

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **COMMUNITIES, ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 16 September 2020 at REMOTE MEETING.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Wednesday, 25 November 2020.

**Elected Members:**

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

**In attendance:**

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

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

Apologies were received from Jan Mason.

**25 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS: 18 JUNE 2020 [Item 2]**

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

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

None received.

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

None received.

**28 CABINET MEMBER UPDATES [Item 5]**

**Witnesses:**

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

Katie Stewart, Executive Director – Environment, Transport and Infrastructure  
Steve Owen-Hughes, Chief Fire Officer and Head of Surrey Community Protection Group

## Key points raised during the discussion:

### CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT

1. The Cabinet Member was asked to provide additional information on the streetlight private finance initiative (PFI) renegotiation. The Cabinet Member stated that negotiations had been underway for the last year and LED roll out was proceeding, after which a discussion on refinancing would take place. The Cabinet Member stated that this was scheduled to be discussed at the next cabinet meeting.
2. The Chairman queried how much of the first tranche of government funding for active travel had been spent or allocated. The Cabinet Member stated that twenty of the twenty-three tranche one schemes had been delivered and the remaining three would be completed by the end of September 2020. Some schemes had been withdrawn and this was largely due to lack of support from divisional Members. This had been anticipated and alternative schemes were in place to replace them. All tranche one schemes and all proposed tranche two schemes had been uploaded on the Council's Commonplace transport map. The Department for Transport would confirm tranche two funding at the end of the month.
3. A Member remarked that there had been good public engagement with Active Travel and asked how public responses would be integrated into the council's Active Travel response to COVID-19. The Cabinet Member stated the top one hundred public comments on the Surrey COVID transport website that received the most support from other residents and were deemed viable by the Council were put on the Commonplace transport map. Active Travel would be a rolling programme of which public engagement was an ongoing component.
4. A Member asked for further information on the timescales for new road surface trials. The Cabinet Member informed the committee that the previous two trials had been a hydroblasting trial - using water to remove shiny elements from a road surface to improve surface grip – and an oil emulsion trial – an alternative to surface dressing. More recent trialling had been on plastic pellets in utility reinstatements trial, however there was a concern that there was a lack of understanding on the long-term performance of plastic. In the coming months, there would be an alternative road marking trial with the aim of reducing use of microplastics. A new thermal patching method had been successfully trialled on one of the worst areas of potholes in the county; it would also be trialled as a reactive treatment. Trial sites would be returned to in 12- and 24-month periods for monitoring purposes. The Cabinet Member stated that Members were informed of progress within updates at full council.
5. A Member asked whether more electric vehicle charging points could be installed in areas which were accessible to all Surrey residents. The Cabinet Member stated that there was an electric car charging pilot: there would be approximately twenty charging points in each borough that had committed funding, and these would be concentrated in town centres. Part two of the pilot would focus on residential areas.

The planning transport team had drawn up plans for how to incorporate electric car charging points in new residential developments to increase the accessibility of charging points to all members of the community.

6. A Member queried what plans were in place for expanding Surrey's public transport network and increasing the number of electric and ultralow emissions buses since the bid submitted to government the previous year had been approved and £41.3m granted. The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that the council had submitted a bid to the Department for Transport to make Farnham an all-electric town. In the east of the county, work was being undertaken with Metro Bus, who were committed with council support to switch over to a hydrogen fleet. The Member requested that the Cabinet Member provide additional information on these plans.
7. A Member asked whether the 20mph speed restriction around villages centres and schools would be enforced. The Cabinet Member responded that policy stated that the 20mph restrictions had to be accompanied by appropriate traffic calming. The Cabinet Member was looking at what could be done around schools particularly those located on A roads.
8. Members and Officers agreed that the Highways Member Working Group should convene before a Cabinet decision was taken on 29 September 2020.

#### CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES

9. A Member asked whether the Cabinet Member could provide feedback on projects funded by council contributions and public donations to Surrey's community foundation. The Cabinet Member offered to provide a full list to the committee after the meeting. Three applications to the hardship fund would be presented at the next Cabinet meeting.
10. A Member emphasised the importance of ensuring the accessibility of the Making Surrey Safer Plan for all residents and suggested holding a live social media event to inform the public of the plan's key elements. The Cabinet Member agreed that public engagement was key and informed members that a series of focus groups would be convened to test information due to be released to the public. There was a revised statement of assurance that had been published to help public understanding and engagement. The Cabinet Member stated that a live presentation to the community could be an option once there was confidence in the information being shared and engagement activities had been tested and validated.
11. A Member questioned what actions were being taken to retrofit buildings with aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding. The Chief Fire Officer stated that there were no high-rise buildings in Surrey with ACM however one high-rise with high pressure laminate composite was being proactively managed with remediation works

taking place. In response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Report recommendations, there was a team working on planning and the implications of buildings over 11m high. An assessment of Surrey's built environment was being undertaken on a prioritised basis following over a decade of unregulated building environment. The Member asked when the draft findings of this assessment could be shared with the Select Committee. The Chief Fire Officer could not give an exact completion date but would report the findings back to the Committee as soon as possible.

#### CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

12. The Chairman asked how much money Surrey Wildlife Trust owed the Council. The Cabinet Member stated that the Trust had recently paid the council £94,342 however, there was still an amount outstanding from property income which now belonged to the local authority. This was estimated at £65,000.
13. The Vice Chairman asked to be provided with further details on the funding for the Council's tree planting programme. The Cabinet Member stated that some districts and boroughs, under the sill regime, were making funds available to their Councillors to facilitate small tree planting. Officers were exploring opportunities for an area of new woodland (incorporating approximately 50,000 new trees) to be planted during the current planting season by the Council, commencing in October.
14. A Member asked whether maintenance of countryside signage could be improved. The Cabinet Member stated that a rebranding process was underway and all boards on the council's countryside estate were being replaced; branding would be more impactful. She offered to share further information with the Committee once this project was complete.
15. Members questioned when further details of the Eco Park could be shared. The Executive Director agreed to share an update on the Eco Park with the Committee after the meeting. It was also agreed that a discussion of the Eco Park could take place during the Private Workshop item of the meeting.
16. A Member asked what funding was in place to spend on bridge repair and replacements. The Cabinet Member stated that recent repair works of two bridges had been paid for by capital funding. One bridge needing repair work was privately owned meaning repairs would be funded by the private owner; this was to be negotiated with the council. Work on the other bridge needing repairs could not be scheduled until August 2021 due to access restrictions.

#### **Actions/further information to be provided:**

- i. For the Cabinet Member for Transport to provide additional information regarding the Council's local plans with Metro Bus

- ii. For the highways member reference group to convene prior to the September Cabinet meeting
- iii. For the Cabinet Member for Communities to feedback to the Select Committee projects that had been funded by Surrey contributions to the community foundation
- iv. For the Chief Fire Officer to bring the results of the assessment of Surrey's built environment to a future meeting of the Select Committee
- v. For the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change to share the outcome of the countryside rebranding programme with the select committee
- vi. For the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change to provide additional information on the status of bridge repairs and replacements and funding required
- vii. For the Executive Director to provide a written update on progress of the Ecopark to the Select Committee

**29 SURREY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE IMPLEMENTATION OF MAKING SURREY SAFER - OUR PLAN 2020-2023 [Item 6]**

**Witnesses:**

Denise Turner-Stewart, Cabinet Member for Communities

Steve Owen-Hughes, Chief Fire Officer and Head of Surrey Community Protection Group

Sarah Kershaw, Chief of Staff and Deputy Head of Community Protection Group

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Cabinet Member stated that detailed work had been undertaken since the March meeting of the Select Committee. Phase one making Surrey safer plan had been successfully implemented despite the COVID-19 pandemic. The annual statement of assurance had been published and refreshed in an engaging format to fully inform the public. Performance of the service had consistently improved since implementation of phase one. The service was awaiting the outcome of the Brunel University external validation assurance later this month.
2. A Member thanked Surrey Fire and Rescue Service for its hard work during the Chobam wildfires and asked what welfare provision was provided for firefighters working in harsh conditions such as those at Cobham. The Chief Fire Officer stated that there was good welfare provision in place; a contract ensured that rapid relief were in place at major incidents. Welfare, including water and provisions, was provided on every fire engine and all firefighters carried a credit card to purchase additional supplies if desired. SFRS had received feedback

from other fire and rescue services stating that the provision of welfare for their firefighters when working for SFRS had been very good.

3. A Member questioned whether firefighter welfare was reviewed on a regular basis, especially for future major incidents. The Chief Fire Officer stated that a welfare review was under way and processes were being checked. The Chief Fire Officer assured the Committee that all concerns voiced by firefighters were listened to. The Cabinet Member gave assurance that welfare was prioritised in the service.
4. A Vice chairman expressed concern about emergency response time and asked how COVID-19 had impacted this negatively. The Chief Fire Officer stated that although the start of lockdown traffic was significantly reduced, road traffic collisions that did occur during this period were more impactful and required a greater level of intervention. Lockdown had caused different incidents requiring different responses.
5. A Member asked how the Service performed on recruitment and retention of staff and asked how many current vacancies there were in the Service. The Chief Fire Officer stated that of 664 posts, there were 59 vacancies which included 17 whole time firefighter vacancies. Across the whole service, there were 67 new members of staff recently employed. The recruiting cycle was ongoing however had stalled during the COVID-19 period. The Service was now able to recruit and train at all levels in the service. Internal promotions were encouraged as were pursuing different career paths within the service. Exit interviews were conducted with staff and the Chief Fire Officer informed the Committee that the most common reasons for staff leaving the service were personal issues, new external opportunities and taking retirement. A Member requested that the Chief Fire Officer provide a breakdown of the number of serving firefighters and support staff.
6. The Member also referred to the proportionately high level of retirements and questioned whether this would be an issue in the future. The Chief Fire Officer stated that reemployment and pensions rules did mean that some firefighters had to retire when they did not wish to; the Chief Fire Officer assured the Committee that the Service was good at promoting experienced staff from within and therefore loss of experience with retiring officers was not a problem.
7. With regards to the Service's retirement protocol, a Member asked whether there was scope for firefighters who had not been passed medically fit for active service, but who did not wish to retire from the service, to use their experience in a different field within the Service. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that firefighters must achieve a fitness standard and pass medical tests to remain operational however the Service was exploring alternative avenues of work in non-operational roles for firefighters at retirement age who could not meet the standards required for frontline duty. In response to this, the Chairman asked how many firefighters had recently left the service and for what reasons. The Chief Fire Officer stated that he would circulate these figures after the meeting.

8. The Chairman asked what the demographic of the SFRS workforce was. The Chief Fire Officer stated presently SFRS was unrepresentative of the community it served and that the culture needed to change to make SFRS an employer of choice for people of all backgrounds. The recruitment process was being altered in order to eliminate bias and actively diversify the workforce. Unconscious bias training would be key; policy and procedures were being analysed and departments being challenged on this issue.
9. The Chief Fire Officer stated that the Service had learned a lot from engagement work, particularly that many operational staff were displeased about the change in shift patterns. A staff focus group would be convened to discuss these issues and other specific concerns; restrictions on shift patterns are defined in the Grey Book (national terms and conditions) and do not allow much room locally for deviation, however. The Chief Fire Officer assured that all comments from staff were gathered by senior leadership teams and discussed in leadership meetings to inform actions.
10. A Member questioned how effective the new ways of working had been in relation to performance data. The Chief Fire Officer explained that, since the new ways of working had been introduced, the performance data stated that the target for response times for critical emergencies was being exceeded by, on average, three minutes, whilst firefighters were getting to emergency locations faster by one minute, in comparison to the previous year, and in less time than the modelling data in the Making Surrey Safer Plan had predicted. These response times had been improved largely by the introduction of new technology and ways of working.
11. A Member asked for assurance that response timing issues had improved. The Chief Fire Officer informed the Committee that the service measured risk growth minute-by-minute before an incident occurred, this enabled the service to move resources dynamically when required and based on the likelihood of that incident occurring. The Member requested that average figures for all fires were shared with the Committee in order to ascertain whether average response times had differed before and after the COVID-19 period. The Committee wanted assurance that changes were not having an adverse impact on communities. The Member requested a supplementary written answer.
12. A Member asked the Chief Fire Officer whether the results of the independent assurance review by Brunel University would be published and whether the Select Committee would have an opportunity to address any issues risen. The Chief Fire Officer stated that the integrated risk management plan had not required independent validation however, due to the previous HMI report and rating, the implications would be significant, and the service wanted academic assurance that the service was improving. As the first service to undertake work in this way, HMI had hailed it an exemplary way of working. Phase two assurance by Brunel University would not be completed until the end of September; the changes advised would be published alongside the Service's response to the plan and the adjustments and recommendations that would be taken on board.

13. A Member asked that a Member Reference Group convene prior to the implementation of phase two. This was to be agreed after the Terms of Reference had been established.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

- i. For the Chief Fire Officer to provide figures of the number of firefighters that had either retired or left the service.
- ii. For the Chief Fire Officer to share operational details of the dynamic coverage tool with the Select Committee.
- iii. For the Chief Fire Officer to provide assurance that any changes to the Service were not having an adverse impact (average figures for all fires to ascertain whether average response times had changed).
- iv. For the Chief Fire Officer to provide the ratio of serving firefighters and support staff to the Select Committee.

**Recommendations:**

- I. Committee to convene a reference group for the duration of the Making Surrey Safer Plan to meet frequently with the Cabinet Member and Chief Fire Officer to review progress against the key metrics of improvement for Phase 2 as outlined in the plan.  
Saj Hussain (Chairman), Fiona White, Mike Goodman, Jonathan Essex, John O'Reilly (ex-officio).
- II. The Reference Group to report back to this Committee with its findings on a regular basis (e.g. every other public meeting).
- III. The Committee to schedule public scrutiny of the improvement work prior to inspection in 2021 to its forward work programme.

**30 SURREY CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY PROGRESS UPDATE [Item 7]**

**Witnesses:**

Natalie Bramhall, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

Katie Stewart, Executive Director – ETI

Carolyn McKenzie, Director – Environment

Katie Sargent, Environment Group Commissioning Manager

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Cabinet Member stated that the council had been working hard to engage with its borough and district partners; the Cabinet Member had held meetings with climate change portfolio holders and officer leads

from eight of the district and boroughs, with the remaining three meetings scheduled. The meetings had been positive and confirmed a shared desire for joint working to tackle the climate crisis. Many district and borough councils, however, now did not have the funding to continue their climate work and were turning to the County Council to lead on, and fund, carbon reduction activities.

2. The Cabinet Member continued that work was underway to greater understand the council's carbon reduction targets, how they would be achieved, and the financial impacts of them. Consultants were being commissioned to produce a series of costed carbon reduction targets for the council's estate and the county.
3. The £300m Greener Futures investment programme was endorsed at March cabinet and would make a significant contribution to deliver on the climate change ambitions. A dashboard reporting the resulting emissions reductions would enable performance reporting to occur.
4. An urban tree planting fund had been launched and members had been asked for suggestions. Finally. The council had put a bid into the government's green homes local authority delivery programme (GH LAD) which, if successful, would bring £6.2m into the county to improve energy efficiency in low income inefficient housing, reducing fuel poverty in the county as well as stimulating Surrey's green economy. In order to improve the council's chances of being awarded this funding, the council allocated £750,000 capital funding to act as a top up fund for more costly energy efficiency measures.
5. A Vice Chairman expressed concern that the COVID-19 pandemic and unitarisation of local authorities could impact on the delivery of the council's climate strategy. The Cabinet Member stated that a unitary authority could be better placed to deliver climate ambitions. In the interim, cooperation and communication with district and boroughs would be key in bringing forward the strategy. The Cabinet Member could not yet state what impact COVID-19 would have on the climate change agenda but hypothesised that the biggest bearing would be on public transport.
6. A Member asked how many Surrey residents had used the interactive carbon footprint tool. The Cabinet Member informed members that the green microsite on World Environmental Day and it had 1,700 hits in the first month.
7. A Member asked whether the council could assist the health sector to meet climate targets. The Group Manager assured the committee that the directorate was engaging with the health sector, mainly through the Surrey Heartlands Board, Heartlands Sustainability Network and The Estates Board.
8. A Member stated that transport was the largest source of emissions in Surrey and asked what plans were in place to address this. The Executive Director stated that it was still working progress to say what the scale of change needed would be. The timing was important, and the service was still in the process of updating the local statutory transport plan (LTP4). Work was being undertaken on the Rethinking

Transport programme and the promotion of Active Travel, which would be brought to a future meeting of the Select Committee. The Group Manager stated that the council had commissioned Laser to perform net zero scenario work which would inform the actions the council needed to take to achieve its targets. A range of costed scenarios would be brought to the committee and included in the delivery plan.

9. A Member referred to the EU funded programme offering training and grants for energy efficiency and low carbon measures to SME businesses. The funding had been awarded and was due to start in October 2020. The Member asked whether this programme would still be going ahead given the UK's exit from EU. The Group Manager stated that funding was guaranteed until the end of the funding period which was in 2023.
10. The Chairman asked whether the results of the costed carbon reduction scenarios for countywide emissions would be available for the next meeting of the Select Committee. The Group Manager confirmed that the work was expected to be produced by November 2020.
11. The Chairman stated that the implementation of climate change strategy would be council wide and asked whether there could be a discussion at the next Chair and Vice-Chair meeting about convening a forum whereby the council could work closely with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change to ensure success in the council's climate ambitions. The Committees Business Manager agreed that this should be discussed with colleagues from other select committees at the next group meeting.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

- i. For the Rethinking Transport and Active Travel Programmes to be brought to a future meeting of the Select Committee

**Recommendations:**

- I. Chairman to discuss the future of climate change scrutiny with the Select Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen's Group at its next meeting

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

**Witnesses:**

Ross Pike, Scrutiny Business Manager

1. The Scrutiny Business Manager stated that there were many items to be scoped and prioritised before the end of the municipal calendar. This would be discussed with the Committee in due course.

2. The Scrutiny Business Manager stated that there would be a climate change item at the November meeting of the Select Committee.

**32 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING: 25 NOVEMBER 2020 [Item 9]**

The Committee noted its next meeting would be held on 25 November 2020.

Meeting ended at: 12:30

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**Chairman**

**33 PRIVATE WORKSHOP [Item 10]**