

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **COMMUNITIES, ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 29 April 2024 at Council Chamber, Woodhatch Place, 11 Cockshot Hill, Woodhatch, Reigate, RH2 8EF.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Wednesday, 17 July 2024.

**Elected Members:**

- \*Mark Sugden
- \*Buddhi Weerasinghe
- \*Liz Bowes
- \*Catherine Baart
- \*Jonathan Hulley (Chairman)
- \*Lance Spencer (Vice-Chairman)
- \*Keith Witham
- \*Richard Tear
- \*Cameron McIntosh
- \*Andy Macleod
- \*Stephen Cooksey
- Jan Mason
- John Beckett

\*present

r= Remote Attendance

**12/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]**

Apologies were received from John Beckett.

**13/24 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS: 7 FEBRUARY 2024 [Item 2]**

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

**14/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]**

None received.

**15/24 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]**

No questions or petitions.

**16/24 SURREY CONNECT DIGITAL DEMAND RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT SERVICE (DDRT) [Item 5]**

**Witnesses:**

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth

Katie Stewart, Executive Director for Environment, Growth, Land, Property and Infrastructure

Lucy Monie, Director for Highways and Transport

Paul Millin, Assistant Director for Strategic Transport

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Chairman asked what could be done to increase the number of registered users of the Digital Demand Responsive Travel (DDRT) Service. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that the number of people using the service varied across the different DDRT zones, primarily due to population differences. Every household and business received publicity about the DDRT service before it started. Ongoing promotion and publicity were needed, which was part of the communication plan being developed. Local initiatives were being looked at to try to encourage greater ridership, such as through discounts and group travel offers.
2. A Member asked how successful the DDRT's communication plan had been. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that numbers were rising in terms of people subscribing and using the scheme. Work was being done with the communications team, and the University of Surrey to see how to increase DDRT usage.
3. A Member raised that Mole valley's DDRT service was set up as a door-to-door service, rather than a stop-to-stop service, and asked if this remained. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that this was part of the learning. DDRT was offering essential door-to-door trips but was now only offering a stop-to-stop service. If a new 'stop' was desired, it could be assessed and made available to residents. The Stop-to-stop service made services more available for residents.
4. A Member raised that between 10-15% of the cost of running DDRT services was recovered. The Member asked what the realistic cost recovery ambition was once the services were established, and if there was an indication of how much, per journey, the Council was subsidizing for the Mole Valley District. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport noted that DDRT

was not introduced to become a commercial offer. DDRT was successful in areas with relatively low levels of public transport. As DDRT became more established and optimised, it was reasonable to achieve between 20-25% of cost recovery in running the service.

5. A Member asked what proportion of the £4.85 million (m) budget for DDRT was being funded through government funds, and if there was any further Government Rural Mobility Funding available. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that the Rural Mobility Fund grant, allocated to Mole Valley's DDRT service, was a 2-year grant finishing in May 2024, and would be fully utilised. Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Phase 2 funding was the other source of funding, where around £2.4m would be applied for DDRT for the current and next financial year of 2025/26.
6. The Member asked if the DDRT funding was sustainable, and if the Council could continue the service if there was no further government funding. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that there had been transparency over what the current costs of DDRT were, and the future ambitions for more DDRT across Surrey, which was fed into the medium-term financial plan.
7. The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth explained the Cabinet was committed to DDRT, and funding was put aside for it in the budget. The Council was not aiming for DDRT to break even. The Council was providing public transport services in non-commercial areas to ensure no one was left behind and was meeting the transport, climate change and emissions targets. DDRT was not cheaper than subsidizing a fixed bus route, but it was more flexible and targeted to residents. DDRT's budget was less than the subsidised fixed bus network, which currently stood at £11 million, which conveyed DDRT's value for money. The Mole Valley programme was the best performing government subsidized programme in the country and with time other DDRT areas would grow to this level.
8. The Member asked what happened before the DDRT schemes were introduced in September 2023, and referred to the West Guildford scheme, where there had been an approximately 45% increase in the number of passengers journeys every week, compared to before DDRT was introduced. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that following the

public and stakeholder consultation, there were several socially necessary services that were subsumed into DDRT. Data could be retrieved on those services in terms of passenger numbers and provide a comparison in the DDRT zones. In terms of engagement, the strategic transport team would be surveying users to understand journeys were made before DDRT.

9. In relation to the Council funding and operating many bus services in Surrey, a Member asked if thought was being given to establishing the Council's own Bus franchise. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that through the national bus strategy, 'Bus back better', published in March 2021, all local transport authorities in England were asked to assess, as part of the BSIP, if there was a want to explore franchising or an enhanced partnership model for bus operation. The Council chose to establish the enhanced partnership model. The county deal framework conveyed an opportunity that local authorities, including Surrey, could consider bus franchising. The Initial step for bus franchising would be securing approval from the Secretary of State. The cost the franchising model was significant, and no County Council to date had implemented one. Around 70% of bus journeys in Surrey were made on commercial services, without Council involvement.
  
10. A Member asked what the target number of passengers per day that DDRT was aiming for to achieve value for money. The Member also asked what the other measures of success were. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that the measures of success for DDRT were being developed, which would include things such as passenger satisfaction ratings. It was also about understanding the improved geographical accessibility for residents. Currently, the average number of passengers per operating hour across all the DDRT services was 1.55. A target had been set for 2.5 and 3 passengers per operating hour. The current rate for customer satisfaction was 95%. The completed performance targets would return to the committee.
  
11. A Member asked If there were opportunities to transport children to a place where they could get a commercial bus or a safe walking route to school. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that DDRT was not a school transport service. DDRT could be used to get to other modes of transport, such as a train station to help with school travel. Most children in mainstream education who were entitled to travel assistance were travelling on buses and coaches, which was the most cost

effective. Most taxis procured by the Council for travel assistance were for children being educated in a special education needs (SEND) setting. It was not simple to use DDRT vehicles for SEND children due to the safeguarding and support measures required. If DDRT was used for home-to-school transport, it would take it out of service for a period in the morning and afternoon, preventing other residents from using DDRT, defeating the rationale of DDRT.

12. A Member reference the service *Chatterbus* which offered school transport services. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that *Chatterbus* had a different operating model, choosing to provide a transport to a local school for a period in the morning. This was working well, but *Chatterbus* was not a DDRT service.
13. Regarding safe routes to school, the Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained a review of safe routes to schools was underway, which was looking at individual schools across the county in terms of entitlement of children and routes to see if there was an opportunity to make some of the routes safer by interventions which were not necessarily high cost, such as rights of way that could be opened up for children travelling to school.
14. The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth added there was a piece of work being done with operators to see if the use of DDRT could be maximised. There was a distinct pattern in Mole Valley of people using the DDRT service for medical appointments, rather than a taxi or a fixed bus route.
15. A Member asked about the publicity and communications plan behind the DDRT service. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained a more detailed communications plan could be brought back to the committee for scrutiny. All the contact detail for Surrey Connect were on the public website, and the e-mail address where people could request an additional pick-up point in the locality was [surreyconnect@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:surreyconnect@surreycc.gov.uk).
16. A Member raised an issue in Chobham with accessing appointments at the Chobham and West End Medical Practice. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that this was a known problem and the Strategic Transport team had been discussing how this could be improved.

17. A Member asked if there was an analysis showing the catchment areas for specific geographical locations not using the DDRT service. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that these areas would be identified in the communications plan, to increase DDRT usage. If Members felt there was a cohort of residents that needed to receive more publicity, this could be reviewed. Opportunities to slightly extend the operating area of DDRT, to bring in a new community that would not adversely impact how the service operated in terms of efficiency, could be reviewed.
18. A Member asked what options existed for extending more regular services during the afternoon. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that there was the same number of vehicles in all DDRT areas operating throughout the day. All Surrey Connect services were currently operating from 7.00am to 7.00pm Monday to Friday and 8.00am to 6.00pm on a Saturday. Therefore, the afternoon period was still well-served. In some areas more vehicles were being introduced, increasing the ability of users using DDRT.
19. The Member suggested the team could look at doing more regular routes or frequent services during the afternoon when there were rail strikes. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained this was difficult as resource needed to be available to provide the replacement service, with often little notice of a rail strike timetable. It was more complicated with an overtime ban. Work was done with operators to see what could be done in these situations, but it was difficult to respond.
20. A Member asked what the timeframe was for the roll out of DDRT in the areas of Elmbridge, Reigate and Banstead and Spelthorne. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that the areas in the report had already started to be looked at to see what the opportunities for DDRT were. The expanded DDRT services, the areas of which could not yet be shared, would start in 2025, likely in September.
21. A Member raised that the Padam (booking and scheduling software), feedback option did not allow users to feedback when they could not book a DDRT bus. The Member asked what the capacity of the DDRT service was and how the capacity could be increased without that feedback option. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport noted that a learning point was around when a resident was unable to book a trip on DDRT, how would this be known and how could it be learnt from. This was

currently being worked on with Padam. Another learning point was around short-term cancellations, which the team needed to work out how to deal with these. Part of this was about improving understanding among residents around providing more notice of cancellations. Once these learning points were resolved, the availability and utilisation of the DDRT service would improve.

**Actions:**

1. To bring back the communications plan to the committee for scrutiny, once completed.
2. Assistant Director of Strategic Transport to provide figures on the cost of DDRT's per passenger trip in Mole Valley.
3. Assistant Director of Strategic Transport to share comparative data on the passenger numbers from the socially necessary services that were subsumed by DDRT, before and after DDRT was in place.
4. Assistant Director of Strategic Transport to share the results of a future survey on how DDRT passengers were making journeys before DDRT was in place.
5. Performance targets for DDRT, once completed, to be presented to the Select Committee for scrutiny.

**Resolved:**

The Committee agreed the following recommendations:

- I. Recommends and **supports the development of a clear set of performance measures, targets and metrics** around take up of the service to provide Cllrs and residents clarity over the success of service take-up and on where to focus communications or other efforts to encourage take-up; as well as clarity over where targets are not being met so that decisions around value for money can be made.
- II. Supports the **development and implementation of a communications plan** to support the introduction of the new Surrey Connect DDRT services which will be vital to growing patronage on existing and new services and agrees the recommendation that this be brought back to the Committee for scrutiny at a date to be agreed with officers.
- III. Notes that this is an expensive service benefiting a relatively small number of people and that **ongoing monitoring of the success and take up of the service is therefore critical** and

requests that the Committee is kept up to date on progress and that a report is submitted in 6 months' time (*by end October 2024*).

- IV. Encourages further exploration of opportunities to expand and maximise use of the service** to address resident needs for example to access medical appointments.

#### **17/24 BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE [Item 6]**

**Witnesses:**

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth

Katie Stewart, Executive Director for Environment, Growth, Land, Property and Infrastructure

Lucy Monie, Director for Highways and Transport

Paul Millin, Assistant Director for Strategic Transport

**Key points raised during the Discussion:**

1. In reference to the twelve national priorities for Bus Service Improvement set by the Department of Transport (DfT), the Chairman asked what the priority areas were for improvement in Surrey. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that the most important areas to residents was looked at to invest and improve. Previous consultations undertaken in Surrey, asking for resident's opinions on Bus Service Improvement investment plans and the Bus Service Improvement plan (BSIP), and the results of your *bus journey* survey, highlighted resident's desire for buses to be more reliable, run where and when people wanted to travel, were frequent and had fares set at an attractive level for regular and new customers. The key issue for bus operators was the need for more bus priority measures that supported bus reliability. These, along with the greener futures priority, focussing on decarbonizing public transport and investment in electric and hydrogen fuel cell buses were the priority areas for the BSIP and Council investment.
2. A Member asked if there was a scoring mechanism for funding schemes in accordance with the priority areas. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained there was not a scoring criterion, but there was a governance framework with an enhanced partnership board and a stakeholder reference group. The two big bus operating companies sat on the board along with a Small to Medium sized Enterprise (SME) that were representing the interests of all bus operators. Investment was



going into bus priority measures to improve reliability and bus enhancements alongside bus operators which made buses more attractive and frequent, helping to grow patronage. Investment was going into the fare offer, such as the Surrey link card introduced in 2023 to support residents aged 20 and under to access half the adult bus fare. There was investment into more zero-emission buses, as part of greener future priorities and more real time information so residents could make better travel choices. There was hope that more government funding would be received and there had been previous success with £7.8 million of BSIP funding going to Surrey.

3. Regarding consultation, a Member asked which stakeholders had been involved, with particular reference to Members. The Member also asked about the Surrey Enhanced Partnership and Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) and how it informed the 2024 BSIP update. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained there would have usually been more engagement with Members, but the BSIP timeline, with draft guidance published end of January 2024 with a deadline of 12 June 2024, took away this opportunity. The priorities of that were hoped to be achieved was consistent across the previous BSIPs and had not changed. What was updated in the current BSIP was additional investment, along with the current position with the investment planned in 2021 and 2023.
4. Regarding SRG, the Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that it had been invaluable and included representatives from bus operators, disability groups, County Councillors, Borough and District Councillors and officers, who were consulted on the BSIP update. This was part of the agreed governance of the Enhanced Partnership. The DfT had confirmed there was no longer an expectation on councils to update BSIPs annually. Further updates were only required when something significant had occurred, such as significant investment or changes to the local bus network. This change would allow for a more detailed consultation.
5. The Member added that communication with Members was an opportunity for engagement and Members were a good communication vehicle. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport agreed and explained where individual changes to bus route were made all individual relevant members were contacted and encouraged to promote the changes locally. There had been member development seminars on BSIP. The Director for Highways and Transport added that corporate colleagues were

expected to be worked with to produce a communications plan that cut across a lot of the bus services. There would be an opportunity in this to ensure more was done to engage members and to reference how members were provided with opportunity to promote the bus services and changes around it.

6. A Member asked what the challenges were with the Enhanced Partnership arrangements and if the governance and stakeholder feedback mechanisms were working well. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that since the partnership started in November 2022, it had been effective in making key decisions, which were channelled through the Enhanced Partnership Board, such as the Surrey link card. It had also supported the expansion of DDRT and the programme for bus priority measures. The board looked less at performance against the BSIP, and the targets set, which was the responsibility of the Council officers who then reported it back to the DfT. The SRG had broad representation but could be more representative. Work was underway with the Surrey Minority Ethnic Forum to encourage other groups to work with them. Work was being done with colleagues in the Customer and Communities directorate to try to increase young people's engagement and give them a voice on the SRG. In terms of how the governance was framed going forward, the regulation of board and SRG meetings to three a year was being proposed. SRG meetings were likely to take place in January, June, and September, with at least one in the evening to encourage greater uptake. Board meetings would follow one month on from the respective SRG meeting. The performance of the Enhance Partnership Board and SRG meetings would like to be focussed on more, along with the achievements the Council and partners were delivering against the BSIP targets. In summary, there was more that could be done, but the enhanced partnerships were still relatively new and there was a want to get more people engaged, particularly younger people and people from minority groups.
7. In reference to the recommendations from the Bus User Group, a Member asked if there was a list of bus stops where changes would be made, such having the curbs look at and what the deadline/target was to make the changes. The Member also asked if there was a timeline for introducing audio announcements for bus stops. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that the Strategic Transport Team could pull together a list. Regarding audible announcements at bus stops, it was an initiative within the overall enhanced

partnership scheme. It was currently not funded but would remain on the agenda. The Director for Highways and Transport added that there were regulation changes to the information provision on buses. There was a requirement for bus operators to provide facilities for announcing bus stops, which was to be introduced over the next two years, but it was subject to the age of the bus.

8. A Member asked how likely it was that the Capital and revenue request totalling £45.2m capital and £30.1m revenue, submitted in 2021 would be met by government. In addition, the Member asked if this was assumed to be unlikely, what element of the BSIP would be prioritised. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that there was no guarantee that funding would be made available from government. A case would continue to be made to government for investment in Surrey, which would be supported by the Council's track record on delivery. Surrey was benefiting from funding from the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) 2 scheme for two SMEs, which would see the introduction of 19 electric buses. Focus would need to be in the bus priority measures in the agreed areas, where bus patronage would be grown, more zero emission buses introduced, more real time information, expansion of DDRT and a maintained support for the Surrey Link Card.
9. A Member asked what the impact of the end of the National Bus Fare Cap in November 2024 would be. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that the DfT data showed over 90% of all journeys outside of London were made using the £2 Fare cap. There were some issues with the Fare Cap with passengers making regular shorter journeys not getting as good a deal from the Fare Cap as people travelling less frequently and making longer trips. The government could allow the Fare Cap to end and return to operator set pricing models. Local transport authorities could be asked to fill the gap in funding to maintain the £2 Fare Cap. This would require additional funding which was not in the budget. Other ticketing offers could be reviewed nationally such as season tickets, other discounts, and group travel options. The government could also decide to maintain the £2 Fare Cap or move to what was proposed in 2023, to increase the Fare Cap to £2.50. It was hoped sufficient notice would be provided to local transport authorities in what decision the government makes regarding the Fare Cap, to allow for planning a response.

10. The Member asked if school transport should be considered as part of the bus policy. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that the Council already supported several local bus services, which were either specific for school transport or with local bus services going past schools, both supporting pupils that were entitled to support and those who were not.
  
11. A Member asked for an update on the development of the *real time passenger information (RTPI) system* and whether there were any plans for this to be accessed on a platform such as an app. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained that more real time information was being installed in Surrey. Roughly 500 RTPI were installed on streets, bus station or key destinations, which would be increased by another 100 over the next two years. From May 2024, Stagecoach would be able to send messages to roadside displays to advise bus passengers of any cancellations. This facility could then be made available to other operators later in 2024. There was information on the council website, and most bus operators had apps to see what was happening on services in real time.
  
12. A Member asked about the impact of hydrogen buses to help deliver the BSIP, particularly regarding the cost of operation and efficiency. The Assistant Director for Strategic Transport explained there was 34 Council funded hydrogen fuel cell buses, which would be in service by the end of 2024. There were 43 hydrogen fuel cell buses that were coming into Surrey, Kent, and West Sussex, funded by the relevant councils, metro bus, Gatwick airport and government funding. The Council's ZEBRA 2 bid would see 19 electric buses coming to Surrey, in partnership with two SMEs, Falcon and White Bus. These busses would be new and a better experience for customers.

**Actions:**

1. Strategic Transport team to provide a list of improvements that had been made to bus stops over the past 6 to 12 months, and planned improvements for the next 2 years.
  
2. Strategic Transport team to share more detail on the roll out of the recent regulation changes, in terms of information provision (e.g. bus operators to announce bus stops on the buses)
  
3. Assistant Director for Strategic Transport to provide a summary of what was available in terms of providing real time passenger information.

**Resolved:**

That the Communities Environment and Highways Select Committee:

- I. Welcomes the comprehensive update and notes the requirement for the County Council to complete and submit the updated BSIP to DfT by 12 June or otherwise risk a delay in the release or the potential loss of the second instalment of £3.9m of BSIP Phase 2 funding.
- II. **Welcomes the priority that is being given by the Council to Bus Services** which are vital to delivering greener futures objectives and to improving outcomes for residents through faster, more reliable, and cheaper public transport and continues to encourage the council to keep investing in and prioritising these services.
- III. **Encourages better engagement with members on Bus Service changes and improvements** to enable them to promote services to residents and asks that this be factored into wider work to develop a Communications plan.

**18/24 LAND MANAGEMENT POLICY [Item 7]**

**Witnesses:**

Natalie Bramhall, Cabinet Member for Property, Waste and Infrastructure

Marisa Heath, Cabinet Member for Environment

Katie Stewart, Executive Director for Environment, Infrastructure & Growth (EIG)

Carolyn McKenzie, Director for Environment

Colin Galletly, Assistant Director for Estates Management

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Chairman asked if the work to develop the Land Management Framework and Land Management policy suggested any major change in direction in how the council managed its land-based assets. The Director for Environment explained there were several areas being reviewed such as the way land-based assets were managed from an environment agency point of view. Potential for using council owned land was being reviewed to provide Biodiversity net gain (BNG) for the Council's own developments. Potential for adaptation and flood-risk management was being reviewed, to see how sites could be used to mitigate impacts in flood-risk areas. A lot of the Council's sites had a lot of footfalls, which meant looking at other sites to develop. Renewables would also be reviewed.

2. A Member referred to the report's description of the Land Management Framework as a tool to aid decision making on how land-based assets and risks were managed, and asked what early decisions this was expected to influence. The Member also asked how the framework integrated environmental, social, and economic consideration into initial planning and development stages to align the broader sustainability and community goals. The Cabinet Member for Property, Waste and Infrastructure explained that the Wray Park estate was currently being reviewed for opportunities that could be realised in terms of improved farming, release of land, buildings for disposal and get land designated as BNG. The Assistant Director for Estates added that West Park estate was 3 farms with some other land. It was not an ideal commercial or operational set up from a farming aspect. Work was being done with farmers and colleagues in natural capital to see how the farms could be consolidated into better and more sustainable businesses. This would release land for disposal and BNG.
3. A Member asked what the main opportunities were for the Council's income generation, and how the council balanced those opportunities against its duties as a landlord and guardian of the natural environment. The Cabinet Member for Property, Waste and Infrastructure provided the example of the letting of Kinnersley Farm. Estates and Natural Capital agreed a set of terms that enabled the farm to be marketed for regenerative farming, while ensuring that tenants provided a strong business case. The farm had new tenants that paid an increased rent with innovative farming methods and grant funding. Some land was released for BNG. This model could be used elsewhere.
4. The Member asked what the annual income for rents was, received by the council. The Assistant Director for Estates Management could not provide the exact figure. A review was currently being completed on the rents.
5. A Member asked about the opportunities to sell land to developers, and if the Council coordinated with borough and districts and their local plans to ensure appropriate infrastructure was provided and extra school places. The Cabinet Member for Property, Waste and Infrastructure explained that Coxbridge farm was sold in Waverly, which took years to get it through Waverley planning. A substantial capital receipt for the council was received and it was also providing 190 homes on the land, 80 of which were social/ affordable houses. Boroughs and

districts were worked with, for example some land was recently sold to Tandridge council to be used for social rent homes.

6. A Member asked how the land management policy would influence decisions around the disposal of land and use of greenbelt, such as for school builds. The Member also asked about one storey school buildings. The Assistant Director for Estates Management explained that within Land and Property, there was a strategy and planning function that reviewed surplus land available, and if there was an alternative use for the land. The council would try to recycle properties. The reason for one storey schools was possibly due to the largest special educational needs schools that were preferred to be a single storey building but needed to confirm.
7. A Member asked about what extent the Council was taking advantage of new government Environmental Land Management grants or other environment-based funding streams. The Director for Environment explained the Council already had a lot of grants from existing schemes. The new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme was still in development but would be a future focus to maximise grants.
8. A Member asked to what extent the Council maximised the potential of the land it owned or managed for environmental ends, such as flood storage and biodiversity recovery. The Member also asked if there was an example of any strategic initiative or projects that had been implemented to enhance environmental objectives. The Cabinet Member for Environment explained it was early days in how the Council would achieve the environmental objects. Potential flood storage was looked at as well as natural flood management in the Mole Valley area. The land management policy was about identifying the opportunities. Flood storage could sit alongside new development. Water pollution related to nitrates from farms and different businesses, as well as sewage. The policy involved how these problems could be solved in a holistically. The Council worked with communities such as the Surrey Hills National Landscapes Board and farmers to see how things could be done in the same way and projects were already taking place.
9. The Director for Environment added that the policy looked at all the opportunities and how things could be mixed, such as putting biodiversity with flooding to get the most value of the land. Focus had currently been around access, getting people into countryside and tree planting. The council was in the process of

developing an orchard at Norbury Park for the community. Horsell Common, a flood storage scheme, was an example of partnership work, which had a sustainable access route for schools and other amenities.

10. The Member asked how the Council planned to engage with local community groups and organisations. The Cabinet Member for Environment Heath explained there was this engagement was already happening, such as with farming groups, residents' associations, and parish councils. This was happening through the Surrey Association of Local Councils. There was still more to do to get to the lower grassroot groups. Some webinars were likely to be held. There was engagement with a range of people such as cyclist groups and walkers regarding transport routes.
11. The Member asked how engagement was done with the district and borough councils. The Cabinet Member for Environment noted there was a greener futures partnership group which met once every two months, and conversations were had on all the workstreams. Officers were also working closely with the partner officers in the district and boroughs.
12. The Director for Environment added that work was being done at a delivery operational level through the number of partnerships that were around climate change, BNG and tree planting. A conversation at a higher level had started with the directors of place in Surrey, looking at green infrastructure and how collective work could be done to get better outcomes.
13. A Member asked about how Council owned land could be used for home to school transport. The Member also asked if finding a way to compare the different environmental options in terms of carbon was getting closer. The Director for Environment explained the council was getting closer to compare the environmental options. Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping was being done, and a piece of work was done around natural capital accounting which started to give the carbon value. There was not currently a standard metric. Work was being done with other authorities, Defra, natural England, Environment Agency, and Forestry Commission to look at how the carbon could be quantified. One area the council would lobby the government to get clearer metrics and information on this.
14. In terms of rights of way, the Cabinet Member for Environment explained the recently completed rights of way consultation received a large engagement. It was also something Parish



councils were interested in. The access points needed to be reviewed, such as cut throughs in the land to get people to towns or train stations. One of the biggest blocks to the carbon agenda was the transport issue. The paths that people wanted to use needed to be identified. Local knowledge would be important to find the key areas.

15. A Member asked if the principle would be to put solar panels on buildings first. The Cabinet Member for Environment confirmed it was.

16. In reference to the report noting that a ten-week consultation would follow the cabinet approval of the draft framework, a Member asked which key stakeholders would be involved and if any challenge was expected. The Cabinet Member for Environment outlined stakeholder groups such as the farming community, private landowners, tenants and groups such as the rambler's association and those using the council's networks across the land would be involved.

17. The Director for Environment added that the local nature recovery strategy was being developed simultaneously to the consultation, which had an extensive stakeholder network which covered a variety of groups which could be utilised. Having conversations with residents in sensitive estates such as Norbury Park could also be done. There was always a challenge between access, biodiversity, nature and nature conversation, with Surrey having a large footfall. There were additional challenges over Cycling versus environment and illegal activity around four-by-fours and motorbikes. There would be challenges around people wanting to use the land opposed to wanting to preserve the land. By looking at the GSI data and mapping, areas could hopefully be identified that needed to be protected and look at ways to divert paths, protect them further or look at new sites to reduce footfall.

18. A Member asked how the internal working within the Council across various teams was affected by the framework, such as Environment, Estates and Rights of Way. The Member also asked for clarification on responsibilities and how different teams communicated and collaborated. The Director for Environment noted that the different teams worked together well. Communication had been on a more informal basis in the past. The land management framework policy would allow teams to communicate and collaborate more formally and introduce more

of a structure for officers input on management decisions. The framework would also help clarify officer roles.

19. The Member asked if it could be made clearer for the public who the relevant point of contact for different issues would be to ease communications. The Member also asked if there were any other sections that came into the remit of the land management policy. The Executive Director for EIG explained that work was being done with the Strategic Director for Customer Service Transformation to provide a clearer and more seamless experience for customers. Regarding other sections that fell into the policies remit, there was the natural capital team, colleagues in Land and Property and other teams such as highways, transport and the flood team. More widely, there was the town and village approach, and coordination beyond the remit of EIG with colleagues in the Childrens Families and Lifelong Learning directorate.

20. The Cabinet Member for Environment raised that openness with partners such as charity and voluntary groups was important, to ensure there was coherent messaging, working together as one team.

**Actions:**

1. The Assistant Director of Estates Management to provide figures for SCC's annual income from rents.
2. The Assistant Director for Estates Management to confirm the reason for one-storey school buildings.
3. Environment Directorate to provide a list of grants obtained by SCC over the past year, in relation to the Council's land management policy.

**Resolved:**

That the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee:

- I. **Welcomes the Land Management Policy and Framework** and the greater focus this brings on Surrey County Council's land-based assets and the opportunities these present for furthering strategic outcomes including to support the local economy and achieve climate change and biodiversity targets.
- II. Notes the extent and richness of Surrey County Council's land-based estate comprising over 10,000 acres of countryside and 3,000 kilometres of public rights of way and **supports**

**continued work to optimise this estate to deliver benefits to the residents of Surrey**, including through leisure and recreation, mental and physical health, sequestering carbon and supporting biodiversity.

**19/24 SUSTAINABLE FOOD STRATEGY – REPORT ON A COUNCIL MOTION  
[Item 8]**

**Witnesses:**

Marisa Heath, Cabinet Member for Environment

Mark Nuti, Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Public Health

Katie Stewart, Katie Stewart, Executive Director for Environment,  
Infrastructure & Growth (EIG)

Carolyn McKenzie, Director for Environment

Katie McDonald, Natural Capital Group Manager

Negin Sarafraz, Public Health Principle

Cllr Lance Spencer, Committee Vice-Chairman

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Cabinet Member for Environment suggested that the terminology 'plant-based' should not be used in the motion and instead terminology around reduction of meat consumptions and consuming other foods should be used.
2. The Public Health Principle, regarding language, outlined that plant-based food could imply processed food, which may not be healthy. Inclusivity needed to be ensured, such as for children with eating disorders.
3. The Vice-Chairman asked if the recommendation effectively encompassed what was put forward in resolution one. The Vice-Chairman brought attention to 'Government Buying Standard for food and catering services', rather than using the term plant based. The Public Health Principle explained that the food strategy supported the resolution. Terminology needed to indicate more fruit and vegetables, rather than using the term plant-based, which could be interpreted as the processed plant-based products. It was already included in the school curriculum to have conversations with children and families around food choices.
4. The Cabinet Member for Environment raised that the 'buying standards' was about buying sustainable and local food, rather than plant-based food. The recommendation was about using more sustainable food chains.

5. A Member asked whether it could be ensured that when catering contracts were tendered, there was a requirement to follow and deliver on the Council's food strategy policies. The Cabinet Member for Environment explained that Compass Group (foodservice company) and others had their own ambitious sustainability objectives. Compass Group was aiming to achieve 50% non-meat products. These companies were on similar food strategy pathways to the Council, so it should not be difficult to challenge them on the topic.
6. Regarding the service recommendation to resolution two, the Vice-Chairman suggested that it did not reflect what the resolution was trying to achieve, which was to encourage schools to have meat-free Mondays. The Public Health Principle explained that the resolution was supported, but it was about making it inclusive for all children. Some schools were involved in meat-free Mondays, whereas others were not. A part of the food strategy would be to ensure that all schools were involved in this where there was the opportunity.
7. The Chairman of the Adults and Health Select Committee (AHSC) raised that there was a concern around how the motion would affect people in any form of social care. It was important that these people had a full choice and were not restricted. This was particularly important in areas of neurodiversity, mental health issues and those with dementia.
8. The Chairman asked if the whole system food strategy already supported a meat free Monday in schools. The Public Health Principle explained that the food strategy actions were still being developed, but If the language used was clear and considered inclusivity, the food strategy would support meat free Mondays.
9. The Cabinet Member for Environment, in relation to the Chairman of AHSC's point, explained that the food strategy had to broadly think about the people the Chairman raised. People on low incomes would also be considered. Nutrition needed to be considered as well as sustainability, such as ensuring children were getting enough fibre in their diet which science had proved to be an issue. The strategy needed to be based on existing evidence around what the best diet was.
10. The Vice-Chairman suggested the recommendation be reworded to encompass resolution two after the meeting. The Cabinet Member for Environment concurred.

11. The Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Public Health agreed that the wording needed to change. The Cabinet Member also raised a point around education, and suggested the recommendation could include something around schools having conversations around what children wanted to eat rather than being prescriptive about what children could and could not eat. The Cabinet Member for Environment suggest something could be included around empowering schools to have a debate around the food strategy give schools choice.
12. A Member asked to what extent Local Authority guidelines and Surrey's outreach to schools covered or included Academies. The Public Health Principle explained that most schools that were covered by the council and were not private had signed up to Surrey Healthy Schools and Eco-Schools.
13. A Member suggested polytunnels could be considered so the food growing season could be extended in schools.
14. A Member asked what was meant by 'facilitate a robust public involvement', in the service recommendation for resolution 5. The Public Health Principle explained there were several roadshows, to get people to talk about food, which resulted in a want to ensure people were involved in the implementation of the whole system food strategy. This would provide the opportunity to ensure it was not a top-down strategy and action plan, and instead came from the community.

**Resolved:**

That the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee:

- I. **Notes the comprehensive work to develop the Surrey's Whole System Food Strategy** and the Surrey County Council Climate Change Strategy and the key ambition they set to make our local food system more sustainable, empower local people to make healthier food choices and reduce the impact of food system on climate change, and that these ambitions align closely with those set out in the Motion.
- II. **Agrees the Service recommendations for resolutions 1,3,4,5 of the Council Motion and that further work should take place outside of Committee to amend and agree resolution 2** of the Motion taking into account the Committee's discussion and points made; and for the Committee to report to Council with recommendations in July 2024.

- III. **Encourage development of KPIs** to measure change on the ground (e.g. around sourcing of local food, length of food chain, quality of food supplied).

1.13pm Break was called.

1.28pm Meeting resumed.

## **20/24 CABINET RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE REPORTS [Item 9]**

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

1. The Chairman noted that following the Water Utility companies' special session that took place on 25 January, a report was submitted to Cabinet. The report included several recommendations on improving collaboration on strategic planning and new developments, working with the regulator on the development of water company KPIs and the establishment of a task force to deliver several objectives. The Cabinet accepted these recommendations.
2. Regarding advertising and sponsorship, the Vice-Chairman explained that the Cabinet did not accept the greener futures reference group recommendation and the advertising and sponsorship would go ahead unrestricted.

## **21/24 RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 10]**

No comment was made on the recommendations tracker and forward work programme.

## **22/24 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING: WEDNESDAY 17 JULY 2024 [Item 11]**

The date of the next public meeting will be held on Wednesday 17 July.

Meeting ended at: 1.30pm

---

**Chairman**

