

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 22 November 2022 at the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

PRESENT:

Cllr Roger Whyborn	Cllr Matt Babbage
Cllr Susan Williams	Cllr Paul Baker
Cllr Chris McFarling (Vice-Chair)	Cllr Alastair Chambers
Cllr Gill Moseley	Cllr Paul McCloskey
Cllr Phil Awford	Cllr Nicky Packer
Cllr Sajid Patel	Cllr Wendy Thomas
Cllr Dr David Willingham	Cllr Chloe Turner
Cllr Vernon Smith (Chair)	Cllr Robert Vines
Cllr Emma Nelson	

Virtually in attendance: Cllrs Matt Babbage, Nicky Packer, Paul McCloskey and Wendy Thomas

Substitutes: Cllr Emma Nelson

Officers in attendance: Colin Chick, Simon Excell, Philip Williams, Peter Wiggins, , Jason Humm, Wayne Lewis, Tom Main and David Owen

Cabinet Members: Cllr David Gray – Environment and Planning
Cllr Philip Robinson – Education, Skills and Bus Transport

Youth Climate Group Tom Manders-Trett, Meredith Souther, Rebecca Fulford, Rachel Billingham and Amber Kimberly.

Apologies: Cllrs Alan Preest and Dom Morris

1. INTRODUCTION

The meeting was split into two parts.

The first part was a **Joint meeting of the Environment and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committees to consider Items 4 and 5.**

There was then a break to allow members of the Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee to leave the meeting and **Environment Scrutiny members to continue with the remaining items on their agenda.**

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

4. STRATEGIC PLANNING

4.1 Simon Excell, Assistant Director for Planning and Economic Development, presented this report. Members noted the following:

- Since 2013 when the Regional Strategy for the South West was revoked and in the absence of any further national legislation, district councils have had the statutory responsibility for land use planning in their areas.
- Tewkesbury Borough Council (TBC), Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) and Gloucester City Council (GlosCC) took the decision to adopt a Joint Core Strategy in 2017, which would soon be replaced by the Joint Strategic Plan (although this was proving to be a lengthy process to date).
- Cotswold District Council (CDC) adopted their Local Plan in August 2018, Forest of Dean District Council (FODDC) adopted their Local Plan in 2012 and Stroud District Council (SDC) adopted their Local Plan in 2015. All of these were currently being reviewed.
- Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) had a number of statutory roles and responsibility in relation to planning. It was required to produce various plans such as the Local Transport Plan (further examples available in the written report), which meant it had an extremely important role to play, in this scenario, as the infrastructure provider for the County.
- The district authorities determined the vast majority of planning applications and GCC was merely a statutory consultee to this process.
- In their role as consultee however, there was unfortunately an increasing number of examples where GCC's representations were being ignored and/or disagreed with. The report explained how this was particularly in relation to funding that would be required to deliver vital infrastructure as a result of the application being approved. Such funding should be drawn from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions paid by the developers. The introduction of CIL by all district council apart from FODDC, had restricted GCC's ability to secure S106 agreements directly from the developers to fund such infrastructure.
- It was the opinion of officers present that GCC was losing out on tens of millions of pounds of financial contributions.
- Figure 1 in the report outlined the value of CIL collected by each of the CIL Charging Authorities in 2019/20 and 2020/21.
- Figure 2 showed of the funding received in Figure 1, the very small percentage of contributions that had actually being allocated (with the exception of SDC). Since implementation of CIL, GCC had not received a penny from CBC, TBC, GlosCC nor CDC.
- Figure 3 summarised the amount of CIL retained by each district council at the end of March 2021 (data for the next financial year would be available soon). In relation to SDC, because any bid to SDC was required to be spent by the end of the financial year in question, this left GCC unable to bid for the majority of its funding needs. Instead, Expressions of Interest are invited to be made.
- Concerning data was presented in Figures 4 and 5. They showed the trend of the amount of S106 obligations that GCC have entered into and

received over the previous 6 financial years. It was very clear from the data provided the significance of CIL's detrimental impact on GCC securing these vital funds.

- It was updated that the amount secured by GCC for 2021/22 (which had not been available at the time this report was published) was £4.6m.
- The introduction of CIL was likely to have a detrimental impact on district councils also being able to secure S106 monies. Developers were often seeing the two funding pots as 'two bites of the cherry' for local authority contributions.
- As GCC was not a planning or CIL charging authority itself, there was very little that could be done about this decline in S106 income. It could not charge CIL itself; it could not insist district councils paid the required CIL; it could not insist they reverted back to S106 or that developers paid S106 contributions instead of/as well as CIL; and they could not insist their representations made on planning applications were adhered to. The only option available was to try and influence the district councils through making representations, along with future discussion and negotiation.
- The JCS authorities had agreed recently to review their CIL process, this was an extremely time-consuming process however, and one that GCC again had no authority or direct influence over. The latest timeline for the CIL review was for it to be completed in 2024 at the earliest.
- The only option available to GCC in extreme circumstances was to consider more formal legal action. GCC had recently received external legal advice and opinions available on the current situation.
- Looking at the wider question of scope and/or appetite for a county-wide strategic planning, it was advised that all local authorities, apart from TBC, had recently signed up to a Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground. Unfortunately, this had taken over 4 years to produce, was very watered down in terms of content and did not have unanimous sign up.
- A county-wide strategic planning approach had recently been started in Oxfordshire, but it had been abandoned fairly quickly.

4.2 The contents of the report caused alarm and frustration for members, this was particularly so for members of the Committee who were also elected members at the various district councils, and who wanted to gain a better understanding of how it had got to this point, and how they could help find a solution.

4.3 Officers reinforced that the justification and evidence to support their comments regarding the significant amount of funding that GCC was not able to secure was outlined particularly within the data in the report. The trend in the S106 data provided clearly showed that the amount of S106 money had significantly reduced from around £20m pre-CIL to £4m this financial year just gone. This data was also against a backdrop of greater growth and inflationary costs.

- 4.4 It was added that the level of CIL being generated to begin with was not enough either, even if the district councils gave GCC every penny of CIL they received (which clearly was not viable or legal) it still would not be enough to cover the required infrastructure costs or make up for the lower S106 contributions.
- 4.5 Education colleagues at GCC were concerned that there were areas of Gloucestershire being developed without GCC being able to ensure education was provided for its future families.
- 4.6 The situation regarding SDCs bidding process was challenged. In response it was shared with the Committee that all major allocated planning sites in Stroud remained within the S106 regime and for applications that CIL was implemented, in 2021/22, for example, GCC received 91% of that financial year's contributions. The member felt SDC could not have done more to assist GCC in securing as much infrastructure funding as possible.
- 4.7 In response, officers reiterated that SDC's bidding process constrained GCC's ability to bid for large infrastructure projects that would take more than a financial year to deliver. Even though, quite rightly, GCC had received the majority of CIL contributions from SDC in the last financial year, 90% of a reduced pot was still not enough to mitigate the impact of large developments.
- 4.8 Some members expressed their view that CIL simply was not working, and it had been a flawed system from the start. They acknowledged how tirelessly GCC officers had been working to try and secure developer contributions wherever possible.
- 4.9 Members also expressed how concerned they were to hear of potential legal action occurring between local authorities. The current financial situation was very hard hitting for councils across the country, not to mention if local councils began paying for legal advice and representation against each other. A Member added that Gloucestershire was in this position due to a change in national policy and because the planning system was broken. Rather than fighting amongst ourselves, pressure should be being put on Government Ministers to change the system overall.
- 4.10 In response officers reiterated that they had been in this declining situation for a number of years now. GCC had paid for a review of CIL for the JCS authorities, but this is taking longer than originally anticipated. Officers felt they had given everything to try and resolve this issue by working together, and if anything at this point, legal advice would at least provide an opinion on the right way forward, because at the moment, solutions had become stagnant.
- 4.11 Another member shared their concern over the delay in district councils reviewing and updating their own local plans, and a worrying example of CIL money being allocated to a local parish council to rectify a developer defect, which it was clearly not purposed for.

- 4.12 Officers confirmed that there were no national requirements to advise local authorities on how best to distribute CIL, and this had resulted in a number of county councils across the country finding themselves in the same situation, such as Hampshire County Council.
- 4.13 Cllr David Gray, Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning, welcomed the Committee's discussion today in a sense that everyone was clearly in agreement that we, as a collective of local authorities, were not raising the amount of money needed to facilitate vital infrastructure. The recent Census information stated that Gloucestershire saw around an 8% increase in population between 2011 and 2021, TBC alone was the 4th fastest growing borough in the entire country. With this level of growth, it became even more important for GCC to be able to obtain substantial amounts of funding to provide the necessary infrastructure. Although the Cabinet Member acknowledged the misallocated energy spent on disagreement, this was as a result of the sheer desperation felt by GCC.
- 4.14 Cllr Philip Robinson, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, saw and felt the current helplessness of this situation, particularly in relation to education provision. He reiterated the difference between the two funding pots, CIL was effectively a roof tax and nonspecific, whereas S106 was infrastructure specific. This resulted in CIL being extremely limiting in comparison. The Cabinet Member reinforced that the Capital Schools programme for Gloucestershire was in a very serious situation. Areas of the county needed new schools due to population increases but the money to provide them had to come from somewhere.
- 4.15 A member added that it was impossible for councillors to justify to residents that their nearest school was 13 miles away because GCC were unable to provide adequate provision. This also had an indirect impact on other areas of GCC's budget such as home to school transport.
- 4.16 As a result of the above discussion, several members requested sight of clear and factual examples of the district councils they represented declining/not adhering to GCC's funding requests through planning application representations.

ACTION: Simon Excell

- 4.17 There was also a request from officers for members to share with them any examples of GCC not giving representations to planning applications previously and going forward, as they would be very concerned to learn this was happening.
- 4.18 In terms of moving forward on this issue, the Committee unanimously agreed for the following actions to be recommended:
- The report and minutes from this meeting to be:
 - Referred to Leadership Gloucestershire to discuss at their next meeting.

- Shared on behalf of the Committee with all district councillors, to reinforce this Joint Committees level of concern for the ongoing situation.
- Members of this Joint Committee, who were also district councillors, to continue this discussion with their respective district council.
- For officers at all the involved councils to revisit discussions, work together and ultimately find a way forward in the interest of their residents.

5. BUS SERVICES UPDATE

5.1 Tom Main, Transport Operations Manager, gave an overview of this report and Members noted the following:

- The bus network in general was a mixture of commercial, services that did not need any council authority to run and just needed to be registered with the Traffic Commissioner, and subsidised services, these were the non-commercially viable services which the council currently spent around £5m per year plus £6m per year reimbursing operators for concessionary fare passes.
- At the height of the Pandemic, passenger usage was about 5% of pre-Covid level. There had been a significant recovery since then but on average, services had recovered about 70-80% of its passengers. This coupled with, inflation, increase in fuel costs and driver availability, had led to growing pressure on operators to remain viable.
- The revenue gap due to the Pandemic had been contributed to by the Government via support grants in order to avoid a drastic loss in services that would have otherwise occurred.
- Part of the response from Stagecoach, the major local operator, was to scale back their offering and cancel services. This would then enable them to reallocate drivers onto the more commercial routes and thus improve their reliability for passengers.
- It was stressed that at no point had GCC supported these changes, officers had highlighted from the beginning that the proposed scaling back of services would have a significant impact on communities in Gloucestershire.
- But unfortunately, the council could do nothing to prevent Stagecoach from making these changes, as long as they gave the required notice period to the Traffic Commissioner.
- Having been made aware of the proposed changes, Officers at GCC acted quickly to carry out an informal procurement exercise to gauge the market. They received 1 bid out of the 13 contracts they advertised. Unfortunately, the difficulty of this market was a countrywide issue, councils were having to pay more for the same services and replacement operators were hard to come by due to the severe driver shortage.
- Once the full documentation was received from Stagecoach outlining the withdrawals, the council attempted another procurement exercise to replace the lost services and received only 3 bids out of 13 contracts.

- Officers had worked very hard since to secure a further 4 contracts. They felt the position as it stood was GCC providing emergency and temporary cover.
 - In October, GCC launched two pilot transport schemes call 'The Robin', an attempt to try something different on rural transport. The trials would form part of a business case for potential future expansion.
 - Members would be aware that the council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding bid in 2021 was unsuccessful, along with 70% of other councils. Officers continued to work closely with DfT to review the feedback and enhance the BSIP in preparation for any future funding opportunities, with a full review planned for 2023.
 - There was also the creation of an Enhanced Partnership which was an agreement between council and public transport operators in the county on how they will work together, creation of forums and board to assist that etc.
- 5.2 All members paid their thanks and appreciation to officers for their tireless hard work during the Stagecoach withdrawal and for reaching a position of 350,000 services being supported for the time being.
- 5.3 A member questioned whether, looking at longer term aspirations, the council had considered applying for the franchising scheme under the Bus Services Act 2017, which would allow additional powers to control the bus network in these circumstances. It was advised that during the Bus Back Better project, the question was asked of all local authorities whether they had an Enhanced Partnership arrangement or franchising, every single rural authority had gone with the first route. GCC's understanding at the moment was only the larger metropolitan areas franchised due to the significant costs required to set it up (in the £100s of millions).
- 5.4 Officers acknowledged that Stagecoach had a very large proportion of the network procured to them and in situations like this, it worked against the council. Although stressing how difficult the market was at the moment, they were very pleased to see a number of other companies agreeing to come back or starting new in the county and hoped to have a much more competitive and balanced network in the future as a result. It was suggested that councils may want to consider referring the bus market to the Competition of Markets Authority for a formal investigation.
- 5.5 Of the 500,000 journeys withdrawn by Stagecoach, GCC had to date managed to save 350,000 which left an estimated 150,000 journeys which would either be completely lost or would suffer a reduction in frequency. All the routes GCC have managed to replace had been subsidised by the council, regardless of whether they were previously subsidised or commercially available routes.
- 5.6 It was stressed that GCC, in this case and in many others, was not the statutory provider 'of last resort' but could be if it chose to and could afford to be. There remained a number of holes in the programme of services that had

been, or were due to be withdrawn, with no alternative offers on the table. Officers could not give specifics at the moment, as all efforts had been focused on the imminent changes but now they had reached a relatively stable position, they would look towards the next round of withdrawals due for February 2023. Buses like the K and E loop in Cheltenham would need to be assessed, as with all other routes, to understand whether it was viable for the council to procure and retain them as they were.

- 5.7 Acknowledging that the issue of infrequent and unreliable services had been ongoing for some time prior to the withdrawal notification. Members questioned whether there was any mechanism of recouping costs for services not adhered to. Officers advised that they could not do so against any commercial services that failed to turn up as timetabled, but they had as much as possible tried to do so for any subsidised services. This had also led to the decision of the Council to report Stagecoach to the Traffic Commissioner, it was felt that as a private company who took £7.1m of public money via GCC, Stagecoach had not exercised the responsibility to the public that this came with.
- 5.8 Members shared frustration on behalf of their constituents of the timings these changes were communicated, the lack of opportunity to advocate for services to be saved and the services that formed part of the 150,000 potentially lost. It was felt that Members should be advised at the earliest opportunity, even when such things were only a risk, in order to better prepare and represent their communities.
- 5.9 These comments were noted and appreciated but felt they could only be directed at Stagecoach themselves, not officers at GCC who had worked tirelessly to recover from an impossible situation. It was shared that Stagecoach had informal conversations with GCC twice in August but provided no firm proposals or action at that point. In early October they then, very suddenly, issued a 42-day notice via the Traffic Commissioner for all the withdrawn services. They also ignored the advisory 4 week notice period (prior to the 42-day statutory) to allow local authorities sufficient time to consider replacements, arguing that the informal conversation in August should have been enough to trigger preparation.
- 5.10 Looking towards future funding in this area, it was advised that the current Covid support funding for public transport was due to end in April 2023 and officers awaited the announcement on anything further. They felt confident however that Government had recognised the ongoing challenges for public transport provision and felt there was a show of an appetite to change and tackle these issues via the launch of the BSIP funding opportunity in 2021. Aside from Government funding, the Council continued to work very hard in-house to address challenges and were due to do a piece of work on market engagement and development. It was stressed however that these issues would not hinder the council's ambitions on transport decarbonisation.
- 5.11 Examining details of The Robin initiative, Members were informed that GCC

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had entered into an agreement with Lincolnshire County Council to provide a call centre option as an alternative to using the app to pre-book. Noting the need for flexibility as there were no set journey times, it was suggested that over time data would start to identify regular requested journey times and plot the most efficient route. There was also a suggestion of looking into providing alerts on the app that a pre-booked service was due so other users could join relatively last minute.

6. BUS IMPROVEMENTS TASK GROUP

Members welcomed the task group one pager and thanked Cllr Bloxsom and Cllr Thomas for their efforts in producing it.

The Joint Committee unanimously approved for the task group to proceed, whilst suggesting the following points:

- To ensure the consultation of bus users covers a wide demographic, including protected characteristics.
- To make sure as many district, borough and parish councils are allowed to feed in as possible to prompt partnership working.
- To consider barriers preventing current non-bus users.

7. BREAK MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2022 were approved, subject to the below amendments.

- 4.2 “a tool to ~~reduce~~ **improve** road safety”
- 4.4 reword to reflect that where 20 mph schemes were in place, communities who had not taken steps to measure the speeds spoke largely in favour of the schemes they had; however where they had gone back and measured traffic speeds, they had found significant amounts of non-compliance.

8. ANNUAL CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY REVIEW

8.1 The Chair invited Pete Wiggins to introduce the Gloucestershire Climate Change Strategy Progress Report 2022, members noted the following:

- Scrutiny was asked to feedback on the Annual Progress Report prior to it going to Cabinet in December.
- Gloucestershire’s Youth Climate Group (GYCG) due to present worked with GCC to develop the original strategy in 2019 and since continue to be engaged and review progress.
- Gloucestershire’s carbon performance was published nationally, 2-years in arrears so the data in this report was the most up to date available. It was clear that the country as a whole benefited from drastically reduced

emissions in 2020 due to the various lockdowns, and all local authority areas would expect to see a significant rise on emissions for the next data set in 2021.

- Members noted the development of Climate Leadership Gloucestershire as a working group of Leadership Gloucestershire, and whose membership included lead portfolio holders at all Gloucestershire councils, as well as senior directors/managers and who aimed to work together to coordinate a countywide approach to climate change.
- GCC remained on target to achieve its own reduction in emissions by 2030, as set when the council declared a climate emergency.
- The main challenge now was to tackle the Council's Scope 3 Emissions which were as a result of procurement to third party suppliers and services and had not been included in the original target scope. The Council was in the early days of working to address these and performance would now be reported alongside the original scope.
- Annex 1 of the report included a brief accessible summary of the Council's approach, progress to date and plans going forward, plus feedback from GYCG and the Youth Climate Action Survey which had received views from almost 3000 young people.

8.2 This was followed by a presentation from members of the GYCG the detail of which can be found [here](#).

8.3 Members started discussions by paying thanks to members of the GYCG who had given their time and courage to attend and present at today's session, but also for their input on the Strategy's progress to date. They commended the Group's enthusiasm and commitment to the environment and our communities.

Questions to GYCG

8.4 A member asked where the group saw action against climate change in 10 years' time, particularly considering the results of COP27 which did not rule out the use of fossil fuels. The group remained hopeful that there would be positive change in the next few years. They felt there had been some positive action from the COPs and welcomed this level of communication and engagement at a local level on action and remaining challenges. They stressed that organisations and leaders needed to realise that economic growth should be around the climate and environment, not despite of. Growth could be classed as beneficial in the long term if it did not positively impact the environment. It was also noted that, continuing on this path, the cost of climate change adaptation in the future would far outreach any economic growth benefits.

8.5 Considering GCC's net zero targets, members of the group felt the need to look beyond simply reducing the county's emissions as they stood, there also needed to be consideration for reversing the impacts that had already

happened. They saw offsetting and carbon sequestration as important tools but were very wary of large organisations using them as an excuse to continue huge levels of pollution.

- 8.6 Several members asked questions to the group on how they, as elected representatives, could help make engagement with local government more accessible for young people. A member particularly reflected on slide 14 which did not list government being a form of inspiration for young people.
- 8.7 The group stressed one of the key barriers for young people remained the right to vote, they found it incredibly demoralising to have no outlet for their opinions. Local Government remained complicated and foreboding for a lot of young people. This was two-fold in both understanding how it worked, but also not being represented at an elected level. They felt it was invaluable for education and training to be provided through schools to help young people understand how local authority worked, what they did and were responsible for, and then how young people could be involved and show it as a realistic avenue for their futures.
- 8.8 Similar to the GYCG work, the group emphasised the importance of youth voices on local boards and projects. This level of engagement helped to take the first step in building those relationships.
- 8.9 Members of the Committee acknowledged that they themselves needed to do more in their own divisions such as reaching out to schools and youth groups and share their knowledge and experience of local government, as well as inviting young people to attend council meetings, for example. The Group added that members could also explore access to lesson plans and teacher resources to help continue young people's learning.
- 8.10 A member put forward a proposal, supported by others, that two seats be allocated for young people to co-opt onto the Environment Scrutiny Committee (non-voting) to either observe or give opinions within these meetings. This should also be requested for the Climate Leadership Gloucestershire membership.

ACTION: Democratic Services/Pete Wiggins

- 8.11 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning added that young people should not underestimate the power that they had in influencing others and taking action and engaging at a local level. A responding ask from the Group was for councils to do more in reaching out to young people and providing that two-way street of communication. Whilst noting there be a lot of opportunities locally e.g., working with town and parish councils, young people needed to be made aware of these. It was accepted that GCC had started to evolve and develop better communications, but it had a lot more to do.

- 8.12 To close the discussion, members again thanked the Group for their challenge and input to date and urged them to keep doing so as the Council moved through its journey towards achieving its net zero targets.

Questions to Pete Wiggins and the Sustainability Team

- 8.13 Members welcomed the annual update which they felt showed a lot of work was happening, of which they were really grateful to officers for. They also particularly welcomed that the officer team was growing and being properly resourced.

- 8.14 Due to a number of detailed questions from a member, officers requested to respond in writing after the meeting to ensure they could give the answers sufficient time and attention. The answers to these have been added as an appendix to this minute. Within these questions however, a few clarification points were given:

- The data provided for county wide emissions was published by Government, which meant they also set the scope for both the territorial emissions (everything arising from Gloucestershire) and those within local authority influence, as well as anything excluded within these. Just because there were exclusions however, it did not mean Gloucestershire was not seeking to influence a change in these areas (page 3 of the report).
- The RAG rating used in the Action Progress 2021/22 to date was related to progress rather than risk, those showing in red were not being taken forward as originally hoped.

- 8.15 The Committee noted that 11 elected members had to date taken part in the Carbon Literacy Training provided via GCC. The team were looking at how this will be expanded in the future. There was also reference made to the Green Champions scheme for staff, an action was taken to explore how this resource could be made available to elected members as well.

ACTION: Pete Wiggins/Democratic Services

- 8.16 It was explained that the Salix Fund was a 50/50 fund set up between GCC and Salix Finance (who were a national body with Government funding, an offshoot of the Carbon Trust) to use as a loan scheme to help take carbon reduction initiatives forward. The Fund was currently aimed at projects focused on heat decarbonisation and was now open for use by parish and town councils so the team would be exploring how to best engage this information.
- 8.17 Noting the absence of reference specifically to methane from livestock and leaking landfill, a member queried whether work was being done to reduce these emission outlets. It was clarified that the report and performance measures refer to carbon as CO₂e which puts all emissions on equal footing and then expressed as tonnes of carbon. For example, methane was around

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28 times more powerful in terms of Global Warming potential than carbon so 1 tonne of methane would equate to 28 tonnes of carbon.

- 8.18 The team worked closely with colleagues in property on land and estate management, and there were really excellent examples of good practise which they were looking to highlight and share with others. Livestock also fell within one of the key themes for Climate Leadership Gloucestershire's work, agriculture, and partners were working together across the county on simple changes such as what farmers fed the livestock etc. that could make a significant difference. In terms of landfill, the key change for GCC in this area was the creation of Javelin Park for the disposal of household waste.

9. WORK PLAN

Members reviewed the current work plan and requested future items on:

- Civil enforcement powers
- Traffic Regulation Order process

CHAIR

Meeting concluded at 15:00.

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Questions for the Annual Climate Change strategy review

1. Understanding the increasing threats posed by global heating, it would be helpful to change the wording from climate change to climate emergency (where wording is important to underline the urgency needed to act now)

Could we please change to the Annual Climate Emergency Strategy review?

[This has been added as a subtitle to the annual report.](#)

2 How can we ever get real control over emissions when everybody seems to exclude motorways from the numbers? Similarly, GCC is for some reason excluding from the county figures (right hand pie chart p6 of the report) large industrial sites, railways and land-use – can these. Particularly industrial sites and land use please be accounted for to get a more accurate assessment of the County's carbon emissions?

[They are excluded because they are not within the local authority's influence \(they are managed by Highways England\) and are instead included within the national figures addressed by government.](#)

3 Great that the climate team is finally growing and being resourced as necessary.

4 Decarbonisation of buildings – according to the annual Health report, GCC occupies 775 sites across the county (<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/2111500/dph-report-2021-sources-of-strength.pdf>), so having assessed 12 of them (bottom of p17 in 2.8) should not the RAG rating of orange be red. 12 out of 775 is about 1.5%/year?

[The Action Progress, 2021/22 to date \(Appendix 1\) states that the RAG ratings denote whether the action is complete \(green\), in progress \(amber\) or not yet underway \(red\). The action is in progress and the premises referred to are those whose heating systems requiring replacement over the next 3 years.](#)

5 We should be doing commercial energy recovery AND heat decarbonisation, not just deleting 2.10 because a solution has not yet been found. And why aren't we doing carbon capture particularly on our biggest emitters like Javelin Park EfW?

[This refers to a technology that was to be piloted at Shire Hall but is no longer appropriate. Carbon Capture technology at Energy from Waste facilities is at an early stage of development within the UK. The council hopes to commission a study in 2023 with its contractor at Javelin Park to better understand the potential and feasibility of carbon capture.](#)

6. 30% modal shift (p20, 3.11) should not have an orange RAG rating, it should be red. We all know that the Local Transport Plan targets for public transport and cycling are nowhere near being met. Although not complaining per se about the Cheltenham to Gloucester cycle route, this route is generally well served with public transport whereas many of the rural connection routes are not and therefore deserve more funding for active travel routes and should not be left behind?

[The amber rating denotes that the action is in progress. Comments re: active travel in rural areas are noted and will be discussed with Traffic & Transport colleagues.](#)

7 Public Transport is in chaos. 3.17 (p21) should be red.

The amber rating denotes that the action is in progress. The council's approach to addressing recent challenges with bus services was reported to the Environment Scrutiny Committee on 22 Nov 22.

8 The consequences of low CIL contributions affects the lack of new local school places meaning that our public and school transport costs (and carbon emissions) are increasing. Are these being accounted for and measured?

The amount of CIL being collected and distributed by the five District Councils that have implemented it is being closely monitored by the County Council. It is hoped that all of the District Councils will soon implement a method of distributing CIL and that the County Council will be enabled to bid for the monies that the District Councils have received. It is difficult to directly assess the impact of the lack of CIL payments to the County Council, as CIL should cover a wide range of infrastructure required to mitigate the impact of new developments – not just transport / education. GCC officers will continue to actively engage with the District Councils to attempt to secure CIL monies and deliver the required infrastructure to reduce public and school transport costs and carbon emissions.

9 (4.4 p22) – why has no progress been made on district heat networks. Why can't progress be accelerated rather than revisiting the timeline? The incinerator is wasting heat whilst there are no local sites able to use it.

The amended timeline for this action is a result of a combination of factors including limited capacity within the team and the absence of any viable heat off-take options. Any development in the vicinity of the EfW would be dependent on investment by a third party with suitable energy requirements and being able to reach a commercial agreement with them.

10 Fosse Cross FRC battery storage (4.5, p22) – why is this being pushed out to 2023/24? We need to be moving at pace to decarbonise our energy system.

The timeline for this action is a result of limited capacity within the team, which is being addressed through a restructure.

11 (6.1 p22) – why has nothing happened on the climate award scheme? The activity seems to have been pushed out to 2024-8. We need to be promoting urgent action from our communities, who control the majority of the emissions.

This action is considered of lower priority than many others within the action plan and as a result of limited capacity within the team, the timeline has been extended. Our current focus is on increasing our communications and community engagement work in line with our engagement plan. There has been a significant increase in the scale and reach of our engagement campaigns throughout the past year.

12 Proposed actions (1.8 p.ii) – a dynamic purchasing system for local seasonal food would be great, but the circular economy is really about repurposing what would otherwise be waste. Where are the new actions for this? There's work going on in other county councils eg Essex CC with the BLUEPRINT programme e.g.

<https://projectblueprint.eu/https://www.essex.gov.uk/news/two-national-awards-for-circular-economy-team>- are we engaging with it?

Thank you for drawing this initiative to our attention. The council's waste strategy includes actions on promoting reuse and repair, supporting the circular economy. The Minerals

Plan also seeks to increase the reuse of material in place of virgin materials from quarrying.

13. Youth Panel survey – the GCC responses to the young people’s feedback in general read as if they’ve been written as an auto-response. The Panel have asked for community involvement in the response group (by which they mean the Climate Leadership Group, as is evidenced by the questions above) – the GCC response is “N/A”. (1C p v) How is that helpful?!

Maybe find a human within the officer team to respond next time, and recognise the passion, creativity and genuine interest in the Panel’s involvement rather than just quoting back some existing GCC strategy of limited relevance please.

A considerable amount of officer time is spent on developing and supporting the GYCG, including regular in person attendance at evening and weekend events, together with the development of an engaging and fulfilling program of activities for them. We acknowledge that our written response was a little hurried in places and it will be redrafted to provide more detail and consideration.

14. Recycling rate up 50.8%. Can the residual waste tonnage reflect that, as it would be frustrating to find that recycling is up simply due to an increase in consumption e.g. cardboard from online shopping?

We are pleased to say that our latest waste forecasts are a 4% increase in recycling this year (compared to last year) and a 4% reduction in residual waste. Overall waste (all household waste streams, recyclable and residual) are down 5% year on year.

15 net zero means carbon emissions will continue to enter the atmosphere. Should we not be looking at carbon negative or possibly zero carbon?

The Net Zero ambition was agreed by Full Council and remains our current stated ambition. The council’s climate change strategy is due to be reviewed in 24/25 and it may be opportune at this point to revisit our targets and ambitions.

16. Is Cotswold Airport carbon footprint not mentioned for any particular reason now that duties on internal flights have been reduced? What is GCCs involvement with Cotswold airport, and indeed any other aviation facilities in the county?

GCC has no direct involvement in Cotswold Airport or other aviation facilities in the county. Gloucestershire Airport is jointly owned by Gloucester City Council and Cheltenham Borough Council.

17. Looks like emissions nationally (and globally) are rising again following return to business as usual post pandemic. Are we bucking that trend?

It is too early to tell, Gloucestershire data for 2021 will be published in 2023.

18 Do we note that it takes a newly planted oak tree about 100 years to sequester 1 tonne of carbon. This takes us way beyond our net zero targets.

The 1 Million Trees initiative is in support of the Gloucestershire Tree Strategy developed by the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership. There are a range of alternative carbon sequestration opportunities, including wet woodland, flood plain and grassland that we will explore with partners through the Local Nature Partnership.

19 How is the 56,861 tonnes CO₂e from landfill calculated.

This is calculated using the government carbon conversion factor for residual household waste to landfill, using Gloucestershire residual household waste arisings. Available at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/greenhouse-gas-reporting-conversion-factors-2021>

20 The Committee on Climate Change have recorded a fall in waste sector emissions to landfill but there has been a significant rise in fossil emissions from EfW plants. The recommendation is to install Carbon Capture and Storage. Will GCC look into that possibility to further reduce carbon emissions?

Please see response to Q.5.

21 (6.2 p 22) Libraries are creating greener together zones to increase access to sustainable literature. How does this work and what does this mean?

All libraries in the county now stock a Greener Together collection of books providing information on how to reduce your carbon footprint, along with a wide range of other useful advice on topics including growing your own vegetables and recycling. You can find the Greener Together collection by searching for 'climate change' on the library catalogue at <https://gloucestershire.spydus.co.uk/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/MSGTRN/WPAC/HOME>

22. How are we supporting young people through education on carbon (literacy) to help them become the climate leaders of tomorrow?

We have formed and continue to support the Gloucestershire Youth Climate Group to give young people a voice on climate change issues. The Gloucestershire Libraries Greener Together collection includes titles suitable for younger readers. Our outreach work includes engagement with schools and youth groups, and our social media work now extends to platforms such as Instagram which tend to have younger followings.

23. We need to decrease demand first. Are we able to write to government to pilot/fund a home retrofit scheme? (And tackle the rising energy costs)

We are supporting retrofit work through the energy theme at Climate Leadership Gloucestershire.

24. Is the development of a carbon offsetting scheme really ethical? (Allowing the wealthy to pay to continue polluting). Most offset schemes actually decrease biodiversity.

The Net Zero ambition was agreed by Full Council, which includes an 80% reduction in carbon emissions. The Gloucestershire Nature & Climate Fund (GNCF) seeks to secure funding from developers for Biodiversity Net Gain and carbon sequestration funding for the county. Without the GNCF that developer funding and its biodiversity and carbon benefits would go elsewhere.

25. (1E p vi) With the critique of traditional power structures, GCC responses do not appear to understand that power could be devolved down to the most local level that can effectively use it and that truly participatory budgeting and planning could then become the norm. Could changing power structures be discussed again please?

This would be a matter for Full Council. Colleagues in Democratic Services would be best placed to support on this, although we are of course happy to remain part of the conversation, particularly on matters relating to the environment.