

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 17 January 2024 commencing at 10.00 am at the Council Chamber - 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 Dr David Willingham	Cllr Wendy Thomas

Cabinet Members: Cllr David Gray (Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning) and Cllr Philip Robinson (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Bus Transport)

Apologies: Cllr Susan Williams, Cllr Sajid Patel and Cllr Brian Tipper

2. MINUTES

2.1 The minutes of the meetings held on the 31st October and 15th November 2023 were approved as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. E-SCOOTER PROVISION IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

4.1 The Committee received a presentation from representatives of Gloucestershire's e-scooter provider, Voi. Matthew Pencharz, Voi's Head of Policy and Yiseth Scorcia Tenjo, City Success Operations Manager, gave the presentation and were supported by Tom Main, Gloucestershire County Council's (GCC) Integrated Transport Manager, Colin Chick, GCC Executive Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure, and Jason Humm, GCC Director of Transport and Highways.

The following key points were highlighted:

- E-scooter trials were brought into the UK under Europe's tightest regulation during the pandemic. It was confirmed that e-scooters are classed as motor vehicles by the Department for Transport (DfT), meaning riders must follow the rules of the road, this includes the need to have a valid driving/provisional licence and Motor Third Party Liability (MTPL) insurance.
- It was stated that since Voi e-scooters came into use in Gloucestershire in August 2023, there had been 10300 users with over 81,000 trips completed.

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There were currently 450 e-scooters in operation within the county which had replaced over 13000 car trips, reducing 4.2 tonnes of CO2 emissions.

- The safety features of using Voi's e-scooters were explained, these included in-app mandatory first-time user training, an intoxication and reaction test, and geofenced zones which created no riding or slow speed zones.
- It was also stated that Voi had an in-app anti-social behaviour (ASB) reporting tool and in-field staff who monitored and penalised ASB. Voi also confirmed that they had a three-strike policy for ASB which would lead to a permanent ban.
- The data confirmed that the predominant user age group for the e-scooters was 26-39 years old and that 85% of users were under forty. The most frequent usage time was peak hours on weekdays and after 10am on weekends with 40% of users regularly using the e-scooter for their commute.

4.2 Responding to a Member's question about Voi e-scooters blocking pavements for other residents, Voi did state that generally e-scooter parking compliance was high. However, the officers confirmed that Voi were developing their system to better identify e-scooters that were parked in inconvenient places. As whilst Voi did issue warnings for users who had incorrectly parked their e-scooter, the system was not as effective as they would like.

4.3 Voi confirmed that they had conducted a user survey in the Autumn of 2023 which allowed them to find out the number of users who used an e-scooter rather than taking their car.

4.4 When asked about riding an e-scooter under the influence of alcohol, the Voi representatives confirmed that a warning message automatically came up on the Voi app to discourage users from riding under the influence when users failed the reaction test. It was stated that GCC were also working with the police. Likewise, the Voi representative stated that if they caught anyone using someone else's account or were underage, the police were able to prosecute.

4.5 Members were encouraged to raise any concern over the position of e-scooter parking bays with the officers. However, officers stated that Gloucestershire were one of the most stringent authorities on the position of parking bays.

4.6 Answering a Member's question about whether Voi could stop e-scooter pavement riding with the geofence technology, it was stated that currently pavements were too close to roads to use geofence technology, but Voi confirmed that they were working on new e-scooters with this technology.

4.7 Responding to a Member's question about complaints, the Voi representatives stated that residents could either report complaints via the Voi app or by email. The

Voi representative confirmed that he would share Gloucestershire's complaints data with the committee.

ACTION – Matthew Pencharz

4.8 A Member questioned how much it had cost GCC to implement the Voi e-scooter scheme, it was confirmed that there had been no cost to GCC.

4.9 When asked about extending the Voi e-scooter riding area, officers confirmed that Voi and GCC were working together to persuade the DfT to increase the geographical area of where the e-scooters could be used. To do this, they had to obtain a revised Vehicle Special Order (VSO) from the DfT which would expand their area however, they stated that the DfT had been cautious about the expansion of e-scooter usage.

4.10 When asked why Voi did not have helmets attached to their e-scooters, the Voi representatives stated they had found that most users did not want to share a helmet. Whilst Voi strongly encouraged the use of helmets when riding, they would not enforce it.

4.11 Responding to a Member's question about expanding into small market towns, it was stated that because the e-scooter market had very low margins, it meant that big cities and towns were needed to meet the vehicle costs. Therefore, it was hoped that as the e-scooter market expanded into larger cities, they would be able to create satellite town locations which would be able to use a larger town or city to sustain it.

4.12 When asked how long the Voi contract was, the officers confirmed that the original contract was scheduled for a review at eleven months, then the contract could be extended for a maximum of three years, but this was dependent on whether the DfT made any changes to e-scooter regulation.

5. IMPROVING GLOUCESTERSHIRE'S BUS SERVICES SCRUTINY TASK GROUP REPORT

5.1 Cllr Wendy Thomas, who chaired the Bus Services Task Group, was invited to give a short introduction to the task group report. She was supported by Jason Humm, Tom Main and Philip Williams, Assistant Director of Traffic and Transport.

5.2 Many of the Members thanked Cllr Wendy Thomas for the report and for her role as Chair of the task group. The Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Bus Transport stated that he welcomed the report but would reserve his formal

response to the sixteen recommendations until GCC's Cabinet meeting on the 31st January 2024.

5.3 Responding to a Member's question about the use of cameras on vehicles such as buses or refuse vehicles to detect potholes in the county, the officers confirmed that whilst there had been trials on using AI cameras for pothole inspections, it currently did not operate successfully anywhere in the UK. However, officers confirmed that it was being considered as part of the Highways Transformation program.

5.4 A Member questioned officers on why Gloucestershire couldn't create an integrated ticketing system like Cornwall had rather than waiting for the DfT's Project Coral integrated ticketing system. It was explained that Cornwall's integrated ticketing system was what influenced the DfT to create their own integrated ticketing system. Therefore, the DfT had since discouraged other counties from creating their own system and asked them to wait for the DfT's system.

5.5 Answering a Member's question about bus prioritisation, it was confirmed that GCC had used some of the DfT funding to employ experts to understand the county's bus junction performance and to identify types of solutions that would be needed. In 2024/2025's budget, there would be capital funding for a three-year bus priority programme which would design new systems and hopefully begin installation by the end of the 2024/2025 financial year.

6. TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS

6.1 The Chair invited Philip Williams to give an update on Gloucestershire's Traffic Regulation Orders.

The following points were highlighted:

- A TRO is a legal document that restricts or prohibits the use of the highway network in line with The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Examples of TROs include speed limits, on-street parking restrictions, weight limits, one-way streets and banned turns. All TROs must be made within a two-year window from initial consultation. The typical cost of a TRO is £15000 but this was dependent on complexity and cost of the work.
- The Officer confirmed that the team had undergone a significant transformation recently including four new senior level positions who reported to Philip Williams. The TRO team now reported to a Traffic and Active Travel Manager and included a TRO Manager, a Road Safety Manager and a Traffic Engineering Manager. It was confirmed that whilst they were recruiting for these positions, an external consultee, TRO Limited, was brought in to support the current TRO Manager.

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- The current TRO program had 94 live schemes with 40% either being at construction stage or at senior management sign off. The remaining 60% of TROs were being progressed as per a prioritisation system.
- The Officer confirmed that the Members received a monthly TRO progress report for their area which allowed for greater transparency.

6.2 Answering a Member's question about recruitment, the officers confirmed that there was a national shortage of qualified staff, and this had caused challenges with recruitment. To help the roles appear more attractive, they focused on creating flexible job roles and actively encouraged staff to do additional training to obtain promotions.

6.3 Answering a Member's question, the Officer confirmed that they had been mindful that the same contractor was being used for both TRO and winter road safety such as filling in potholes. Therefore, this had caused conflict about what should be prioritised leading to delays in TROs being delivered. The Officer confirmed that they were looking at what could be done to overcome this issue.

6.4 A Member questioned if the TRO process could be made cheaper and more efficient, the officers stated that there was a plan to review the TRO process. It was believed that GCC could become more efficient by bundling together TROs in the same area rather than delivering on a first-come-first-served basis.

6.5 Responding to an Officer's statement about having issues with developers not implementing the TROs needed after the development had been completed, the Member questioned whether there was any more that the Local Planning Authorities on GCC's behalf could do to strengthen these relationships. The Officer confirmed that they did sometimes need the Local Planning Authority's help if there was a compliance issue with enforcing conditions.

ACTION – Philip Williams to confirm whether there was anything more that the Local Planning Authority could help with.

6.6 Responding to a Member's concern over lack of communication about the progress of TROs, the officer confirmed that a greater focus was going to be placed on keeping communities informed to explain why there were delays or why their TRO had been rejected.

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

7.1 The report was taken as read. Member's questions were answered by Colin Chick, Jason Humm and Simon Excell, Assistant Director of Economic Development and Planning. There were no pre-submitted questions.

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7.2 The Chair asked the Committee Members for their thoughts on changing the current question process for this item; it was decided that they would keep the current process.

7.3 Responding to a Member's question about whether the target of installing 1000 Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) by 2025 was realistic, the Officer confirmed that he did not believe they would reach their target as the Local Electrical Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund had stated that they would not release funding until GCC changed their methodology for procuring the EVCPs. The stipulation for the funding was that GCC were only allowed to put EVCPs in areas where there was no off-street parking which narrowed down where chargers could be placed. The Officer did clarify that the target of 33 EV charging sites (4 EV chargers per site) being installed by March 2024 would be reached.

7.4 A Member raised concern that the instruction label on the EVCP posts was too low, the Officer confirmed he would raise this with the EVCP team.

ACTION – COLIN CHICK

7.5 Responding to a Member's question on whether all bids from communities for the Road Safety Partnership's Community Speed Watch would be funded, the Officer confirmed that most bids were viable for funding in the current phase (Phase 2) but it was likely that if there was a Phase 3, this would include the residual bids from Phase 2.

7.6 Answering a Member's question on whether National Highway's A417 work would always take priority over local resurfacing issues, it was stated that the National Highways did inform GCC of ongoing work, but it was confirmed that the A417 project did take precedent over local resurfacing projects in terms of road closures.

7.7 Responding to a Member's question, the officers confirmed that the Digital Household Grant had received over two hundred applications which the team were reviewing to confirm viability, and it was hoped that as many as possible would be taken on. Regarding the Fastershire program, it was hoped that a Lead Cabinet Member decision would be taken to extend the current legal agreement by one year so the deadline would be the 31st March 2025 as GCC's contractor, Gigaclear, would not meet their target by 2024.

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8. WORK PLAN

8.1 The following items were scheduled into the work plan for the following year:

March – 1. Climate Leadership Gloucestershire Update

2. An update on the cost recovery for damage to infrastructure by drivers to be included in the Economy, Environment and Infrastructure Report.

May- 1. Local Nature Recovery Strategy

2. Climate Risk Vulnerability Assessment

July – 1. Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) update and Public Rights of Way Issues

2. Winter Service Plan Review

September – 1. Transport Decarbonisation (including Mass Rapid Transport) Update

2. Strategic Risk Item 2.1 (to include flooding)

November – 1. Traffic Regulation Order Update

2. Highways Contract Consideration Factors

Future Consideration: Road Safety/Community Safety Annual Figures (May 2025)

8.2 It was suggested that September would be a joint meeting with the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee.

CHAIR

Meeting concluded at 13.28pm.

To view the meeting recording, please use the following link:

<https://gloucestershire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>

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