visit; 95% of respondents finding it

extremely easy or easy to use the booking system; and 99% of people getting a booking either on the exact day they wanted or an acceptable alternative date.

RESOLVED to note the updates.

140. Performance Dashboard

(Item 6)

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

1. Ms Kennard gave a verbal summary of the fifth performance dashboard for 2022/23, up to December 2022. She confirmed that of the 17 key performance indicators within the remit of environment and transport, 9 had been RAG rated green, 6 amber and 2 red. She addressed the two red indicators, WM01 (Municipal waste recycled and composted) and WM03 (Waste recycled and composted at Household Waste Recycling Centres), reminding the committee that the indicators had been impacted by in-year regulatory changes and lower volumes of organic waste that resulted from dry summer weather. She verified that overall performance was strong.
2. Mr Bond asked why pothole blitz statistics weren't contained in indicator HT01b (potholes repaired (as routine works and not programmed)) and whether, taking the completion rate into account, outstanding potholes would be repaired on time. Mr Jones clarified that the pothole blitz programme predominately involved large pre-planned patching works which targeted multiple surface defects in a single activity. He agreed to consider how best to present the performance of both areas. He reminded the committee that a significant quantity of street works were the result of utility, telecom or developer works, which KCC had no power to prevent. He gave reassurance that enforcement was taken seriously and that fixed penalties, from £250 for local roads, up to £10,000 for strategic routes, were issued for delayed or poor-quality works.
3. Following a question from Mr Rayner, Mr Smyth confirmed that indicator WM01 had been impacted by the Environment Agency's Regulatory Position Statement 249 published in July 2022, which allowed potentially hazardous waste wood received at Household Waste Recycling Centres to move as un-assessed, non-hazardous material as long as it was destined for biomass or the manufacture of panel board. He further explained that the Statement would be in effect until the end of March 2024.

RESOLVED to note the Performance Dashboard.

141. Corporate Risk Register

(Item 7)

Mark Scrivener (Corporate Risk and Assurance Manager) was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Scrivener introduced the Corporate Risk Register and addressed the three corporate risks which related to environment and transport: border fluidity, infrastructure, and regulatory arrangements; impact of Climate Change on

KCC services; and Home to School Transport. An additional overview of the Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate risk profile was provided and contained eight risks: skills shortage and capacity issues; Health and Safety, and wellbeing considerations; funding sufficiency for Net Zero ambitions; identification, planning and delivery of Medium-Term Financial Plan targets; Capital Investment and Asset Management; failure of ICT systems; delivery of in-year budget targets; and services provided to the Directorate that do not meet an acceptable standard. He welcomed the committee's comments and suggestions.

2. Concerning risk CRR0042 (Border fluidity, infrastructure, and regulatory arrangements) members commented that greater pressure needed to be put on government to reduce the impact of border control on the local highway network, residents, businesses and the movement of goods and services throughout the county. Mr Jones addressed government's new Entry/Exit System (EES) protocol which would take effect in November 2023. He provided additional detail on the Kent Resilience Forum's (KRF) involvement and noted that the February half term had been a watershed moment, with Operation Brock not being deployed, improvements to data and better collaboration with French authorities. He reminded the committee of the anticipated impact the recently approved £45m Levelling Up Fund supported scheme, to improve infrastructure and traffic flow to the EU through the Port of Dover, would have in improving the local road network.
3. In relation to risk GT0026 (Funding sufficiency for Net Zero ambitions), Miss Carey provided members with assurance that additional internal and external funding continued to be sought, with examples of successful bids provided. The impact of recent investment on the Council's carbon reduction and increases to revenue through Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funded projects were detailed. She reminded members that there was limited opportunity for the Council to borrow and that there were many competing statutory needs.
4. Mr Smyth confirmed, following a question from Ms Dawkins, that risk CRR0052 (impact of Climate Change on KCC services) addressed the anticipated impact of climate change on services delivered by KCC, with the risk considering the extent that KCC would need to adapt.

RESOLVED to consider and comment on the risks presented.

142. Southern Water - Presentation

(Item 8)

Nick Mills (Head of Clean Rivers and Seas Task Force, Southern Water) and John Mealey (Stakeholder Engagement Manager (Kent) Southern Water) were in virtual attendance for this item.

1. Mr Mills gave a presentation. The contents of the presentation included: Beachbuoy scheme modelling; water quality testing; storm overflows; delivery of the Deal, Margate and Swalecliffe Pathfinder schemes; collaboration with partners; and capital investment in Kent, including £89m on enhancement

works at wastewater treatment works in Kent between 2020-2025 and planned increases in the flow passed forward for full treatment at 13 sites.

2. Following a series of questions from the committee, Mr Mills confirmed that:
 - a. information would be released in May 2023 explaining how Southern Water would deliver against its commitments to reduce overflows and pollution over the next five years, with a long-term plan to be published in 2024;
 - b. the rollout of future Pathfinder schemes elsewhere in Kent depended on the Environment Agency and Ofwat's regulation regime as well as local supply chains, with a specialist high skilled workforce required to deliver schemes effectively;
 - c. that Southern Water's £90m fine sentenced by the Environment Agency had been paid from shareholder contributions; and
 - d. that details of the company's programme of wastewater treatment in Edenbridge and its use of the River Eden would be given to members.
3. Members were invited to provide the presenters with written questions for answering following the meeting.

RESOVLED to note the contents of the presentation.

143. Work Programme

(Item 9)

The following items were added to the work programme:

- A report on road closures (including communication, compliance and enforcement)
- A report reviewing the highway aspects of planning applications

RESOLVED to approve the work programme.