

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 18 September 2019 commencing at 10.00 am at the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

PRESENT

Cllr Robert Bird	Cllr Kate Haigh
Cllr Dr John Cordwell	Cllr Ben Evans
Cllr Kevin Cromwell	Cllr Klara Sudbury
Cllr Stephen Hirst	Cllr John Murphy
Cllr Sajid Patel	Cllr Nicky Packer
Cllr Eva Ward	Cllr Brian Robinson
Cllr Suzanne Williams	

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllrs Ray Theodoulou, Stephen Davies, Paul McCloskey, Gina Bloomefield, Jim Dewey, Keith Rippington and Matt Babbage.

Cllrs Shaun Parsons and Patrick Coleman were in attendance as substitutes.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

3. LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN REVIEW

3.1 Members were reminded that this meeting was a joint meeting of the Environment and Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committees to consider a draft review of the Local Transport Plan (LTP). The joint nature had arisen from the cross over of interest for both Committees to scrutinise the Plan's development.

3.2 The Chair advised members that the purpose of the item was for both Committees to comment, ask questions, and raise concerns/issues on the draft report presented. These comments will then be recorded and fed into the ongoing consultation before the report is sent to Cabinet in December.

Background

3.3 Simon Excell, Lead Commissioner for Strategic Infrastructure, introduced the item with a presentation outlining the background for the review and the key suggested changes.

3.4 The Committee were advised that the published draft review was not the final document. Following today's scrutiny, an emerging draft consultation

document will go to Cabinet and then to formal public consultation early 2020.

- 3.5 The Council undertook early stake holder engagement on the draft document and feedback indicated the emerging reviewed LTP was much more in line with district and LEP policies.
- 3.6 It was explained that this review has come about due to the significant change in priorities and policies that have been seen recently, both locally and nationally.
- 3.7 It was important that the reviewed LTP linked well with the evolving climate change agenda, new Local Plans such as the Joint Core Strategy and the Local Industrial Strategy currently being produced by the GFirst LEP. It is vital for Gloucestershire that all such plans and strategies are co-ordinated.

Changes within the LTP document

- 3.8 Members were informed that a key change to the LTP was a new chapter on 'Shaping the Way to 2041'. This chapter looked towards a new timeline and beyond the 2031 timescale of the original LTP. Its focus will be to take consideration of trends, emerging technologies such as a better use of smart phones for transport, and new transport modes such as electric vehicles.
- 3.10 The 'Overarching' chapter has been revised to take account of the county's priorities on climate change and the environment, growth, health and wellbeing and sustainable travel behaviour.
- 3.11 The 'Public and Community Transport' chapter has been updated. The term 'Park and Ride' has been changed to 'Transport Interchange Hubs'. The idea being that the concept should grow to include other modes of transport, rather than just the traditional car and bus model.
- 3.12 It was highlighted that there are currently 3 existing Transport Interchange Hubs, with another 6 proposed at M5 Junction 10, A46 Shurdington, Elmbridge, West of Severn, M5 Junction 11A and M5 Junction 12.
- 3.13 There will a focus on bus priority, especially in the congested areas, as well as an encouragement to invest in ultra low emission vehicles.
- 3.14 The Cycle Policy will be updated to strengthen Gloucestershire's Cycle Network and to make cycling a more direct, safe, comfortable and therefore more attractive transport option for the County.
- 3.15 Members were shown a desired countywide cycleway map which envisaged a network of cycle routes from Tewkesbury Ashchurch in the North all the way down to Cirencester, encompassing Cheltenham and Gloucester on the way.

- 3.16 The Freight and Highways chapter has been updated. This update included in particular, an attempt to ensure all HGV's coming through the County are channelled into the most appropriate freight routes.
- 3.17 The chapter on Rail has been updated to reflect the ambitions of improving services and seating availability on all major routes in the County. Members were advised that the Rail Investment Strategy should be published later this year and will help inform the LTP, bids to government and LEP and train operating companies discussions.
- 3.18 Finally, there will be a new chapter on delivery which will move away from short/long term time periods for schemes to categories developed by a 'Scale of Impact' indicator to provide objective classifications.

Member questions

Cycling

- 3.19 There was discussion about the 'desire line' cycle network map that Members were shown in the presentation. Officers explained that this map was a 'vision' for the County's cycle network, highlighting areas of growth and smaller settlements that residents want to see better cycle connections for. It was a developing plan and some areas are yet to have identified routes on the network for a cycle path to be installed.
- 3.20 In addition to the LTP vision, officers also highlighted the £3.6 million scheme to link cycling between Cheltenham and Gloucester that is emerging with Highways England. GCC is heavily engaged with this process and would expect work to begin in the next year.
- 3.21 A member highlighted that something that deters people from cycling at the moment is when they leave the designated cycle path; the roads they have to use are sometimes not fit for cycle use. Officers agreed it would be impossible and unnecessary to provide 100% cycle route coverage for residents, some of their journey will need to be on the existing road network and therefore it is vital these plans also include improvements to roads.
- 3.22 There was also a discussion about the types of cycle lanes currently used. A member was aware of research that showed if a cycle lane is painted on a highway, cars tended to pass closer to the cyclist than they would if there was no cycle lane. In addition, where there are bike symbols painted on the road, cars will not tend to treat this as a shared route. There was a suggestion that soft segregated cycle lanes may be the way forward to allow for a physical barrier between the car and the cyclist.
- 3.23 Linking the desire lines to new developments, a member raised the concern that infrastructure such as cycle routes tend not to be added to a new development until after, meaning retrofitting this infrastructure is more difficult.

- 3.24 The Committee were advised that traditionally the County would charge developers under a Section 106 for infrastructure required on new developments. Since the introduction of the 'Community Infrastructure Levy' which calculates a charge per roof rather than individually for education, highways etc. there is concern that developers will be undercharged and local authorities will miss out on vital infrastructure funds.
- 3.25 GCC is currently in close discussions with the district authorities (as the planning authorities enforcing the Levy) to ensure it is applied fairly.
- 3.26 In relation to hire bike schemes that have been trialled around the country, a member informed the Committee that some have not had the intended consequence i.e. bikes not being returned properly and just piling up in public places. It was advised that such schemes would more likely be provided by the private sector in the future.
- 3.27 A member informed officers that there was an issue of cycle lock up spaces at Kemble station. There were still only 12 compared to 600 car parking spaces.

Rail

- 3.28 A member noted that a company called Systra were being used to inform the 2019 Rail Investment Strategy and expressed concerns that the last contractor to carry out this piece of work knew nothing about Gloucestershire and its challenges. It was reassured that SLC Rail have sub-contracted Systra who have carried out similar work in Swindon, Worcestershire and the North Cotswolds so already have a lot of local experience.
- 3.29 It was highlighted that when the improvements to train availability/capacity for Cheltenham and Gloucester happen, there will be a knock on effect on the need for more available connections to the rural areas for commuters going home to other areas of the County.
- 3.30 Local members were keen to highlight the importance of the Kemble station as a link to London for the West of the County and that it should be considered as a key Interchange Hub. Officers agreed that improvements to Kemble Station are needed and that rail upgrades are a key part of the LTP.

Public & Community Transport

- 3.31 A member questioned why there isn't a joined up approach when it comes to the availability of public transport routes and places people may need to access such as hospitals. It was advised that the main issue with achieving this link is that bus services are generally commercially run and the Council's ability to publicly subsidise bus routes is very limited.

- 3.32 It was suggested an option that could be developed is demand responsive transport where, through the use of smart phones, buses can be requested for certain routes when they're needed, rather than routes being subsidised full-time and only used a few times day.
- 3.33 Another benefit of the LTP looking towards 2041 and beyond is the ability to solve transport problems as above with forward planning.
- 3.34 The Committee were advised that there has been a slight decline in bus service use, less than the national average. A member requested the data on bus use to be shared with the Committee.

ACTION: ORLAGH STONER

- 3.35 The Committee heard that GCC have developed an app called 'GlosTalk' to help people with disabilities find appropriate public transport. The app contains real time bus journey data and can tell you what stop to get off at etc.
- 3.36 Another issue faced by bus users is the traffic at peak hours which can sometimes significantly delay bus services. It was advised that bus priority lanes are assessed on a case by case basis.
- 3.37 The key for the review of bus services is to first identify and target bus routes and pinch points where interventions will reach the most people and make improvements for key corridors.

Highways and Freight

- 3.38 A member highlighted that the East/West access around Cirencester has had little focus within the LTP Review. Whilst they understand the main focus is around the increased housing in the Severn Vale area, Cirencester has serious traffic issues, which is only likely to get worse once the A417 improvements are completed. In addition there is an issue of freight travel on the A429 Fosseway.
- 3.39 In response, it was highlighted that the A417 improvement scheme is a Highways England led scheme and that they would have done modelling on the scheme's impact. The A429 is a designated freight route on the map, and there isn't any other route to send freight onto to connect the east to west area. There is a hope that future advice would be for freight destined for regional/national destinations to use national roads rather than cutting through County A roads. The Cotswold local plan has identified schemes that could improve this situation but they're currently unfunded.
- 3.40 There was a question about what improvements could be made to the way freight is moved around the County. Members were informed that there is more awareness of freight moving onto rail in the future; Network Rail has also asked that freight terminals are more recognised within LTP's. It was

also highlighted that the Interchange Hubs will increasingly link with freight movement so the HGV's can be load onto smaller vehicles before being delivered into the towns.

- 3.41 A member requested data on the success of the Cotswold Lorry Management Zone in reducing the number of HGVs using unsuitable roads for their journey.

ACTION ORLAGH STONER

- 3.42 A member highlighted that even though Junction 14 is technically out of County, it still had a big impact on Gloucestershire. Officers reassured they are aware of the impact of this junction on the road network but as the Councillor rightly pointed out, GCC would be unable to bid for funding improvements as it doesn't fall within the County's boundary.

General

- 3.43 It was questioned whether there had been consideration of self-driving vehicles now that the LTP has a 22 year span to 2041 and it is likely such technologies would come to fruition before then. It was noted that the change from 2031 (the original LTP timeline) to 2041 was to make sure it is inline with district local plans.
- 3.44 Officers advised self-driving vehicles have been considered in the 2041 chapter, as are a lot of other technologies that may emerge from now until then. Whilst it is difficult to pre-empt these technologies when they are not yet widely available, it is vital that the LTP encompasses the possibilities so it can build the infrastructure ready. This may be for example exploring how different modes of transport connect with the infrastructure in real-time.
- 3.45 Members welcomed the discussion on a Rapid Transport System but were advised this is one of the schemes within the LTP that is yet to have any funding attached. Further feasibility work is being undertaken at this stage.
- 3.46 It was highlighted that a number of the schemes in the LTP Review were currently unfunded, and concern was raised about where the funds could come from. Members were advised that there are various different funding routes for transport schemes such as through the County Council, District Councils, developers, national government, sub national transport bodies, GFirst LEP and adhoc national funding pots .
- 3.47 There was a question about the prioritising of funding for the LTP projects. It was explained that the process will be adapted each time depending where the funding comes from. For example, if the funding is related to reducing CO2 emissions, the weight will be strengthened on that particular aspect of the scheme, meaning those schemes that score higher will be the most relatable to the funding.

- 3.48 There was a question about the environmental impact of the plan, how does it help towards meeting the Council's climate change emergency commitments. It was advised that there a specific climate change policy with the LTP and it strengthens transport targets for carbon neutrality to be inline with the GCC pledge. Climate change is also a key assessment criterion in selecting schemes which has resulted in 22 schemes relating to active, healthy transport choices and 7 to sustainable options.
- 3.49 There was a request whether one the review objectives could be changed to 'Restore the Environment' instead of 'Conserve' as currently being used. It was advised that is this was only a review; to rewrite the Plan's objectives would be to review the evidence base it was originally formed on. It was also important to be realistic about the scope of transport in restoring the environment; restoration falls more appropriately within district local plans.
- 3.50 A member queried how officers planned to engage with the public, beyond consultation and reduce the amount of cars on the road. It was agreed there is a huge task ahead in terms of changing behaviour in relation to climate change.
- 3.51 The 'Thinktravel' document had been incorporated into the LTP, which is the Council's brand for influencing travel behaviour. The 'Thinktravel' team are also working closely with businesses and schools, air quality and health partnerships; it recognised there are many contributing factors to people's travel behaviour. It was also advised that the LTP public consultation will take a similar approach to the recent climate change consultation which was incredibly successful.
- 3.52 Members were encouraged after today's meeting to feedback to their relevant district councils. There is also an emerging communications plan which will include day/evening stakeholder engagement sessions. It was reinforced that the Plan is still developing and changes will be made where necessary before and after public consultations. The Committee requested an email copy of the presentation/supporting documents from today's meeting that they can share with their districts.

ACTION: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

- 3.53 Several members highlighted that changing their travel to work often meant a significantly longer journey e.g. using a bus instead of driving. It was recognised that it will be impossible stop all car use, but the first area to focus on would be to reduce short journeys in cars. Evidence shows that a very high proportion of car use in the County is only for short journeys, and it would have a massive impact on the network reducing these alone. It is also key to improve public transport for people who do not have access to a car.
- 3.54 A member pointed out that the majority of the schemes revolve around the M5 areas of Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury and questioned what improvements are considered for the more rural areas. It was advised that

the 2041 chapter addresses improvements in connectivity for the Forest of Dean and Cotswolds via rail station improvements and high frequency bus services, but also the pinch point congestion problems at Chepstow. It was considered that improvements in technology could offer new opportunities such as electric bikes which would be more appropriate for hilly areas.

- 3.55 There was a discussion about electric vehicle infrastructure. Members noted the map in the presentation which showed current public electric vehicle charging points but questioned how the infrastructure would develop.
- 3.56 It was advised that there is currently a bid for funding with the LEP and GCC is working with a number of companies to understand the demand in each area of the county. GCC will be providing the infrastructure to allow individuals to make a change to an electric vehicle, although it is not envisaged this will be a like for like swap. It is still very important to encourage more people to reduce their car use and opt for a more sustainable transport option. The highway infrastructure cannot maintain the use of cars to continue as it is.
- 3.57 It was confirmed that a key action that would be taken away from this discussion is how GCC will prioritise the allocation of electric charging points.
- 3.58 A member highlighted that improved technology could provide the support for more employees to work from home and thus avoid the need to travel into work/for meetings. It was advised this was being considered in other departments of the Council but wasn't a specific LTP issue. When they are developing the transport network however, the team would carry out a facilitating role by providing space for cables etc.
- 3.59 There was a concern about problems faced by people living in town centres that do not have allocated parking and have to continually move their vehicles. It is hard to encourage walking and cycling if people cannot leave their vehicles. In response, there are a lot of innovative projects happening such as advertising underused parking spaces. Another key improvement for this problem also is the strengthening of the Transport Hubs.
- 3.60 Cllr Moor, Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning, highlighted this review had produced a much more ambition document in comparison with the original Plan and he welcomed in particular the work to improve rail, sustainability and carbon emissions. The Cabinet Member thanked the Committee for all their comments and a very helpful meeting.

CHAIRPERSON

Meeting concluded at 12:58