

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **COMMUNITIES, ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS SELECT COMMITTEE** held remotely at 10.00 am on 18 June 2020.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Wednesday, 16 September 2020.

**Elected Members:**

- \* Mr John O'Reilly (Chairman)
- \* Mr Andy MacLeod (Vice-Chairman)
- \* Mr Saj Hussain (Vice-Chairman)
- \* Mrs Fiona White
- \* Mr Keith Witham
- \* Mr Mike Bennison
- Mrs Jan Mason
- \* Mr Ken Gulati
- Mr John Furey
- \* Mr Paul Deach
- \* Mr Jonathan Essex
- \* Mr Mike Goodman
- \* Mrs Natalie Bramhall

**In attendance:**

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Transport  
Natalie Bramhall, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change  
Denise Turner Stewart, Cabinet Member for Communities

**15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]**

Apologies were received from Mrs Jan Mason and Mr John Furey.

**16 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS: TUESDAY 24 MARCH 2020 [Item 2]**

The minutes were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

**17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]**

None received.

**18 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]**

None received.

**19 ENVIRONMENT TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE DIRECTORATE RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS [Item 5]**

**Witnesses:**

Denise Turner Stewart, Cabinet Member for Communities  
Natalie Bramhall, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change  
Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Transport

Katie Stewart, Executive Director – Environment, Transport and Infrastructure

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Cabinet Member for Communities provided an overview of the work of the Environment Transport and Infrastructure (ETI) Directorate during COVID-19. An International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) accreditation approach was being undertaken and a new Director of Resilience would add additional capacity to the service. The Cabinet Member relayed how the relationship with funeral directors had been crucial throughout this period in enabling the death management approach to run smoothly. Protecting the workforce and preparing staff return to work was being undertaken, with the help from the health and safety team, whilst the support for armed forces personnel had continued and new grants awarded for the veteran's hub.
2. With regard to the Coroners Service, the Cabinet Member reported that there had been a significant reduction in waiting times for post-mortems, with a marked improvement in systems and processes. Hearings had continued with remote access enabled for the public.
3. Simultaneously, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) had continued to respond to all emergencies whilst developing the community protection offer. SFRS was one of the first services to access key worker testing and the council was supporting the National Fire Chiefs Council in lessons learned with partner fire and rescue services. The Community Protection Group had advanced on its transformation programme – building back services and acting as a key component in the COVID-19 response. The Community Safety Team had been working to support domestic abuse provision and a new refuge had been established.
4. The Chairman referred to the government's active travel grants querying the status of the council's bids. The Cabinet Member stated that, in total, the government had allocated £8.5m to Surrey and the council had applied for the first tranche of this to be granted as revenue funding. The majority of this funding would go on measures already being installed in Farnham, Reigate & Banstead and Mole Valley. The focus would largely be on unpedestrianised retail areas. These pilots would develop the template for the rest of the county, and it was anticipated that the second tranche of funding would be received in the summer. A newly appointed officer had increased the capacity of the team for project development.

5. The Chairman asked whether Members and residents could be involved in the process prior to the submission of bids. The Cabinet Member responded that a new virtual map on where residents could mark and nominate areas for improvement was due to be launched and would help prioritisation. The Cabinet Member assured the Committee that Members would be included in any consultations taking place in their area, and urged Members to think how walking, cycling and bus routes could be improved in their area.
6. The Chairman raised pressures on bus operators due to the declining bus usage during lockdown. This conflicted with both the council's Rethinking Transport and Climate Change Strategies that had prioritised increased public transport use. The Cabinet Member stated that proposals were still being implemented and there had been a spike in patronage with every easing of lockdown restrictions. Buses were starting to return to their normal timetables (approximately 80% were already operating at normal timetables and the Cabinet Member would provide this information to members retrospectively). Payments to bus operators had continued and the government's bus operators grant was still effective. The Cabinet Member assured the Committee that provision for buses would continue with an associated campaign to promote greater bus use in due course.

*Jonathan Essex joined the meeting at 10:50*

7. A Member queried the impact that the £20m deficit in government subsidy due to COVID-19 and the redeployment of staff to manage the emergency would have on the council's financial recovery programme that had been underway before lockdown. The Cabinet Member for Communities stated that, in fact, some services had improved during COVID-19. Close working with partners to increase local resilience had created closer working relationships. The Executive Director had worked to maintain momentum on programmes such as Rethinking Transport, Rethinking Waste, the Climate Strategy, and the new Tree Strategy. Staff had modified their ways of working to ensure this work continued whilst others were redeployed. Financial pressure would be felt but a review of the ETI Directorate was underway which would give an opportunity to maximise the existing staff and resource. Transformation would continue to be a priority as would partnership, cross-sector and organisation working.
8. A Member referred to the reopening of community recycling centres (CRCs) and questioned what plans were in place to accept all waste types whilst adhering to social distancing measures. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change stated that officers were already working with SUEZ to reopen the small CRCs and a date for the reopening of three more was expected to be announced on 19 June. Initially, the smaller CRCs would be accepting green waste only.

The Cabinet Member stated that a booking system would not be put in place.

Actions/Further information requested:

- i. The Cabinet Member for Transport to provide the Committee with information on what percentage of buses are operating at a business as usual timetable.

## **20 WASTE COMMISSIONING STRATEGY [Item 6]**

Witnesses:

Natalie Bramhall, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

Katie Stewart, Executive Director – Environment, Transport and Infrastructure

Richard Parkinson, Environment Delivery Group Manager

Mark Allen, Interim Waste Programme Manager

### **Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Cabinet Member stated that the existing waste Private Finance Initiative (PFI) was due to expire in September 2024 thus new service arrangements would be commissioned and a strategy developed to meet the council's statutory duties. The commissioning strategy would consider approaches ranging from full re-procurement to division of the service into separate packages that could be procured within a shorter timescale. The council would actively engage with all district and borough councils on future models.
2. Reduction of residual waste by encouraging residents to produce less waste and separating the collection of recycled waste and food waste would be a key element of the strategy. To help achieve this, a review of the variable elements of the funding mechanism through which the council funded the Surrey Environmental Partnership (SEP) and the districts and borough councils was underway and due for completion in September 2020. With the approval of this paper, the Executive Director would establish suitable board and governance arrangements with representatives from Surrey Chief Executives and the SEP.
3. A Member requested that the council's Climate Strategy be adhered to with regard to residual waste, either by managing it locally or transporting it further for treatment by a fleet of electric vehicles. The Executive Director agreed that reference in the report to climate change needed emphasising and more work needed to be undertaken to set out how carbon emissions could be monitored and reduced. The Environment Delivery Group Manager stated that adherence to 'reduce, reuse, recycle' would generate a significant carbon emissions reductions.

4. A Member requested that the 20 action points to deliver on climate change from the Council's Climate Change agenda be included in the Waste Strategy. The Waste Advisor confirmed that the climate change action points and council strategy work would be considered but more work needed to be done around carbon modelling. The Committee thought that the CRC Task Group recommendations should also feed into the Waste Strategy. The Group Manager assured the Committee that the Task Group recommendations would be taken into consideration.
5. A Member asked that the impact on emissions of every 1% improvement in recycling be measured and tracked albeit greater emphasis should be focused on increasing waste reduction and waste reuse. The carbon reduction effect of the latter is far greater and would link to the consumption transformation challenge. The Waste Advisor confirmed that rate analysis would be carried out but it would also be important to consider the following factors to provide a carbon impact of the existing service: how waste and recycling are collected; what vehicles collect waste; the efficiency of waste collection vehicles; how far the vehicles travel; the infrastructure that waste is taken to. The cost, recycling and carbon impacts of each waste strategy option could be considered before a final decision.
6. A Member asked why regional waste facilities might be used to treat Surrey's residual waste and not at the EcoPark. The Executive Director stated that on completion of the EcoPark, it, and the gasifier, would take a percentage of Surrey's waste thus excess residual waste would still need to be managed. A decision needed to be made whether additional facilities be created in Surrey to manage excess waste or whether the county engaged in a regional disposal waste facility. The Cabinet Member explained that some neighbouring counties were developing facilities with spare capacity which could provide a cost-effective alternative to building additional capacity within Surrey.
7. A Member asked whether there had been an increase in clinical waste due to COVID-19 and, if so, how this was being managed. The Group Manager responded that very little clinical waste was produced and the service had been careful with categorising items as clinical waste. Items such as facemasks and gloves did not need to go to specialist disposal. The Group Manager assured that any clinical waste would be dealt with correctly.
8. A Member stated that financial performance was about sustainability, operating at the lowest cost, and giving the best service to residents and that this be made more explicit in the recommendation. The Executive Director replied that financial performance had been broadened from reducing cost and cost efficiency to comprising financial sustainability and assured the Member that this would be made clearer.

9. The Vice Chairman proposed that an education campaign could increase the proportion of residents who separate their food waste. The Cabinet Member agreed that campaigns to stimulate uptake should be developed through joint working with Surrey Environmental Partnership (SEP). There was not satisfactory uptake in food waste recycling; the green food bins were not big enough for larger families and this was something that the Cabinet Member would investigate.
10. A Member requested that consideration be given to managing the treatment of food waste differently, by increasing composting and energy generation and recovery.
11. Members stated that advising residents on ways of decreasing their waste production should be prioritised in the new contract. The Executive Director stated that “reduce, reuse, recycle” would be emphasised in, and the waste hierarchy was at the heart of, the commissioning strategy.
12. Regarding reduction of food waste, a Member asked whether the scope could be widened to all waste and whether details of infrastructure investment to focus on reuse, composting, recycling and food waste could be included in the strategy. The Executive Director stated that infrastructure for all waste would be looked at. The Cabinet member stated that any future arrangement would be very different from the existing arrangement with SUEZ and may comprise a number of contracts for the various elements of waste.
13. The Chairman asked officers what lessons had been learned from the last contract. The Executive Director, Cabinet Member and Group Manager agreed that greater flexibility and control to change the service in response to local needs should be built into the new contract. Based on the discussion, the Chairman asserted that a longer-term contract was not desirable.

Recommendations:

- i. The Cabinet Member considers the development of Surrey based infrastructure to deal with residual, food waste and composting as part of the Waste Commissioning Strategy setting out reasons why or why not it should be commissioned
- ii. That the Cabinet Member provide assurances that the recommendations made by the CRC Task Group in September 2019 are inputted into the development of the new Waste Commissioning Strategy.
- iii. The Select Committee will convene a Member Reference Group to offer feedback and challenge to officers on the development of the strategy

Membership: Mike Goodman, Ken Gulati, Fiona White, Jonathan Essex, Andy Macleod (Chair), John O'Reilly (ex-officio)

**The Select Committee also made the following amendments to the report recommendations (text in bold)**

It is recommended that the Committee:

- a) Approves the development of a Waste Commissioning Strategy;
- b) Approves the proposed outcomes for the Waste Commissioning Strategy, to:
  1. Meet Surrey County Council's Waste Disposal Authority (WDA) statutory duties.
  2. Maximise the financial sustainability of waste management in Surrey. **(this outcome must include cost efficiency measures)**
  3. Reduce the carbon impact of waste collection and disposal. **(this outcome must incorporate the Surrey Climate Change Strategy action points and also measurements on the impact on emissions of increasing reuse and waste reduction rates significantly)**
  4. Maximise the integration of waste management in the county
- c) Approves the programme proposed for the development of the strategy and procurement of the waste disposal contract; and
- d) Within this programme, approves the review of the variable elements of the funding mechanism through which the county council funds the Surrey Environment Partnership and the Waste Collection Authorities.

**21 COMMUNITY PROJECTS FUND [Item 7]**

**Witnesses:**

Katie Stewart, Executive Director – Environment, Transport and Infrastructure  
Matthew Snelling, Strategic Lead – Policy and Strategy

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Select Committee noted the interim reports.
2. Members requested that the minutes of the CPF Task Group meetings be circulated to members of the Select Committee.

3. The Chairman stated that the final task group report would be finished in time for the Cabinet meeting.
4. Members stressed that strong a governance framework behind the Community Projects Fund would be key.

Actions:

- i) The Democratic Services Assistant to circulate the minutes of the CPF Task Group meetings to the members of the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee.

**22 RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME  
[Item 8]**

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Executive Director agreed with Members' suggestion to form a task group to support development of the Council's Land Use Strategy, due for completion in March 2021.
2. The Committee requested the following topics to be developed for future meetings of the Select Committee: countryside and rights of way; highways capital investment as agreed by the Council.

**23 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING: WEDNESDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2020  
[Item 9]**

The Committee noted its next meeting would be held on 16 September 2020.

Meeting ended at: 11:51

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**Chairman**