

MINUTES of the meeting of the **COMMUNITIES, ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 22 November 2019 at Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Thursday, 23 January 2020.

Elected Members:

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

In attendance

Denise Turner Stewart, Cabinet Member for Community, Safety, Fire & Community
Colin Kemp, Deputy Leader
Mike Goodman, Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste
Nikki Barton, Councillor

20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

None received.

21 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING [Item 2]

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

22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

None received.

23 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

None received.

24 CABINET MEMBER PRIORITIES UPDATE [Item 5]

[Jan Mason arrived at the meeting at 10.05]

Witnesses:

Denise Turner Stewart, Cabinet Member for Community, Safety, Fire & Resilience

Colin Kemp, Deputy Leader

Mike Goodman, Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Members for their reports and notes.
2. The Chairman of the Committee stated that the Leader of the Council was dissatisfied with the share of LEP resources that Surrey received. The Chairman asked the Deputy Leader of the council to explain over what timescale the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee might be involved in getting better value out of the two LEPs.
3. The Deputy Leader of the Council responded by saying that Cabinet had not had the capacity to put in bids for LEPs and there was no new money coming into them, which had led to lack of certainty. He added that until the future of LEPs had been established, he would not be able to confirm the direction of the council. He highlighted, however, that the Council was building its capability and needed to both put together bids and work together with boroughs and districts to ensure that the County Council's plans were aligned with local plans. The Cabinet Member could not confirm how the Committee could get better value out of LEPs because it was a reactionary process but when appropriate, a discussion with the Committee could take place.
4. The Chairman stated that the committee wanted a reasonable timeframe in which this discussion would take place and the Deputy Leader of the Council suggested that there would be greater clarity after 12 December 2019.
5. A Member of the Committee requested that a list of projects currently funded by LEPs be published. The Deputy Leader responded by saying that a list of projects that had been funded by LEPs existed in the public domain. He also stated that he could not discuss something that hadn't been finalised, but he would be happy to have a non-public verbal conversation with the member to inform her of current funded projects in the area.
6. A Member of the Committee asked whether the Deputy Leader could separate the county bids that were under consideration with the district and borough bids that were under consideration. The Member also

asked the Deputy Leader what was in hand between partnered county and district bids and asked about the status of the HIF bids. The Member also wanted to be informed of the scale of budget that would be required for 2021 to fulfil any bids and regeneration projects that the council wished to make, and over what timescale.

7. The Deputy Leader informed the Committee that nothing would be released with regards to the A320 during purdah. He confirmed that the local plan conversations went well and he was satisfied with the evidence base that the council was putting forward.
8. The Deputy Leader informed the committee that the Guilford HIF bid had been received and announced, and the Woking one had been received. There had been no update on the Tandridge A22. He emphasised that although four bids had been accepted through the first stage, it would not be guaranteed that they would get funded in the second stage.
9. A Member of the Committee stated that the lack of funding for transport to the south east was a major issue and asked the Deputy Leader to update the committee on how council would get devolution in the funding to the south east to improve Surrey's infrastructure.
10. The Deputy Leader responded saying that he estimated that five to ten million pounds would enable him to plan and deliver and more work needed to be done in this area. He further explained that transport for south east was stalled due to a lack of statutory status. The major road network work was ongoing and would be submitted later that year albeit there was still no financial understanding of how much money the council would receive. He concluded that there would be new certainty with the newly elected government.
11. A Member of the Committee raised concerns that the future bus strategy would not facilitate a shift from the use of private car to public transport nor fulfil the place-making agenda. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste was asked whether he could assure the committee that the future bus strategy would look for funding and not increase the scale of the roads, rather increase the scale of bus routes.
12. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste agreed that the county needed more of its residents to adopt regular use of public transport. The Council was looking into electric buses with borough colleagues and thinking about how bus routes could be linked up to train stations. He stated that the Leader of the Council was aware that the council needed to look at what resources were needed to make this happen.
13. A Member of the Committee stated that bids are hugely resource intensive and asked the Deputy Leader what the resource implications would be for the council and enquired whether it would be worthwhile

establishing a permanent team to apply for funding. The Deputy Leader agreed that the council needed a permanent team to manage funding alongside a core of officers who could both scope out work with members and districts and lead a vision for place making and shaping and creating solutions around the county's towns, roads and communities. Following this, he stated, the council would then need funding to buy in external resources to design each individual scheme. Finally, he highlighted the importance of setting a framework to bring the right people in at the right time and that they were in the process of understanding this. The Deputy Leader was thanked for the work he was doing on Transport for the South East but it was requested that greater transparency of the project was provided and that members should be involved from an earlier stage.

14. It was queried what liaison the Deputy Leader had had with the LEPs with regards to securing money from them for energy projects and whether the Deputy Leader had been in touch with the Greater South East Energy Hub and, if so, what had been said.
15. The Deputy Leader responded by asserting that the environment needed to be at the forefront of everything the council does. He assured the committee that the LEPs were increasingly focused on environmental issues, future technologies and related skills. He also stated that the energy board was driving a lot of work around renewable energy resources and that he needed to bring himself up to speed on these issues.
16. The Chairman highlighted that the Countryside Strategy had been continually delayed and asked the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Fire & Resilience when the committee would likely see the strategy for scrutiny so that possible suggestions could be made.
17. The Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Fire & Resilience stated that there were several ongoing pieces of work which were influencing the Countryside Strategy namely the Leader's environment charter, renegotiation of Surrey Wildlife Trust contract and the work of both the Surrey Health and Wellbeing agenda and the Surrey's Greener Future Task Group. The Cabinet Member appreciated that the countryside strategy item had been constantly referred on the agenda but explained that this strategy must be aligned with the aforementioned issues, as ultimately they would inform the countryside strategy. The Cabinet Member stated that the committee could expect the strategy to be on the agenda in 2020.
18. Members expressed concern that planting 1.2 million trees would be insufficient to replace the huge number of trees lost due to Ash Dieback and asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste whether the Council would be looking at alternative methods of carbon sequestration. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste stated that whilst the target was 1.2 million, he hoped that this figure would increase and informed the committee that this was being discussed.

19. Members asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste whether Surrey Highways would consider planting trees on the road verges to help mitigate against traffic congestion. Members also relayed that people living on residential streets would like more trees planted on their roads and highlighted that trees are greatly lacking in densely populated residential areas. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste reminded the Committee that DEFRA was about to produce its urban tree planting strategy. The Council has been working closely with its highway colleagues and had productive discussions with about how tree planting could be done in the right way.
20. A Member of the Committee raised concerns that the council's climate strategy appeared to bare down on the ability of people who manage the countryside estate to make profit and asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste whether he thought that this was the case. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste said he understood the importance of protecting the countryside for future generations. The Cabinet Member for Community, Safety, Fire & Resilience said that they would be careful that the climate strategy would not constrain the ability of the rural economy nor Surrey Wildlife Trust's activity in terms of conservation.
21. The Committee asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste whether any money could be put into removing tree stumps. The Cabinet Member stated he would ask environmental experts whether any of the existing tree stumps could be removed.
22. Members requested that further information on drainage issues be provided and it was agreed that this would be passed onto the Cabinet Member and it would be provided outside of the meeting.
23. The Chairman asked whether the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Fire & Resilience was happy with any improvements in the performance of the service.
24. The Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Fire & Resilience stated that the first action of appointing a senior team had given stability to the service and the recent inspection letter had reflected very well on the work that had been done. She also stated there had been a lot of activity with on-call and wholtime recruitment. With regards to the FBU dispute, she assured the Committee that a sophisticated communications campaign would manage any risks and that resources and plans were in place should any matters arise and informed Members that the service met regularly with Fire Brigade Union officials and discussions were progressing well. In terms of confidence, the Cabinet Member assured the committee that the service was on target and performing as it should be.

Actions/further information to be provided:

- i. Deputy Leader to provide an update on all the outstanding bids with both LEPs, the value of them and the likelihood of getting the resources and capacity in place to deliver them. The deputy leader should break them down into surrey bids, partnered bids between county and borough, and borough and district independent bids.
- ii. Cabinet Member for Highways to send written responses to the questions posed to him to all Members of the Committee.

Recommendations:

1. The Select Committee reviews the information contained in this update and offers feedback to the Cabinet Member;
2. The Select Committee considers where it may add value to the Cabinet Member's work through scrutiny and scopes topics as required.

The Chairman agreed to consider Item 6 before Item 5a

25 REVIEW OF CHARGES FOR PARKING IN COUNTRYSIDE ESTATE CAR PARKS [Item 5a]

Declarations of interest:

None received.

Witnesses:

Denise Turner Stewart, Cabinet Member for Community, Safety, Fire & Resilience

Alan Bowley, Head of Environment

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Fire & Resilience stated that the Council was looking to maximise health and wellbeing in the population of Surrey by encouraging as much use as possible of Surrey's countryside. A cabinet decision was taken in January 2018 to introduce charges at the five busiest countryside sites. In July 2018, it was agreed that a review be undertaken after 12 months of the charges being introduced and, unless significant contribution had been

made to the countryside in terms of income, the charges would be removed. The net income was stated as being £42,000 for Newlands Corner and £61,000 for the wider estate, with £0.3 million in capital costs. The review concluded that the financial benefits of charging to access the countryside was outweighed by extensive physical and mental health and wellbeing benefits, as well as providing quality of life and community interaction for residents. The Cabinet Member stated it was important that access to the countryside not be constrained by fixed financial outlay. She informed the members that the Council was investigating a voluntary payment scheme, as adopted at many National Trust sites. Newlands Corner would be subject to a local access agreement and, in the event of removal of charges, Albury Estate would be required to engage in discussion, which had already commenced. The recommendations were set out in the report and the Cabinet Member asked the Committee whether it had any questions.

2. A Member asked the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Fire & Resilience to emphasise the point about Newlands Corner not being included in the proposal due to considerable lack of understanding on part of most members of the public that the land was not public property. The Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Fire & Resilience pointed to paragraph 25 of the report where there was explicit reference to the Member's query. The Cabinet Member assured the committee Member that this would be emphasised at the Cabinet meeting.
3. Another Member of the Committee stated that they thought car parking charges should not be scrapped rather lowered to a nominal fee to cover some maintenance costs. The Cabinet Member referred to the National Trust which had a donation system in place and said that she would be looking into the prospect of voluntary contributions in Surrey's countryside estate car parks for which most of the existing infrastructure would stay in place.
4. A Member of the Committee informed the Cabinet Member that he had concerns that scrapping parking charges would be to the detriment of Surrey Wildlife Trust and asked whether the trust would be negatively impacted by this decision and experience a reduction in revenue. The Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Fire & Resilience stated that Surrey Wildlife Trust received the majority of its funding from Natural England and that conversations between the council and Surrey Wildlife Trust were progressing favourably. There would be some withdrawal of responsibility from the Trust which would drive an income stream and thus the cost of managing the countryside could be done for less.

[Jan Mason left the meeting at 12.14pm]

5. The Vice Chairman and Chairman asked the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Fire & Resilience whether it was guaranteed that

the parking charges would not be reintroduced in the medium term and the long term. Both the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Fire & Resilience and the Deputy Leader assured the Committee that the parking fees would not be reintroduced in the medium-term but could not guarantee the same in the long-term. The Deputy Leader concluded the discussion by reminding the committee that both the health and wellbeing agenda and the environment agenda state that residents should have access to the countryside for their own health.

Actions/ Further information to be provided:

No actions identified.

Recommendations:

1. The Committee endorses the decision to end car parking charges;
2. The Committee periodically monitors countryside usage to gauge impact on Surrey resident's health and wellbeing.

26 SURREY'S GREENER FUTURE TASK GROUP REPORT [Item 6]

Declarations of interest:

None received.

Witnesses:

Esme Stallard – Climate Change Project Manager
Simon Griffin – Partnership Lead. Strategic Commissioning
Colin Kemp, Deputy Leader
Mike Goodman, Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Vice-Chairman summarised the work and final report of Surrey's Greener Future Task group explaining that in light of the declared climate emergency and Surrey's Community Vision, the Task Group had explored actions that the Council could take to tackle climate change. It had been concluded that Surrey County Council's current policies were inadequate and would not help realise the county's net zero carbon by 2050 target. The Vice-Chairman stated that the 'call to action' summarised the recommendations of the Task Group and what the Council should act on in order to develop a more detailed strategy. It was also specified that further and more extensive research would

need to be undertaken in collaboration with partners and residents to form a realistic, costed and inclusive strategy to deliver net zero. To achieve this, it had been suggested that a member reference group be established with involvement from Cabinet.

2. Committee Members reiterated that whilst the report had a strong evidence base and had communicated well the scale and seriousness of the challenge, it was broad in its outlook and failed to set out in detail what actions needed to happen to meet the climate targets.
3. Members suggested a bottom-up workshop approach to engage the public in concerted positive action to fulfil the vision of the Task Group. Members asked the Cabinet Member how they might engage the public and empower them to work together to form part of the solution.
4. A Member questioned whether the Task Group had public acceptance of what it had suggested and asserted that residents must come first. It was suggested that involving schools would be beneficial as engagement of children can encourage adult engagement.
5. Members of the Task Group stressed that there also needed to be a cultural shift within Surrey County Council itself and that all officers and councillors should make positive behavioural changes.
6. It was suggested that engagement with Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and with central government to clearly establish Surrey County Council's aims and the cost of meeting the targets of the Greener Future project would be helpful. Concerns were raised that unless enough money was invested, the work of the Task Group would simply remain a report and not be acted upon. Members agreed that significant financial support would be needed to achieve many of the recommendations presented by the Task Group.
7. Members of the Committee stated that there needed to be a modal shift from private to public transport, but this had been inhibited by buses being run by the commercial sector, which lacked incentive to achieve climate and air pollution targets. It was suggested that it would be beneficial to give local authorities the means to implement how buses run and this was something that central government should look at.
8. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste thanked the officers who helped the Task Group compile evidence and write the report. He reiterated short-term future action should be twofold: developing a costed strategy, with the Surrey Environment Partnership helping to coordinate work across Surrey's local authorities, and encouraging and enabling residents to take positive action.
9. The Vice-Chairman noted that Mr Essex had put a considerable amount of work into the Task Group and recommended to Cabinet that it should involve Mr Essex in all stages of work regarding Surrey's climate strategy.

10. Officers informed the Committee that in September a joint Surrey Leaders and Chief Executives meeting had made a commitment to work together. A working group was set up to establish a shared set of targets for tackling climate change that the 12 local authorities could then endorse. The committee were also told that there was a shortlist of ten ideas to tackle the community design challenge that had been raised in the Greener Future project.
11. A Member stated that they could not fully support the recommendations made by the Greener Future Task Group in their current format, in particular items seven, nine, ten and twelve, as he did not think that these were achievable. Another Member also disagreed with the recommendations of the Task Group and gave his support to a suggested amendment to the recommendations. The Chairman asserted that it was not possible procedurally for the committee to change the recommendations of the Task Group. He emphasised that the report was evidence based and underpinned by expert recommendations and witness sessions with officers and therefore the Task Group had agreed the recommendations to take forward to Cabinet. It was also stated that there would be an opportunity for debate on the call for action at the Council meeting in December and the Cabinet meeting on 26 November.
12. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste endorsed the recommendations of the Task Group because he agreed with the level of ambition in the action plan.

[The meeting adjourned for five minutes at the Chairman's request]

13. Following the meeting recommencing, the Chairman invited Committee Members to make amendments to the proposed Select Committee recommendations as follows:
 - a) Endorse the Task Group's findings;
 - b) Recommend the Call for Action on page 37 to Cabinet and Council for approval;
 - c) Recommend that further work is undertaken by Council officers to test the viability and appropriateness of the recommendations listed in Annex 1 and develop policy as a result.
14. A Member stated that if the council simply did what it considered achievable with respect to the declared climate emergency, then it would not meet its targets. The Member asserted that the call for action should be ambitious and subsequently suggested that the third recommendation of the committee be strengthened. He also stated

that the plan needed to be viable and appropriate to the county of Surrey.

15. Mr Furey suggested alterations to the committee recommendations, namely the addition of:
 - a) The report and call for action as endorsed by this committee should be reviewed to determine achievable and sustainable outcomes with a timeline to delivery, as an urgent item.
 - b) Scope the delivery areas that are government led and achievable, accordingly. The general population be reviewed in terms of how the council can work with them to achieve the desired outcomes.
16. The amendment was seconded by Mr Bennison. A vote was taken and the amendment was lost.
17. Mr Essex proposed that the third recommendation be amended to include the word 'sufficiency', and this was agreed.
18. The recommendations were agreed with the addition of the word sufficiency to the third recommendation.
19. The Chairman stated that the call for action would go to full Council and be debated by all 81 members.

[Fiona White left at 12pm]

Actions/ Further information to be provided:

- i. Feedback on district and borough engagement with respect to how they will all work together to achieve the climate change targets to be provided by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste.
- ii. Establishment of a benchmark for Surrey's performance with respect to the climate change targets

Recommendations:

1. Endorse the Task Group's findings;
2. Recommend the Call for Action on page 37 to Cabinet and Council for approval;
3. Recommend that further work is undertaken by Council officers to test the viability, sufficiency and appropriateness of the recommendations listed in Annex 1 and develop policy as a result.

27 SELECT COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 7]

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. A Member suggested that the Committee discuss the issue of road safety in Surrey in light of the recently released figures by BBC Surrey that eighteen people are killed or seriously injured every week on Surrey's roads. Members agreed that this figure needed quantifying. The Chairman stated that he would ascertain whether there was scope for serious and credible work for the Committee.
2. A Member told the Chairman that he would like a discussion to scrutinise the bus strategy. The Member also highlighted that the Surrey Environmental Partnership was looking to develop a climate plan and that this was a new policy that should be scrutinised by the committee. He also suggested scrutiny of the new highways maintenance contract.
3. The Chairman agreed that the Member's points should be looked into for inclusion on the Committee's forward work programme.
4. It was requested that the Cabinet Member for Highways be asked about the current status of Project Horizon.

Actions/ Further information to be provided:

- i. Submit question to the Cabinet Member for Highways on the status of project horizon.
- ii. Quantification of statistic of traffic-related deaths in Surrey to determine scope for potential future scrutiny.
- iii. The Committee Forward Work Programme be updated to include the proposed agreed scrutiny items.

28 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 23 JANUARY 2020 [Item 8]

The next meeting of the Select Committee will be held on 23 January 2020 in the Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames.

Meeting ended at: 12.25pm

Chairman