

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 15 January 2020 at the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

PRESENT:

Cllr Robert Bird

Cllr Kevin Cromwell

Cllr Sajid Patel

Cllr Eva Ward

Cllr Keith Rippington

Cllr Phil Awford

Officers in attendance: Kathryn Haworth, Sophie Benfield, Colin Chick, Simon Excell and Philip Williams

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllrs John Cordwell, Stephen Hirst and Suzanne Williams.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 26 November 2019 were approved and signed by the Chair.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

4. A429 TASK GROUP UPDATE

4.1 The Chair invited Kath Haworth, Lead Commissioner, to present the report.

4.2 Members were advised that this is the second update that the Committee have received on this item; it was last presented at Committee in March 2018. This report intended to give Members an update on progress to date.

4.3 The Committee were reminded that the task group was initially prompted due to concerns about the strategic nature of the A429 noting its importance for linking the north and south of the County. The task group explored a number of aspects including safety and the level of development of the route, potential opportunities for addressing concerns such as the level of freight use and its close links with neighbouring authorities due to its position.

4.4 The following points were noted:

- **Recommendation 1:** completed at the time, there is no further update.
- **Recommendation 2:** it had been concluded that the likelihood of reclassification of the A429 was very low and October 2019's publication

of the report “A Major Road Network for England” did not include the A429 as a trunk road.

It had been agreed that attention should focus instead on managing HGV traffic and capacity issues that are GCC control and influence, rather than campaigning for reclassification.

Officers await feedback on the draft Local Transport Plan Review (LTPR) which includes a section on freight.

- **Recommendation 3:** completed and the data had been used to inform discussion on a proposed lorry ban in Burford.
- **Recommendation 4:** details noted from the report.
- **Recommendation 5:** looking at countywide analysis of accident data, the A429 was not providing sufficient evidence to support a reduced speed limit enforcement across the whole route. As an alternative, GCC have been in discussions with the police about increasing speed enforcement along the route to manage existing limits.
- **Recommendation 6:** details noted from the report.
- **Recommendation 7:** details noted from the report.
- **Recommendation 8:** details noted from the report.

- 4.5 Cllr Moor, Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning, thanked the highways team for their work to date and detailed report. It was highlighted that the White Young Green report would be useful for all members to look at as it may give ideas to members for approaching similar highways issues in their area. The report would provide good guidance and an established priority for a number of years.

Questions

- 4.6 A member queried the figures on appendix A of the report relating to the removal of a footway (£30,000) and VAS sign at bridge (£70,000). It was advised that this was not the costs of the schemes but the contributions that had been made available to address the issue. Once the final solution had been agreed, the funds would be ready to implement.
- 4.7 There was concern raised about the availability of public consultation sessions for the LTPR. It was agreed that the member and relevant officer would discuss this further after the meeting.
- 4.8 In relation to the accident ‘hotspots data’ mentioned in regard to recommendation 5, a member queried whether there was a priority list of junctions that were prone to accidents available per district and if so could members see this information.
- 4.9 It was advised that the Road Safety Team do an annual analysis of accidents which involved further analysis once ‘hotspots’ are identified, this is usually produced around June. The Committee were informed that if they

wanted further information on this data to speak with their Local Highways Manager or the Road Safety Team. It was highlighted there was also a lot of information available on the GCC website under 'Road Safety':

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/highways/road-safety/>

- 4.10 In understanding the effectiveness of the task group, a member requested a summary of its primary objective. The Committee heard that the request initially came due to a number of public concerns about the route. The A429's role was confusing as it had a major strategic role but also passed through a number of settlements.
- 4.11 The task group's research therefore assisted in producing a more comprehensive understanding and view of the role of the route, which also enabled GCC to be on the front foot with neighbouring authorities when it came to new developments in the area.
- 4.12 The report and recommendations had been really helpful for members responding to constituent concerns and had also provided a baseline of data for informing further traffic management.
- 4.13 A member asked whether the actions taken in relation to road safety had had an impact on the KSI (killed or seriously injured) figures for this route. In response, it was advised that reducing the KSI was not a primary aim of the task group, but to identify road safety concerns in general. As previously mentioned, the A429 had not been identified as an accident 'hotspot' but the task group clearly identified other road safety concerns. It was advised that when funding became available, the road safety analysis data would be used to identify areas to address such as the A429.

5. ELECTRIC VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE

- 5.1 The Chair invited Philip Williams, Lead Commissioner for Community Infrastructure, to present the item.
- 5.2 It had been highlighted at the start of the meeting that one of the actions from the previous Committee was for a written brief to be produced for members in advance of today's item.
- 5.3 It was explained that due to the complex nature of this issue, officers had been unable to produce a briefing note. The purpose for today's presentation would be to inform the Committee of the most up to date position.
- 5.4 Members were informed that there had been a lot of market engagement work undertaken to understand the most useful contribution the Council could make in supplying electric vehicle infrastructure, whilst also making the best use of public funds. They were keen to take a position of 'filling in the gaps' rather than duplicating what the private sector was offering.

- 5.5 Page 20 of the report pack outlined other strategic policies the Council needed to align with locally and nationally for this strategy to work well. This highlighted the large overlap between planning for the infrastructure and other ongoing strategic plans.
- 5.6 The strategy would also aim to help GCC achieve its local objectives as outlined on page 21.
- 5.7 Members noted the need to enable individuals and businesses to be able to afford to invest in electric vehicles. At the moment, as they are new on the market, they are very expensive to buy/lease. It was suggested that as the technology and infrastructure caught up, individuals would develop more confidence investing in electric vehicles and the costs would begin to reduce.
- 5.8 It was emphasised the need for a flexible strategy that did not cause risk to the Council's spending, as well as needing to be easily adaptable to take advantage of emerging technologies as the industry progressed.
- 5.9 Members also acknowledged the importance of understanding the demand from the County's residents. To look at the current ownership of petrol/diesel vehicles across the country, it is estimated there are 30 million conventionally fuelled cars on the road and 50,000 petrol/diesel pumps, or 1 petrol/diesel pump per 600 cars.
- 5.10 Some organisations have forecast that if each EV owner had a charger then the UK would need up to 25 million EV chargers by 2050, 2.6 million of which would be in public locations. This would require 2300 chargers to be installed across the UK every day to address demand if everyone switched to an electric vehicle. Other organisations have produced much lower forecasts.
- 5.11 There were also differing views across the industry on how many of these chargers would need to be available in public places, on the highway, at petrol stations, on the street for residential homes or on private driveways.
- 5.12 Pages 22 and 23 outlined sources of financial support and the recommended areas of focus for GCC. It was highlighted as the highways authority, GCC were the only ones who could install on street charging, but there could be an opportunity to devolve power to district and parish council's to manage some installations, as was currently done with the county's bus shelters for example.
- 5.13 Taxis were highlighted as a major part of demand on the Council's input as they were natural users of public infrastructure. GCC had started working with the City Council to see how this may be addressed in Gloucester. As district councils were the licensing authorities, they would need to consider how they could encourage taxi drivers to switch to electric vehicles by amending their licensing policies.

- 5.14 It was pointed out that for larger vehicles, the technology was not yet suitable. Stagecoach, for example, carried out some analysis on their new Euro 6 bus. For a fleet costing about £2 million, to go electric this would increase to £6 million, with £900,000 of that being spent on depot charging points to avoid draining the local network. In addition, the life expectancy and manufacturer's guarantee for the battery life on an electric bus was currently much less than for the engine on an equivalent Euro 6 diesel bus.
- 5.15 Members were advised that Atkins had been commissioned to provide capacity and technical expertise in developing the draft strategy, and a representative was in attendance at today's meeting to take away members contributions.
- 5.16 The Committee noted the key issues and questions to consider on pages 24 and 25 of the report and the following expanded points:
- There would need to be consideration for how the electricity was charged for. At the moment, as the infrastructure is new, a lot of places were offering free charging. However, as the demand is growing, many places were starting to move to a tariff arrangement, as is with buying petrol/diesel.
 - As with the broadband roll out, it would take longer for the infrastructure to reach the more rural areas of the county.
 - It is likely that some residents will be unhappy with the installation of chargers in on-street parking areas. It would be hoped that people will avoid parking in electric charging spaces, as they do with disabled marked spaces. It would be costly for the Council to go down the Traffic Regulation Order route to enforce this otherwise.
 - What approach should be taken on residents requesting to privately connect charging cables from their homes to their vehicle parked on the road? Although this could be helpful to reduce the cost to the Council, it would be vital for criteria to be set to avoid hazards developing such as, electric cables across footpaths.
- 5.17 Members noted the implementation plan on page 26 which requested a draft report to be presented to this Committee in March.

Questions

- 5.18 A member stressed concern that the electric vehicle and infrastructure issue was such a big, complicated issue to solve and it was difficult to see a solution. In addition, it was highlighted that many residents were likely to face issues with on-street parking if spaces were taken up by charges (which were not necessarily being used by residents) as well as the cost of the vehicles currently not being a financial feasibility for most at the moment.

- 5.19 In response it was suggested that, similar to the broadband approach, the best option would be for GCC's strategy to look at delivering the easier 80% of infrastructure first, before then focusing efforts on the more difficult 20%. This way the majority of Gloucestershire's residents would have access to charging points in good time.
- 5.20 It was completely appreciated that there were going to be many individual, complex issues throughout the infrastructure rollout, but if the Council tried to resolve every problem in the first few years, it was likely the problem would feel too big to solve.
- 5.21 The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills echoed the above points by suggesting that taking bitesize steps to begin with and making the biggest impact, in the shorter term would support a majority of the County to switch to electric vehicles.
- 5.22 Then, in the next few years, the remaining 20% of the more difficult, long-term solutions would likely be better supported by advancements in technology and GCC's efforts could be more focused. In addition, it was highlighted that as more people change to electric vehicles, the more affordable they will become and the less financially viable diesel and petrol fuel vehicles will become.
- 5.23 A member wondered whether GCC had within its power to encourage district authorities to make sure that new builds, at least, had charging points fitted as standard. It was stressed however, that there are a lot of existing climate change measures, such as solar panels, that developers were not installing.
- 5.24 It was confirmed that discussions were ongoing but there were difficulties around the absence of specific planning policies to enforce such action. Another member also pointed out that it takes a long time for planning policies to be created or amended.
- 5.25 Referring to the proposals, a member really welcomed how GCC was responding to this issue, and the pace at which a strategy was being created. They agreed that the idea of an incremental approach, as suggested above, was the best way to make a start and they agreed there should be a charge for the electricity used to charge an electric vehicle (as car users currently pay for fuel).
- 5.26 A member suggested that it would be useful to have data on how many people have actually got electric vehicles at the moment, and potentially this was something individual members could look into in their local areas.
- 5.27 For taxis it was wondered whether incentives could be used to encourage taxi drivers to switch to electric vehicles. This currently existed through a government grant but it was highlighted that taxi drivers in the county need to be supported to do so through having the right infrastructure in place. It was

also advised that GCC were working closely with districts on how they can support taxi operators in the county.

- 5.28 It was recognised that encouraging safe and efficient driving also had an impact on air quality and that The Air Quality Partnership was currently working with businesses on rewarding and encouraging staff to do so.
- 5.29 It was requested that where charging points were installed in car parks for example, that they were positioned to allow as many parking bays as possible to have access to that charger, e.g. in the centre of four spaces rather than just within one.
- 5.30 A member reiterated that electric vehicles was an issue with an evolving solution and urged caution for the Council to not rush towards one proposal, which may become redundant in a few years due to advances in technology. It was also stressed that whatever the solution, it needed to be consumer led and be the right solution for the residents of Gloucestershire.
- 5.31 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning expressed that it would be impossible for the Council to understand how the electric vehicle markets would play out in the coming years, the pace of change was massive and it was markets that dictated consumer choice. They saw GCC's role on this issue as a leader, but within a targeted/intervention manner.

Action: To circulate The Times articles on market changes from Cllr Moor – Democratic Services

- 5.32 Reference was made to rural communities who potentially had the financial resources to change to electric vehicles but were also equally likely to be the areas that wouldn't be targeted in the initial infrastructure rollout (similar to issues faced with broadband). In response, it was suggested these may be areas where GCC can work with the local district or parish council's to allow them to install infrastructure solutions on GCC's behalf, or have discussions with the residents themselves.
- 5.33 Members were advised that the cost of purchasing the charging points was dependant on the amount, type and location where they were being installed. The types of charger available offer three different speed levels, the slowest being a 'fast' charger which started at around £2,500 per charger and the fastest was an 'ultra rapid' which can cost up to £75,000 per charger.
- 5.34 In addition to purchasing the chargers, there will also be a cost for installation (which may be more complicated and therefore more expensive in different areas), plus the potential need to upgrade the capacity of the electricity supply to support the chargers. GCC were currently in discussions with Western Power Distribution to understand the cost of upgrading electricity networks and the areas where this may need to be considered.

- 5.35 On questioning, members were informed that advice had been sought from several other local authorities who had implemented similar strategies and the electric vehicle infrastructure providers who work with them.
- 5.36 The Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure summarised the Committee's proposed guiding principles for the draft strategy as follows:
- To begin with an incremental approach to the infrastructure rollout, targeting the easiest solutions first and focusing attention on the more complex issues later.
 - To opt for a charge to charge where consumers will pay a tariff for electricity charging in public places, as they would with petrol/diesel refuelling. This decision would reflect the majority of other authorities around the country.
 - To not allow private residents to run their own cables across footpaths but to see if there are any other solutions that can be offered to individuals wishing to install their own charging points.
 - To recognise that there will be a number of complex issues arising throughout the rollout such as an individual's lifestyle, where they live etc. that may prevent them from having access to the infrastructure initially. To agree that there will not be an immediate solution for these more difficult issues and they may take sometime to solve.
 - To not focus completely on one solution for the infrastructure strategy and acknowledge that as the technology evolves, the strategy will need to be flexible and adapt.
 - To recognise that as the technology becomes more common, the cost of switching to electric vehicles will reduce and petrol/diesel vehicles will become less attractive to the consumer.
 - For GGC to show leadership on this issue, but also to work closely with district authority colleagues throughout the development.

6. DIRECTOR'S REPORT: ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- 6.1 Colin Chick, Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure, updated the Committee on current issues. In particular, members noted that:
- The new contracts under Ringway and Atkins were now stabilised and running well.
 - There was an announcement due shortly on the new structural maintenance contract.
 - There were delays on the Gloucester South West Bypass scheme due to land acquisition issues and negotiations.
 - Only two out of the five advertised posts for the Highways Development team had been filled. It would suggest that due to the shortage of this

particular skill base for a number of years now, the salaries for the higher positions were out of kilter with other local authorities.

- In relation to the Climate Change Strategy, GCC were currently working hard across Gloucestershire to understand how to move forward in a joined up manner.
- Work continued to finish the outline business case for Government on the Junction 9 scheme. It was highlighted that considering a year ago this scheme wasn't being considered under any funding pot, there had been a lot of work behind the scenes to reach this stage.
- Junction 10 scheme was still awaiting a decision from Government.
- The Rail Strategy report will show the ground work for future improvements to the network. The further detail will be being discussed at the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee with Chief Executives and Leaders from the six District Councils.
- GCC will now become a formal partner of the JCS process from April 2020. The Council will have more influence in this position but members were reminded they were still only 1 of 4 around the table, and would not become a decision maker or planning authority.
- Javelin Park was now generating electricity on a fairly standard basis but it has experienced a few stops during its monitoring. Therefore, at the moment, the electricity is being sold at a fluctuated market rate rather than locking into a contract until the electricity production is constant.
- Cllr Nigel Moor, Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning, advised members that the visitors centre at Javelin Park will be completed this month and an opportunity all members to visit the facility would be arranged in Spring 2020.

Questions

- 6.2 A member questioned whether, during the 2020 JCS process, there would be scope to revisit highways issues from previous planning applications. It was advised that the creation of the JCS will still be the responsibility of the district authorities and that GCC will be consulted to comment once a draft was available. This draft and any comments would be shared with members also.
- 6.3 It was stressed, that the consideration of highways issue in the JCS has been an ongoing issue for the Council and that it needed to be taken much more seriously. The problem beginning to present itself is that developments are layering around a 'core' which is an unsuitable use of land and does not allow sufficient access to public transport meaning cars are remaining a necessity. Officers at GCC would prefer to see a transport strategy produced which connected with transport concerns or show plans to mitigate against them.

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

- 6.4 It was suggested that many previous JCS (running to 2031) may be found unsound against inspection in 2020 on this matter.
- 6.5 Responding to these comments a member, in their district councillor capacity, added that GCC joining the JCS was a welcomed move and had hoped to be in a situation where things had massively improved by having highways/county directly involved in the planning process. Reference was made to the issue of how national funding for transport infrastructure was low and it was an issue district authorities struggled to understand how they could overcome.
- 6.6 It was recognised that these comments were only a statement of situation and that all parties would need to be involved to drive forward a more sustainable way for planning in the County, which delivered growth without causing harm to the environment.
- 6.7 A member questioned how far away the Junction 9 decision would be, it was explained that following the submission of the business case, officers would expect a response within 6 months to a year of that date. Junction 10 was still awaiting a decision on funding; the project was currently progressing on a 'minimum expenditure' approach to keep it on time, as currently all expenditure was 'at risk'.

7. WORK PLAN

- 7.1 Members noted the work plan items for the next meeting in March, and it was requested that the draft electric vehicles infrastructure strategy was added as a third item.

ACTION: PHILLIP WILLIAMS

- 7.2 It was advised that following Cabinet's approval of the Draft Local Transport Plan (LTP) Review, it would now launch into a public consultation on 16th January 2020. It was requested if an item could be brought to the May Committee meeting for members to review a summary of consultation responses. It was emphasised that there would not be a full revised document or consultation report available by this date however.

- 7.3 Members agreed that, as with the previous LTP item, this should take the form of a one item joint meeting with the Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee. It was confirmed that all Economic Growth Scrutiny members would be invited to attend in May alongside Environment Scrutiny members.

ACTION: SIMON EXCELL/DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

CHAIR

Meeting concluded at 13:05

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

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