

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 24 May 2022 at the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

PRESENT:

Cllr Roger Whyborn	Cllr Alan Preest
Cllr Susan Williams	Cllr Phil Awford
Cllr Chris McFarling	Cllr Sajid Patel
Cllr Gill Moseley	Cllr Dr David Willingham

Officers in attendance: Colin Chick, Simon Excell, Philip Williams, Julian Atkins, Luisa Senft-Hayward and Orlagh Stoner

Apologies: Cllr Dom Morris – it was noted that due to Cllr Morris' recent appointment to the Cabinet, he was no longer able to Chair or be a member of the Scrutiny Committee. Cllr McFarling as Vice-Chair stepped in for this meeting until a new Chair could be elected at full Council in July 2022.

Members wanted to put on record their thanks to the departing Cabinet Member, Cllr Vernon Smith, who had always put a lot of effort into contributing to the Scrutiny agenda, plus their congratulations to Cllr Dom Morris.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2022 were approved.

The following action updates were noted:

- A meeting had taken place with the GCC website team to amend the Greener Gloucestershire website to incorporate Climate Leadership Gloucestershire (CLG) minutes. This was an ongoing piece of work that would need sign off by CLG before being shared more widely.
- The Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs) for the two School Streets trials were consultative so the consultation took place over the course of the ETROs (which had an 18-month maximum life). The end of the cycle for the School Streets trials was in early May which meant it was not possible to come back to this committee before making a final decisions, otherwise the ETROs would have expired.
- The recommendation and decision were to make the ETROs permanent for both trials but officers also agreed not to move ahead at this time with implementing the next phase of the Trials due to concerns about capacity and resource to deliver.

ACTION: Share decision record with the Committee (DSU)

- Discussions were ongoing with district councils regarding strategic planning issues. It was advised that since the previous meeting, GCC were a full funding partner of the Joint Strategic Plan (previously the Joint Core Strategy) as of April this year. The Statement of Common Ground (a document between all seven local authorities) was also continuing to progress.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr McFarling declared that he was an owner of an electric vehicle, due to the forthcoming discussions on the electric vehicle charging rollout.

4. TRANSPORT DECARBONISATION

4.1 The Chair invited Luisa Senft-Hayward to present this item. Members received a written report in advance plus a presentation at the meeting. The following points were noted:

- 32% of all emissions in the county were transport related, if you included emissions from through traffic, this equated to 44%.
- The Department for Transport had made it clear that developing a transport decarbonisation plan was a condition for any future investment. They had provided various materials, including a tool kit to assist in creating plans.
- GCC had already made commitments towards decarbonisation in its Climate Change Strategy and Local Transport Plan.
- Slide 3 showed a representation of Gloucestershire's carbon emission gap, i.e. how much the county needed to reduce its emissions if it was going to reach its target, represented by the red arrow on the graph.
- Introducing electric vehicles alone was not going to solve the problem. It was more than just stopping to emit carbon by 2045, the county had to stay within its carbon budget overall. The graph on slide 4 showed the consequence of just a 5-year delay on the county's pathway.
- Slide 5 and 6 showed the key emitters of carbon within the transport sector. Business travel, for example, would be a high impact area for potential interventions.
- Trips over 20km accounted for 15% of travel but 60% of emissions and this was the most difficult area to target due to the length of travel involved.
- Slide 7 showed 3 categories of potential interventions such as 20-minute neighbourhoods where residents could access all key services within walking distance and therefore remove the need for short car trips.
- Slide 8 started to present some idea of the scale of change needed. These were not targets per se but more of a starting sketch of the scale before us.

- Slide 9 gave some thought to what the county could look like if all these changes were made, noting things such as increased online activity, excellent active and public transport provisions and smarter road networks and local planning.
- GCC had not stood still to date in this area, slide 10 showed what success had already been seen.
- Slide 13 showed the areas that would be a particular challenge and Members were reminded that there was a Climate Change Transport Forum on 19 July that they had been invited to attend.

Questions

- 4.2 It was illustrated by a show of hands that the majority of those who had travelled to the meeting today had done so via car, and therefore how difficult it was to travel across the county in a timely and suitable manner.
- 4.3 Members noted that Oxfordshire (which had been the comparator used for Gloucestershire to achieve in the public transport arena) represented roughly a doubling of bus use per person compared to this county. Their geography helped slightly as Oxford was in the middle, but Oxford had also been very progressive earlier on with their sustainable transport policy, they had introduced a zero emission zone, are planning a workplace parking levy and had done a lot of work promoting their park and ride services.
- 4.4 Whilst welcoming the vision presented in today's presentation, a member queried whether work had been done on understanding the affordability of this level of change. Whilst acknowledging recent external funding success (particularly in relation to cycle infrastructure), it was accepted that there had also been failures and funding remained a key concern for the council. Where failures had occurred, the team were working hard to understand why this had happened and how to improve next time, and constantly continued to try and locate new funding opportunities.
- 4.5 It was also acknowledged that it was not enough to simply invest and produce the large infrastructure, it was vital to also ensure existing measures were in place to support residents to use that infrastructure in the most efficient way. It was crucial that GCC was paving the way for private investment to plug the affordability gap.
- 4.6 Members noted that the transport decarbonisation action plan was due by the end of this year/early next year. The intention was to have a set of measures that were carbon calculated, showing clearly how the targets would be achieved. The team were also keen to do a geographical analysis of the county's most emitting corridors to use as case studies against the action plan.
- 4.7 A member suggested that the public transport targets appeared unambitious in comparison with other areas. It was advised that Gloucestershire was

starting from a lower proportion of public transport usage, plus there was nothing to suggest that the targets would remain stagnant. As the Plan developed, it was likely targets would continue to grow as well.

- 4.8 Members noted that officers continued to lobby rail companies for the electrification of lines going through Gloucestershire. They acknowledged the importance of this being done but confirmed it would depend on Government funding.
- 4.9 There was concern raised on the reliability of public transport in Gloucestershire, particularly considering the number of issues that had been experienced recently with buses being cancelled or not showing up. It was explained that the impact of Covid on public transport provision had been huge and was ongoing in terms of last-minute staff isolations, plus the industry had been badly affected by the HGV driver recruitment.
- 4.10 Officers were aware of the problems and continued to engage with Stagecoach, who had given assurances that they were trying to tackle this through incentives. It was added that sometimes it simply was not viable for Stagecoach or the council to subsidise bus services that were not used. There needed to be a whole societal change to the way we travelled.
- 4.11 A member asked whether, when assessing schemes, carbon saving was considered as a metric, and whether there were other benefits measured against such as, active travel having health benefits, for example.
- 4.12 It was advised that all schemes went through cross benefit analysis before being finalised, and this would include comparing costs against the benefit to society. A number of benefits were taken into consideration including much wider analysis such as reduced road casualties etc. The Government was currently working to produce guidance to help local authorities better understand and calculate carbon savings on schemes. This was hopefully due in the autumn.
- 4.13 An action was taken to provide a summary of cost saved per tonne of carbon on schemes and a summary of how the costs/benefits were calculated.

ACTION: Luisa Senft-Hayward

- 4.14 On the topic of Electric Vehicle technology, it was noted what a challenge this will be for taxis both in terms of cost for the drivers themselves, but also having suitable access to public charging. It was advised that GCC were working closely with the district licensing authorities to make sure there were complimentary policies in place for this sector. The Government were providing nationwide grants for drivers making the change.
- 4.15 A member raised that they had noticed issues with 'green wave' traffic light systems not working (*a green wave occurs when a series of traffic lights, usually three or more, are coordinated to allow continuous traffic flow over several intersections in one main direction*). It was advised that a number of

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

signals in the town centres had been updated and there was more funding coming through the budget. It was noted how important working signals were for traffic flow and congestion in busy centres.

ACTION: Update on the Demand Responsive Transport trials in the Cotswolds and FOD

5. WORK PLAN

Members noted the future items in the attached work plan and made the following additions:

- To receive a progress report on the Transport Decarbonisation Plan following today's presentation.
- There was a request to look at broadband connectivity in the county. It was advised that whilst noting it was increasingly linking in to the climate change agenda, this was a remit discussion for Economic Growth Scrutiny. It was also advised that there had been a recent update report presented to the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC). It was agreed that members would review this report and then decide if they would like to look into this item further.

ACTION: Send the GEGJC report to members (DSU)

- Members were disappointed that the draft Road Safety Policy had been pulled from today's agenda and requested that this be rescheduled as soon as possible. It was advised that there had been a delay in the governance process which meant the draft Policy was delayed going to consultation.

ACTION: Discuss with officers when suitable to reschedule (DSU)

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

6.1 It was stressed that the current backlog in the Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) applications was unacceptable for residents' awaiting resolutions. It was advised that the team had to prioritise the workload based on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, to ensure there was a clear and transparent approach. In the 2022/23 budget, additional funding was approved to increase the team's resources and recruitment was currently underway. The existing team had been working incredibly hard to manage competing interests and expectations of the public. Some residents required a disproportionate amount of the team's time in this area, at the expense of the wider public.

6.2 A member suggested for officers to explore the option of replicating the Highways Academy for DMMO officers by offering apprenticeship schemes

etc. in conjunction with the University of Gloucestershire or the Royal Agriculture College to bring in the next generation of trained people. This would begin to solve our problem, plus providing people with jobs and creating a recruitment pool.

- 6.3 Officers responded that this would depend to some extent on resource and budget but the sentiment and intention behind the suggestion was agreed upon.
- 6.4 A member raised that yet again, the county had not received a penny of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions from district councils who had adopted CIL (apart from Stroud). Whilst it was good to see that GCC was now part of the Joint Strategic Plan but the very high risk around the lack of CIL contributions remained.
- 6.5 It was reiterated that this issue had been going on for many years and caused a lot of concern for GCC. As the county were not a CIL charging authority, they had no power to request or require the money and it laid completely in the hands of the district councils on whether to pay it. In addition, GCC had recently made districts aware of the very worrying trend in level of Section 106 payments being received. The recent [Infrastructure Funding Statement](#) (which was published in December 2021) showed a decrease of around £18m received in Section 106 monies.
- 6.6 The impact of not receiving the money stretched far and wide. In the context of today's discussion on transport decarbonisation, if GCC were unable to deliver local infrastructure such as new schools next to housing developments, children would then be allocated to schools away from their locality, which would then require families to travel either by car or require GCC to intervene with subsidising public transport provisions.
- 6.7 A member asked for an update on the stabilisation of A435 Cirencester Road.

ACTION: Jason Humm

7. CLIMATE LEADERSHIP GLOUCESTERSHIRE

The report was noted.

CHAIR

Meeting concluded at 12:20.