

MINUTES of the meeting of the **COMMUNITIES, ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 2.00 pm on 19 November 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 Thursday, 5 December 2024.

Elected Members:

- * Catherine Baart
- * John Beckett
- Luke Bennet
- Liz Bowes
- * Stephen Cooksey
- * Andy MacLeod
- Jan Mason
- Cameron McIntosh
- * John O'Reilly
- Lance Spencer (Vice-Chairman)
- Mark Sugden (Vice-Chairman)
- * Richard Tear
- * Jeremy Webster
- * Buddhi Weerasinghe
- * Keith Witham (Chairman)

- * *present*

43/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Cllr Luke Bennett (substitute Cllr Jeremy Webster), Cllr Jan Mason (substitute Cllr Steven McCormick), Cllr Cameron McIntosh (substitute Cllr John O'Reilly), Cllr Lance Spencer (substitute Paul Follows), Cllr Mark Sugden (substitute by Trefor Hogg), and Cllr Liz Bowes.

44/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 2]

Councillor Catherine Baart declared that her son lived very close to London Road, and that he cycles to work, but he does not cycle on Section 1 of the road.

45/24 QUESTIONS [Item 3]

46/24 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS [Item 3a]

There were no Members' Questions.

47/24 PUBLIC QUESTIONS [Item 3b]

There were 11 written questions submitted, in writing, before the Committee meeting. According to the Council's Standing Orders, only six questions could be addressed during the meeting. The first six questions and their answers were included in the supplementary agenda circulated prior to the meeting.

Five members of the public who submitted questions were present and asked supplementary questions.

1. Sam Neatrou asked a supplementary question seeking confirmation whether bus passengers will disembark into a pedestrian-only area, ensuring that the bus stop is not shared with cyclists. Matt Furniss, the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, said all floating bus stops were removed after consulting with the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People. The scheme was designed so that pedestrians can step into a pedestrian-only zone when getting off the bus, while cyclists would be encouraged to go behind the bus stop so that pedestrians would walk out into a pedestrian-only zone.
2. Pat Daffarn asked a supplementary question seeking confirmation that Members had reviewed both the officers' report and the Burford-to-Guildford submission, including the safety improvements detailed in the annex of the Burford-to-Guildford submission. Matt Furniss, the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, said that the Cabinet had considered both written and verbal evidence. He committed to reviewing the route, revisiting the referenced report, and exploring minor amendments, particularly regarding drain covers and other issues raised.
3. Terry Newman asked a supplementary question about whether Surrey County Council believes it can adequately justify and defend a decision to overlook its mandated safety and design standards if the scheme proceeds. Matt Furniss, the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, said that while Surrey's Healthy Streets framework guides new developments, retrofitting all existing infrastructure to modern standards is unfeasible due to spatial constraints. However, incremental betterment, such as enabling safe walking and cycling routes, is still valuable and worth pursuing.
4. Doug Clare asked a supplementary question about whether the Cabinet considered that 94% of the proposed scheme would be significantly safer when making their decision. Matt Furniss, the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, said that all evidence was presented in the report. He expressed greater concern about cycling on pavements, citing a recent coroner's case. The Cabinet Member concluded that the decision is political, with Cabinet Members making their judgments based on the evidence presented.
5. Oliver Greaves asked a supplementary question about whether all relevant safety concerns have been adequately presented and if those involved have been fully informed of these concerns. The Chairman confirmed that they had been.

48/24 CALL-IN: LONDON ROAD GUILDFORD ACTIVE TRAVEL SCHEME - INDEPENDENT TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT OF SECTION 1 FOR CONSIDERATION TO PROCEED [Item 4]

Witnesses:

- Cllr Matt Furniss – Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth
- Cllr Denise Turner Stewart – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities
- Cllr David Lewis – Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

- Owen Jenkins – Interim Executive Director Highways, Infrastructure and Planning
- Lucy Monie – Director, Highways and Transport
- Roger Williams – Active Travel Programme Manager

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. A Member said that the Cabinet's decision to refuse the scheme should be reconsidered. He argued there was not enough evidence to support the refusal and that it did not address safety improvements, secondary effects, or policy and funding impacts. He also stressed the need for decisions based on evidence. The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth said that Active Travel England (ATE) confirmed funds could be reallocated without loss. The project remains a scheme available for future Council implementation. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities said that the evidence suggested that introducing a potential risk in a scheme meant to improve safety would not be considered a safety improvement. She stated that the Council's role is to consider safety and risk and the decision made was due to safety concerns that could not be overlooked. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources clarified that the decision was based on a technical report from ARUP, not on a non-technical opinion, and emphasised that his concerns were about the evidence provided, not the principle of shared spaces.
2. A Member asked whether the Cabinet Members agree that, overall, the benefits to pedestrians and cyclists outweigh the 5% of the area where the scheme is not perfect. The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth said that he does agree that any improvement is better than none, but concerns were raised that prohibiting shared space due to safety issues could hinder walking and cycling projects, considering many areas lack the space—particularly the width of 1.8 metres—to make improvements. It was suggested that a review of Local Transport Plan (LTP4) might be necessary, depending on the decision. The Deputy Leader said that the report notes that 25% of shared paths in Surrey are 1.8 metres wide, without factoring in the reduced road lane width, presenting complex concerns for not only the narrow path but also the risk of vehicle wing mirrors encroaching on the path, weather, and other factors.
3. A Member asked what was the alternative if the scheme did not proceed and how would existing safety concerns for pedestrians, cyclists, and local school children be addressed. The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth said that there were three sections to be upgraded, safety defects were to be reviewed, and further improvements were to be considered.
4. A Member asked the officers to comment and confirm that, given all the considerations, they regarded the scheme as being as safe as possible and that the ARUP report reflected the same conclusion. The Interim Executive Director Highways, Infrastructure and Planning said that the officer's report to Cabinet reflected the best possible scheme given the site's constraints, as confirmed by the ARUP report, and met the requirements of local transport note (LTN) 1/20.

5. A Member asked whether professional technical evidence should outweigh non-technical opinions in decision-making, and whether the ARUP report's conclusion on safety should be considered valid. The Deputy Leader noted that the report's findings were not acceptable to the Cabinet due to the risks. These limitations, tied to the route's location, were referenced but unchangeable, and it was up to the Cabinet to interpret and decide whether to proceed.
6. A Member asked why ARUP conducted a desktop-only exercise and did not require an actual site visit for the report; where were the business requirements given to ARUP; if the scheme was reassessed using the 2024 ATE Route Check User Manual, and if not, why not; and why the ARUP report overlooked key aspects of the ATE Route Check policies, as noted on page 114 of the Cabinet report. The Engineering Project Manager explained that it was standard practice for professional organisations to review drawing designs and perform a technical review based on guidance, including LTN 1/20 and HGV width principles. Regarding the business requirements, the points provided to ARUP were based on the issues concerning HGV width, user safety on the footway, and shared-use path. Concerning the Route Check Manual, the scheme was not reassessed using the 2024 ATE Route Check User Manual because it had already been reviewed. Finally, regarding page 114 of the Cabinet report, it was clarified that the ARUP report did not overlook key aspects of the ATE Route Check policies, as ATE had already signed-off on the design, confirming its adherence to their standards.
7. A Member, after reviewing the scheme and cabinet meeting, believed there were no grounds to refer the decision back and would have opposed the scheme in the first instance. He raised concerns about potential safety risks if traffic exceeds the projected 300 movements per hour and questioned whether prioritising cyclists might discourage pedestrian use, especially for disabled individuals. The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth said that if the scheme had been successful, it would have encouraged more cycling, reduced car usage, and prompted further evaluation of the road's suitability for the highest estimated use volumes.
8. A Member, after hearing the discussion, believed there might be grounds to refer the decision back to Cabinet. He questioned whether the scheme would improve pedestrian safety and asked whether this project should move forward or is there too much uncertainty to make a decision. The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth highlighted the increased number of crossings, continuous pavements, and reduced vehicle speeds, and while recognising the strong opposition to the initial road closure announcement, emphasised that after two years of consultation, a far better design had emerged, even though he was ultimately in the minority. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources said that the decision to oppose the proposal was influenced not only by concerns about the shared space and comments in the ARUP report but also by the narrow width of the road and the risks to both pedestrians and vehicles. Additionally, the opposition of key organizations representing disabled and disadvantaged people in the county played a significant role in the

decision-making process. The Deputy Leader responded to concerns about pedestrian safety, referencing road limits and lack of alternatives.

9. A Member asked the Cabinet Members if anything they heard had made them believe that they had not properly considered the safety and technical issues when making their decision, and whether the Committee's debate had influenced any change in their views. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources said that after considering all comments, he believed that the correct process was followed and key issues were addressed, and while he supported the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth's suggestion to explore small safety improvements, it did not change his decision. The Deputy Leader noted that the Committee acknowledged the qualifications of those producing the reports, and that their decision remained unchanged in light of the important, transparent, due process undertaken.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chair invited the Committee to proceed with voting on the question: "Does the committee wish to refer the decision not to proceed with the scheme back to the Cabinet for reconsideration?" A roll call vote was taken. Voting was as follows:

Votes in Favour: Baart, Cooksey, Follows, Hogg, O'Reilly, Tear and Weerasinghe (7)

Votes Against: Beckett, Macleod, McCormick and Webster (4)

Not Voting: Witham (1)

The Chair declared the question **PASSED**.

Recommendations:

RESOLVED, the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee recommends:

1. That the Select Committee refers the decision of Cabinet made on 29 October 2024 not to proceed with the London Road Guildford Active Travel Scheme, back to the Cabinet for reconsideration on the grounds that:
 - a. The conclusions of the previous report to the cabinet and its technical assessment support the scheme as constituting a significant safety improvement for all road users.
 - b. Technical evidence, equivalent in professional competence to the ARUP report, has yet to be assessed regarding Cabinet's main reasons for not approving the scheme.
 - c. Alternative options to alleviate and address safety concerns have yet to be assessed or presented to the cabinet, including options such as a cyclist dismount sign for the section of the proposed scheme which concerns were expressed about.
 - d. Active travel contributes to improved health and well-being, cleaner air, and the Council's ambition to hit net zero by 2050 as well as adopted transport policies, such as the Local Transport Plan (LTP4).

49/24 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING [Item 5]

The Committee **NOTED** its next meeting would be held on 3 December 2024.

Meeting ended at: 3.38 pm

Chairman