

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 6 March 2024 at the Council Chamber - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

PRESENT:

Cllr Roger Whyborn	Cllr Vernon Smith
Cllr Susan Williams	Cllr Chloe Turner (Chair)
Cllr Gill Moseley	Cllr Emma Nelson (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Alan Preest	Cllr Brian Tipper
Cllr Dr David Willingham	Cllr Wendy Thomas

Apologies: Cllr Sajid Patel

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 6 March 2024 were approved as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

4. BUS SUBSIDY PROCESS

4.1 The Chair invited Tom Main, Integrated Transport Manager, to present this item. Members noted the following points:

- GCC, as the local transport authority, was responsible for using public funds to subsidise parts of the bus network that were not covered by the commercial sector where possible and appropriate. The Council could also part-subsidise a particular route if required to provide more frequent or later services, for example.
- In the previous financial year, the Council spent £5.2m subsidising bus services, which represented a big increase from pre-pandemic when it would usually average £3.5m per year. This increase however did not represent a major increase in the bus network, it was as a result of the lasting effects of Covid on passenger levels, resulting in loss of revenue and cancellation of commercial services which have had to be supported by GCC.
- GCC's subsidy budget covered three distinct types of bus services: timetabled services, Community Transport and Demand Response Transport.
- There were no specific criteria from the Department for Transport (DfT) on what the Council needed to subsidise and it was up to the individual authority to choose what was best for their area. Councils had a responsibility to promote stability and growth in the network.
- All contracts were procured through a Dynamic Purchasing System, an online marketplace which ensured as wide a reach as possible, at the

best possible price. A calculation of 'cost per passenger trip' was used to assess the value for money of a subsidised service.

- In terms of new subsidy funding, this could be sourced from new housing developments, internal bids to the yearly budget setting process and government funding.

Questions

- 4.2 In response to a question, it was advised that during the lifetime of a subsidy contract, be that the full 7 years or less, officers would be constantly monitoring its activity and cost per passenger trip calculations, looking out for any anomalies. The Council also had the option to vary a contract during its term which allowed for slight changes, for example, if a new housing development was built and the bus route could easily add a stop to accommodate these residents. If a new commercial service was launched within the contract period that served the same area, this would also trigger a review process to see if the subsidised route was still needed. Officers were in regular contact with operators as well who were supportive in sharing information to steer variations where they noticed a need.
- 4.3 The Council promoted services where possible through roadside displays, real time bus information and through the joint funding of the travel line journey planner with regional colleagues. Promotion was also a major area of focus for the new Enhanced Partnership to improve cooperation with operators in this area.
- 4.4 Several members raised the issue of transparency in relation to the subsidised services, suggesting that many of the questions residents were asking would be clarified if the Council was more transparent about which routes were subsidised and why. Members welcomed the news that officers were currently working on a webpage to publish this information which would allow more instant access to information for residents.
- 4.5 A member asked for more information about the recovery of passenger numbers since Covid. Officers advised that the current passenger level across the entire bus network was about 80% of the pre-pandemic level, there was a huge amount of detail available on this, but generally speaking the areas of better recovery tended to be urban areas and rural areas were seeing a mixture, there was however a lot of additional context within these generalisations, and the same patterns were being seen countrywide. If a route was very dependent on the use of concessionary passes, its recovery had tended to be slower, as had services such as park and ride.
- 4.6 In the event of cross boarder services being subsidised, an agreement would be made where either, one of the authorities held the contact and the other paid a contribution, or, if there were multiple cross boarder services, one authority would pay for one service, and the other the second service and so forth.

- 4.7 There was a discussion about funding received from Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) via housing development from the district councils. Members were reminded that five of the six district authorities now used CIL and the Forest of Dean remained using S106. Stroud and the Cotswolds had set up a formal bidding process to which GCC annually submitted its bids for infrastructure needs in those areas. Cheltenham, Gloucester, and Tewkesbury were in the process of creating some form of governance arrangements to enable a similar process but to date, GCC had not received a penny of CIL funding from these three authorities. It was added that the Government had now made it a requirement on local authorities to produce and publish a yearly Infrastructure Funding Statement to outline what CIL monies they had received and spent. The latest copies for Gloucestershire would be shared with members.

ACTION: Simon Excell

- 4.8 A member asked what impact the national £2 travel fare and introduction of 'The Robin' service had had on passenger numbers. It was shared that the £2 fare was a direct funding arrangement between the DfT and operators so the council had no direct involvement but from what was understood, the fare reduction was having a positive impact on passenger numbers and promotion of services. 'The Robin' offered an entirely different travel option for residents in rural areas, and therefore had not negatively impacted the passenger number on rural timetabled services. It had also had a positive impact on the urban services as residents were able to feed into more central services after their Robin journey and make these routes more sustainable for the future. Another positive was that it had also not taken away the need for community transport, the 'dial a ride' services, as again it was a different offer. The providers of these services were pleased with the way the passengers had split between these two types of demand transport.
- 4.9 It was acknowledged that there was a lot of data available from bus services, not just passenger numbers but real time tracking information, for example, that could help with congestion analysis, and there were national trials looking at technology that could examine road surface to identify defects etc.
- 4.10 There was also ongoing national research into how multi-model ticketing could be introduced across the country, where one ticket could be purchased and used across all different types of transport. No shire or rural area had been able to implement this yet, but it was an aspiration in the future and officers understood the improvement it would bring for resident experience on public transport.
- 4.11 The Chair closed this item by thanking officers for a very helpful session which had helped members understand the subsidy process a lot better, and for the improvements coming forward to enable better transparency for the public.

5. CLIMATE LEADERSHIP GLOUCESTERSHIRE

- 5.1 David Sharman, Countywide Climate Change Coordinator, gave an introduction to the new Climate Leadership Gloucestershire (CLG) action plan and members noted the following points:
- This was the first action plan for the newly established CLG which brought together all the 54 actions which had developed from the CLG thematic leads cross 10 core themes.
 - Going forward this would be made more publicly available and include a few user-friendly additions such as menus with links, preambles etc. and would be brought back to this Committee on a set timeframe.
 - Within the 10 core themes, the following actions were currently of focus (more details for each are available in the report):
 - Adaption: Action 102 – County Level Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
 - Biodiversity: Action 201 – Ecological Emergency and 205 – Green Infrastructure
 - Behaviour Change: 306 – Community Fund
 - Economy: 401 – Green Skills Coordinator
 - Energy: 501 – Local Area Energy Planning
 - Food and Farming: 601 – Gloucestershire Food & Farming Partnership endorsement
 - Planning: 702 – A central climate planning office/officer/expert
 - Retrofit: 801 – Development of the Retrofit Centre website and 803 – Expert Retrofit Support
 - Transport: 901 – Working together to achieve the Statement of Shared Intent ambitions
 - Waste: 1005 – Further Decarbonisation of Fleets
- 5.2 Whilst members agreed with all the actions that had been included in the plan, there were some suggestions of areas that could be added or explored in more detail. These included – retrofitting on industrial buildings such as the Energy from Waste facility, electrification of the railway, identifying and tackling sources of other greenhouse gases such as methane, Sulphur hexafluoride, Perfluorotributylamine and Perfluorocarbons. It was recognised that not all of these issues were within direct control of the Leadership group, but officers took the feedback on board and would explore any possibilities.
- 5.3 A member raised that it was difficult to evaluate what potential contribution these actions would have to decarbonisation in the county, and also the likely scope of deliverability across the themes. It was advised that there was

an internal tracking version of this plan for CLG use which could be shared with members but was not for publication at this stage. This version looked at measures such as carbon reduction levels, risk and progress for each action which would hopefully give members assurance that these things were being continuously monitored. It was reiterated that officers were aware that this was a very broad and ambitious plan but the group's aim was to capture as much of the current areas of influence as possible, being aware that there may be future policy changes or access to funding that could impact direction and progress.

ACTION: David Sharman

- 5.4 Cllr David Gray, Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning, added that climate change was a huge issue and it spread itself through many different areas. Whilst the action plan may seem rather disparate, the nature of the issue meant there was simply a lot to do. There was no 'silver bullet' to fix the problem. He stated that the group were at an exciting 'tipping point' where it was time to start delivering change after the past few years of background work. Going forward he would expect these updates from CLG to move into reporting things done and achieved, rather than great plans that were needed.
- 5.5 A member recognised the amount of work that had happened over the previous two years to reach the point of this detailed action plan and was very impressed with the format of the document. It was queried how this document could now enable better coordination within the lower tiers of local government.
- 5.6 It was advised that coordination and leadership was effectively happening with CLG partners and would start to become more visible when moving into the delivery phase. CLG had now approved the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils as a non-voting member to join its meetings, and officers were aware that the Association themselves were considering further training and support for their clerks and members on climate change issues, and CLG would look to support this where they can.
- 5.7 An action was taken to provide further information on when the monitoring of CO2 emissions from the Energy from Waste facility would begin and be published.

6. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT: ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

- 6.1 The report was taken as read and opened up to questions from members.
- 6.2 Officers provided responses to the thirteen pre-submitted questions from Cllr Willingham and Cllr Whyborn, which can be found at an Annex 1 of the minutes.

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

- 6.3 In addition, there was a request for the next version of this report to include an update on Walk Bridge and how many Community Speedwatch Cameras were now in place and operational as a result of the Community Speedwatch Fund allocations.

ACTION: Jason Humm

7. WORK PLAN

- 7.1 Members were advised that the Climate Risk Vulnerability Assessment, being led by Climate Leadership Gloucestershire, would need to be delayed to May being too early to update on progress.
- 7.2 The Chair shared that a request had been made, via email, to have an item looking at the recent budget allocation to purchase a new pothole machine and officers suggested this could form part of a wider item on the Council's approach to addressing highway defects.

ACTION: To confirm if this would be possible for the May meeting

CHAIR

Meeting concluded at 12:21.

Executive Director Report – 6 March 2024

Pre-submitted questions and written answers

Cllr David Willingham

1. What level of support and co-operation is GCC getting from the Police to identify / share the identity of those who have caused damage to GCC highways infrastructure? E.g. are number plate / driver details recorded and shared with GCC as a matter of course? (If this isn't happening, has it been raised with members of the Police and Crime Panel to put pressure on the PCC?)

All highway gangs who attend road traffic collisions are aware of the need to record any damage to the highway and vehicle owner details where possible. Officers usually have good relationships with the police attending the scene and even if they do not attend, contact can be made with the police retrospectively to request these details.

2. Were details of the two taxi drivers, prosecuted following ITU work, forwarded to the relevant district licensing authority, and is the outcome of such referrals known?

GCC do not automatically contact the licensing authority in these instances as prosecution by the police should mean contact is made between the police and the licensing authority.

3. What is being done to make Road Safety Partnership (RSP) funding available to unparished areas, where there is no parish council to act as the community organisation leading the bids?

The Road Safety Partnership's Community Speedwatch programme can receive bids led by community groups, resident associations or local members acting as a community conduit in the absence of a town or parish council.

4. As mentioned at Council, the Police Operation SNAP seems to have had 100% NFA (No further action) rate in December 2023. What is the RSP doing to encourage the Police to do more with the submitted footage?

This was not an area within the remit of the Road Safety Partnership as it was a police led operation. Officer would always encourage individuals/communities/members to raise any particular issues directly with the police.

5. Are the MVO (moving vehicle offence) cameras, such as those on Alstone Croft, active yet, and if so what are the initial results looking like / if not, when will they be activated?

GCC applied for and had approved the ability to use the legislation for MVO and currently had four sites for enforcement that went live in December. It was a little too

early to see what impact the powers have had on the areas and the next challenge would be to see how this could be rolled out more widely.

6. When are post-implementation reviews of Cheltenham Zones Z12 (Westend) and Z14 (Railway) going to be undertaken?

There was no planned post-implementation review for Z12 or Z14 but members were encouraged to raise any particular nuances, challenges or individual changes that might be necessary with officers.

7. What liaison has Parking Enforcement had with CBC/GlosPol about joint and late-night working during the Cheltenham Festival?
 - a. Does the Council have any powers beyond issuing tickets, that can be deployed where high-value vehicles are parked illegally because the PCN is not a sufficiently high financial deterrent to the vehicle owners?

There is no specific individual engagement beyond the normal planning for the Cheltenham Festival. Parking enforcement and traffic management teams were all aware of the challenges this week brings and are entirely equipped to carry out enforcement at any time.

8. Can I get a commitment that all TROs funded by members from their Highways Local in the 21/22 municipal year will be fully delivered (order made, signs and lines *in situ*) before the commencement of the pre-election period for county council elections in 2025?

There has been a small number of TROs that have had to be reset because the two-year delivery deadline was missed. Officers were not aware of any other TROs from the 2021/22 programme that would not be delivered by 2024/25 but members were encouraged to make officers aware if this wasn't the case. The team should also be moving older TROs to higher priority in order to avoid missing the deadline again.

9. What is being done to ensure where GCC asks district LPAs for planning conditions or s106 agreements for things like parking restrictions, there is constructive partnership working to find viable and lawful solutions that work for both authorities and extant residents? (Cheltenham planning application 23/00625/FUL, being an example where further GCC work is needed to refute the applicant's parking data to secure either s106 or a planning condition to prevent future parking chaos)

GCC officers continued to work closely with district planning authorities and provide comment on planning applications where appropriate, as well as providing support to enforce on developers the legislative requirement for them to mitigate any adverse impacts of their developments.

10. How is GCC co-ordinating its waste campaigns with the district waste collection authorities, to ensure messages co-ordinate with districts and align with how waste collection is implemented locally?

The Gloucestershire Resource and Waste Partnership had a public engagement and communications group that met monthly. There are a number of quarterly campaigns planned, and all content and messages are reviewed by the Partnership to ensure a joined-up approach. Officers would be happy to provide more information this if required.

11. If the business case for traveller services provision is approved, is there sufficient capital budget to deliver it in the 24/25 budget, or would it need to be added to the 25/26 capital budget?

There had now been a budget provision approached of £254,000 for the next 4 years and officers would currently be working up where this spend would be allocated.

Cllr Roger Whyborn

- 12.3.0 Where it says “GCC’s Cabinet approved the future (2023/24) expenditure on this project on 29th March 2023. The relevant Business Cases will be produced 2023/24 onwards”, can you confirm that following the announcement in the budget setting meeting, what actually will now go ahead over the next few months, and is that likely to recommend what is/are the preferred viable transport mode(s), and will the business case study what is/are the possible route(s)?

Officers advised that there was a cabinet report due to be considered at its next meeting on 15 May 2024 where further detail would be provided. The report will outline all future expenditure on the Mass Rapid Transport project for this coming financial year, it will seek to produce a Strategic Outline Business Case by autumn this year, and this will include viable options and routes for consideration.

- 13.3.0 “Cheltenham / Gloucester / Tewkesbury strategic local plan”: Six forms of housing development are put forward for consultation, ranging from urban extensions to building along transport corridors. Does the County have any views on this subject, and will it be inputting them to the consultation.

This local plan was currently out for public consultation with a deadline of 12 March 2024 for comments. The team at GCC were currently putting together a response to the plan and it was highly likely this would include concern for one of the development options, the rural dispersal option which officers did not feel was sustainable and would increase reliance on car-based journeys. Officers would ensure that future updates on this would be added to the Executive Director report and a copy of the full response could be provided on request.

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