

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 8 May 2024 at the Committee Room - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

PRESENT:

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

Virtual Attendance: Cllr Susan Williams

2. MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting held on 6 March 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

The Chair welcomed representatives from the Gloucestershire Youth Climate Group (GYCG) who, in line with the membership terms at Item 10, would be joining Environment Scrutiny meetings going forward.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Willingham declared an interest as a district councillor in relation to Item 5 and a Trustee for the Cleeve Common Trust in relation to Item 4.

6. MOTION 936

6.1 This item was brought forward to be considered first.

6.2 The Committee were reminded that the Motion 936 tasked consideration of setting up a Task and Finish Group to review the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process. The Chair welcomed Cllr Drew who was the proposer of the motion to take part in the discussion.

6.3 He reiterated that this motion posed a 'cry for help' from local members who were experiencing extensive delays and frustration with the TRO process. He emphasised that this was by no means a criticism of the team at GCC who he knew were working as hard as they could within the current context. Cllr Drew also appreciated that a lot of the issues with this process derived from the bureaucratic and complicated national legislation, but he hoped that a Task Group review would find some improvements that could be implemented locally.

6.4 In support of the proposal, members suggested that the Group would need to look at the technical, legal requirements of the process, as well as the

implementation and resourcing within GCC. They wanted to understand what was causing the significant delays for implementation at the moment, which were reported as sometimes reaching multiple years after approval to proceed. It was suggested that the Group needed to consider its list of consultees to include all those involved in the process, not just highways and consider best practice at other local authorities. The cost of TROs was also raised as an issue to look at in more depth, with a member sharing that often they were asked for financial contributions from their Highways Local Funds to process TROs within their division.

- 6.5 In addition, it was suggested that areas such as post-implementation reviews and the interaction between Highways Development Management at GCC and local planning authorities due to instances of GCC having to pay for and implement TRO variations to housing developments, should be considered.
- 6.6 Officers advised that there was, and had been for some time, a national recruitment issue for technically trained TRO officers which was causing ongoing resource issues. Pressure on the department as a whole also had an impact when needing to prioritise major project delivery, for example. It was added that there was a key need to manage expectation with TROs, there was often high levels of public opposition to suggested Orders and officers were keen to understand a better way to cascade information to members on delivery etc.

4. LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

- 4.1 Nicola Hillary, Partnership Manager from the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership, introduced the item presenting the PowerPoint slides published with the agenda.
- 4.2 In addition, it was mentioned that the guidance from Government referred a lot to key/local wildlife sites which was a county designation of importance for nature which had not been focused on for some time. Gloucestershire currently did not have any resource allocated to maintain local wildlife sites or register new ones, so this process had definitely highlighted this need and the Principal Ecologist at the Council was currently looking into it.
- 4.3 DEFRA had funded the work to develop this Strategy and were now starting to explore funding for the delivery phase which Gloucestershire had responded to the consultation for.
- 4.4 It was noted that the 'new burdens' funding received from the Government for the creation of the Strategy was £315,000 over three years which the Partnership found was a suitable amount.
- 4.5 A member raised the importance of working with parish and town councils in the development of the Strategy as they were often closer to the local benefits and challenges than the district councils were. It was noted that they also had a responsibility for biodiversity and the Partnership were keen to

ensure this Strategy also aligned with plans at a local level, as well as ensuring it was aware and working with local community projects.

- 4.6 In addition, the Partnership should consider how to involve schools and children who were increasingly becoming more engaged with the natural environment through things such as forest schools and city farms.
- 4.7 It was suggested that the Strategy should identify barriers to wildlife, obvious examples being major road networks such as the M5 and consider how we address these. It would also be useful to understand invasive species that Gloucestershire would want to avoid/remove locally in order to help biodiversity thrive.
- 4.8 There was an ask from the GYCG to ensure that the consultation exercises for the Strategy were made as accessible as possible to young people. Officers offered to review the public survey with GYCG.

ACTION: Sustainability team

- 4.9 It was confirmed that the Partnership were liaising and working with other local authorities who were at the same stage of their development process, and also those who were slightly ahead for peer learning. It was advised that most were aiming to have their strategies completed by March 2025.
- 4.10 The Chair suggested that Environment Scrutiny consider the draft Strategy once available, prior to its consideration at Cabinet.

5. WASTE MANAGEMENT AND WASTE REDUCTION

- 5.1 Andy Pritchard, Waste Strategy & Development Manager, introduced the item presenting the PowerPoint slides published with the agenda.
- 5.2 Referring to the residual waste bin composition exercise on Slide 8, members were surprised to see the amount of food waste still being thrown away. It was advised that the sampling exercise was very expensive but very useful in the amount of data it can produce. Unfortunately, there were currently no powers in England for local authorities to enforce cooperation with recycling schemes, such as using food bins, participation remained voluntary.
- 5.3 Members were reminded that the online 'Waste Wizard' was managed inhouse by GCC officers if there were any required updates or changes, for example, if an item was not listed. Where electronic items ended up in residual waste, this would not be routinely removed prior to incineration.
- 5.4 It was noted that, similar to countries such as Germany, the government was introducing a [Deposit Return Scheme](#) on plastic bottles and drink cans to help boost recycling rates from 2025. This would potentially have varying

impacts on district councils as it would removing these items from the local waste streams.

- 5.5 The current Gloucestershire Resources and Waste Strategy had been produced as an interim strategy to cover 2022 – 2025 as national government were currently developing new policies which were likely to have an impact on the future management of waste locally. This also meant that in terms of target setting and communication plans, the Gloucestershire Resource and Waste Partnership (who approve the Strategy) were waiting for the new national direction to be set, to ensure Gloucestershire remained aligned with its policy direction.
- 5.6 The current targets within the Interim Strategy were:
- The annual action plan which accompanied the Interim Strategy would aim to deliver incremental improvement towards the target of a 60% recycling rate for Gloucestershire, with an interim target of 55% by 2026.
 - Residual waste targets were set at reducing 10kh per household per year in line with the downward trend seen of a 10 – 20kg reduction per household per year.
- 5.7 Noting the recent announcement that Government will include all waste incineration technologies in the Emissions Trading Scheme, it was questioned whether estimates for the emissions from Javelin Park were available so the Council could begin to understand the impact of this change.
- 5.8 It was advised that estimations of emissions were available and had been submitted, as required, to the Environment Agency however these remained estimates as the official guidance on how the emissions needed to be measured had not yet been released. Officers agreed to share these estimates with the Committee.

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

- 7.1 The report was taken as read and opened up to questions from members.
- 7.2 The Chair noted that Cllr Willingham had pre-submitted five questions and offered the opportunity to ask these during the meeting. Cllr Willingham asked two of the five questions at the meeting and a written response to the remaining three can be found at an **Annex 1** of the minutes.
1. B4063 Gloucester cycle scheme: Is the scheme still only on one side of the road near Elmbridge Court, and if so how will the plans deconflict bus users waiting at stop glodgwjp (Greyhound Gardens) and cyclists heading into Gloucester especially during the morning commute?

The cycle scheme had been designed to the national LTM120 standard, meeting all design requirements, including taking into account that this

specific section would be more likely to have pedestrians due to the bus stop. It was a very open part of the network where there was good visibility in both directions, the team were doing a lot of publicity around the safe use of the cycle track and therefore, all of this considered, were not anticipating there being a problem at the moment. The scheme would also undergo a safety audit once complete.

2. Street-lighting re-procurement: What pressure can GCC put on the new contractor to get National Grid to deal with cable faults more rapidly? Currently they seem incapable of fixing cable faults without repeated, long-duration, multiple outages.

Officers would continue to lobby where possible but as this was a national issue, the Council would not have a huge level of influence.

- 7.3 There was a request to include the following information in the Electric Vehicle Charging update report to Committee in July: allocation of the recent £3.1m Department for Transport LEVI grant funding and usage data for the charging points already installed.

ACTION: Jason Humm

- 7.4 A member asked for further information on the new Robin services recently announced, including specific routes and 'go live' dates.

ACTION: Jason Humm

- 7.5 A member asked for an update on the anticipated Junction 10 funding gap. It was advised that the funding for Junction 10 was agreed in August 2020, with the scheme not due for completion until 2027. The project had not received any inflationary increase to its funding since its initial approval. Homes England had recognised the impact of Covid and granted a two-year extension to the Council to complete the scheme, but this had not been supported by any increased funding.

- 7.6 This had therefore left the scheme with an estimated £83m funding gap. Officers were currently exploring options to reduce this price and considering avenues to secure additional funding, one of these being contributions from the housing developers. It was stressed that the scheme, Government funded, would enable developers to build and sell some 8000+ houses which would not have been possible had this scheme not been put forward. If it was left uncompleted, the opportunity for development would be massively reduced. Officers therefore did not consider it unreasonable to ask for a contribution towards its completion.

- 7.7 The Chair requested an organisation chart for the Climate and Waste team outlining officer responsibilities.

ACTION: David Owen

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

8. WORK PLAN

8.1 Reviewing the Committee's work plan, members made the following amendments:

- Allocate the future item on the post-evaluation of Highway initiatives to the September meeting.
- Add a future item to review the Gloucestershire Cycle Spine rollout.

9. CLIMATE LEADERSHIP GLOUCESTERSHIRE

The report was noted.

10. GLOUCESTERSHIRE YOUTH CLIMATE GROUP - MEMBERSHIP TERMS

9.1 The Gloucestershire Youth Climate Group membership terms were noted.

9.2 It was reiterated by the Group that it would be very difficult for the same members to attend each meeting due to other commitments and would welcome flexibility on that front from the Committee. They would also review the agenda for each meeting when available to decide whether they could contribute to the subject areas.

9.3 A member suggested that an action should be taken today to explore how to make attendance at the Committee meetings as accessible as possible for the Group. Members could, for example, offer pre-meetings or mentoring help to the representatives.

ACTION: Chair/Democratic Services

CHAIR

Meeting concluded at 13:00

For a full overview of this meeting, please use the following link to access the recording:
<https://gloucestershire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>

Executive Director Report – 8 May 2024

Pre-submitted questions

Cllr David Willingham

1. B4063 Gloucester cycle scheme: Is the scheme still only on one side of the road near Elmbridge Court, and if so how will the plans deconflict bus users waiting at stop glodgwjp (Greyhound Gardens) and cyclists heading into Gloucester especially during the morning commute? **Answer in minutes**
2. Street-lighting re-procurement: What pressure can GCC put on the new contractor to get National Grid to deal with cable faults more rapidly? Currently they seem incapable of fixing cable faults without repeated, long-duration, multiple outages. **Answer in minutes**
3. R bus: how much is the subsidy paid to the operator to run this service and what are usage patterns looking like? **Cost of the R contract to GCC is £219,495 per annum. The current average use is 140 trips per day.**
4. Parking: When will the post-implementation reviews of Cheltenham Z12, Z13 and Z14 take place? **There are no plans to review parking zones Z12, 13, 14 in Cheltenham.**
5. What monitoring of Highways Development Management outcomes and engagement with district planning authorities is taking place. E.g. if GCC raises issues about planning applications, are officers being listened to? **Senior Highways Development Management Officers attend regular triage clinics in the district planning authority offices, which are an opportunity for the district planners to raise any notable items with ongoing applications and our consultation responses, as well as an opportunity for HDM officers to highlight applications which we think are problematic or may warrant a refusal on highway grounds. This engagement with the districts has been well received by the Planners. Generally, if HDM officers are recommending refusal on highways grounds, the planners will be supportive of this. Furthermore, any requests from the highway authority for conditions and S106 contributions are generally included within approvals of permission.**

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