

**MINUTES of the meeting of the COMMUNITIES, ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS SELECT COMMITTEE held at 10.00 am on 19 MARCH 2021 at REMOTE MEETING.**

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on 16 September 2021.

**Elected Members:**

- \* Mr John O'Reilly (Chairman)
- \* Mr Andy MacLeod (Vice-Chairman)
- \* Mr Saj Hussain (Vice-Chairman)
- \* Mrs Fiona White
- \* Mr Keith Witham
- \* Mr Mike 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

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

Apologies were received from Andy MacLeod and John Furey. There were no substitutions.

**2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS: TUESDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2020 [Item 2]**

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

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

Mike Goodman declared a personal interest in Item 5. This interest did not prevent the Member from participating in the discussion.

Declaration: Chairman of the North Downs Railway Line and Member of the Southeast Community Rail Board

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

None received.

**5 RAILWAY STRATEGY [Item 5]**

**Witnesses:**

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways

Paul Millin, Strategic Transport Group Manager

Daniel Philips, Senior Transport Consultant - Arup

Tim Bellenger, Director - Policy and Investigation, London Travelwatch

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The report presented to the Select Committee was the updated Railway Strategy (the 'Strategy') and it was to be considered at Cabinet on 30 March 2021. The Strategy had a supporting evidence base with a set of strategic aims and was part of the wider, forthcoming Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4). Rail was an important aspect of Surrey's infrastructure and would be key in helping the county achieve transport decarbonisation. Railways were largely out of the direct control of local authorities thus the council would focus on effective lobbying, seeking investment, working with bus operators, and improving connections and access to railway stations for residents.
2. The Strategic Transport Group Manager stated that the Strategy was developed in partnership with Arup and would be important in helping the council to articulate its strategies, policies, priorities, ambitions and the supporting evidence basis to local MPs, the government and rail industry to secure investment in Surrey.
3. Members asked about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, officers reported changed commuting patterns and a significant decrease in public railway usage. Despite this, the Group Manager stated that it was still an appropriate time to adopt a new strategy so the council could input and shape the future of the rail industry. The Cabinet Member agreed that it was timely because it was important that post-Covid-19 people returned to sustainable modes of transport to meet decarbonisation and net carbon targets. The Cabinet Member went on to say that, as part of LTP4, it was vital that the railway strategy was integrated into the wider transport and infrastructure plan as early as possible to support the council's Climate Change Strategy (CCS). The Strategy was also important in light of the government's 'levelling up' agenda; it provided an evidence base to lobby government to keep investment around Surrey and the southeast.
4. The Chairman invited the Director - Policy and Investigation, London Travelwatch (the statutory consumer watchdog that represented transport users in and around London including Surrey) to comment on the Strategy. The Director had made several suggestions in response to Surrey's new Railway Strategy regarding station accessibility, community rail partnerships, and the extension of smartcard technology. Passenger numbers fell during the pandemic so improvements in the aforementioned areas were important in attracting users (both new and old) to the network.

5. The Director stated that it was important that the Council engaged in wider consultation with stakeholders and disabled groups, for example Transport for All, in the finalising of the strategy, and suggested that modest changes and smaller schemes would make a considerable difference to people (for example, tactile paving at all stations).
6. The Director added that joint research carried out by London Travelwatch and Transport Focus showed that, post-pandemic, many people who traditionally commuted to work via train would be working from home. Thus, the railway would be increasingly reliant on leisure travel for custom and it was important that it be redesigned to attract the leisure market. The role of community rail partnerships and station adoption routes also needed to be customer improved, whilst extending the Transport for London system (Oyster and contactless payment systems into Surrey) and improving integration between bus and railway would be in the best interest of passengers.
7. The Group Manager responded to the Director's comments. The Service undertook detailed engagement with the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People in development of the Strategy, but the Group Manager hoped that it could undertake further engagement work with Transport for All before schemes were implemented. The Group Manager was interested in the idea of creating a package of small schemes for stations across Surrey that were quick wins at relatively low cost and would identify and develop these in partnership with train operating companies and Network Rail. One of the issues discussed with Network Rail was 'first and last-mile' connectivity to the rail network. It was important that the council worked with districts, boroughs and companies when considering station improvement projects and improving active travel and access for people with disabilities.
8. Regarding the community rail partnership, the Group Manager felt that this was best done locally and not something imposed and led by the council. The council would however work with local interest groups and parish councils to connect them to existing community rail partnerships and introduce them to train operating companies to develop projects. The Group Manager also stated the importance of implementing a more flexible and understandable contactless and smart ticketing system and use of smart cards for the whole of the rail network. Simplification of rail ticketing would be key to encouraging infrequent or non-users to use rail and increase usage for leisure travel.
9. The Chairman asked whether the four categories (network infrastructure connectivity and services, stations and access, and passenger experience) that highlighted the main areas of intervention and policy in the rail network were the outcomes that the council was aiming to achieve through the strategy. The Group Manager responded that some of this work was already underway and the council was engaged in schemes with the rail industry that were achieving tangible outcomes for the work set out in the 'Categorising Interventions' section of the report. Decarbonisation of the North Downs Line was one of the top three electrification programmes prioritised in the UK which the council was working closely with Network Rail on. Additionally, for the

development of Haslemere station, the council had invested some money and levered significant investment from the train operating company and Network Rail for measures to improve accessibility, such as a new carpark and improved cycling and active travel routes to the station. The Council also worked with the train operating company and National Rail on the redevelopment of Longcross Station to mitigate the impact of planned housing development. Work on ‘first and last-mile’ solutions was key to supporting active travel, the council’s declared climate emergency, and other areas of council policy linked to LTP4. It was important that Network Rail knew where the council’s direction for development and growth was so that investment was made in local pressure areas.

10. A Member queried how much flexibility there was for the strategy to change in response the Government commissioned Williams Review that was essential to the rail industry’s recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. The Group Manager explained that, with the level of uncertainty around customer usage of the rail network and how the economy would respond post-pandemic, the government needed to put in a place a model that would be futureproof for the next 5-19 years, meaning a likely shift from a franchise model to concession model. The council would still need to work with companies operating those concessions to ensure the right level of services were delivered to residents. The Senior Transport Consultant for Arup added that ongoing work with government was looking at how this model would work in different parts of the country. It was likely that operation would move towards TfL operation of the London overground i.e. more setting of the timetable and performance-based awards to operators to improve reliability compared to private operators. The Senior Transport Consultant agreed that it was likely to move to a concession model whereby fair risk was taken more by the state however there was uncertainty as to how contracts between operators and Network Rail would look.
11. A Member asked whether the Strategy included strategic out of county projects that would be beneficial for Surrey. The Group Manager explained that the council was supporting a number of improvement projects outside Surrey that were detailed in the Strategy. For example, Network Rail’s Croydon Area Remodelling Scheme project and rail access to Heathrow. The Heathrow Strategic Planning Group was a joint partnership of many of the local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) responsible for planning the region surrounding Heathrow Airport and there was a piece of work underway whereby parties were establishing common areas of agreement.
12. The Government asked local authorities to sign up to enhanced quality bus partnerships to help improve access and the linkage between bus and rail stations. The Group Manager explained that this area wasn’t wholly within the council’s control thus it needed to influence and press the rail industry and government to take action. The council and LEP had put pressure on Great Western Railway to deliver improvements on the North Downs Line which

resulted in an increase in rail service however this progress ceased due to the pandemic. The Senior Transport Consultant added that the electrification of the North Downs Line was one of the interventions that was being approached in a more risk averse manner, which is why it was a 5-10-year medium term goal. He hoped that the shorter end of the medium term would be met with fully electrified trains operating on the line in five years.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- I. The Committee lent its support for the strategy. In particular, Members encouraged the Council to lobby for a simplified fare structure and ticketing system and an expedited timeframe to achieve electrification of the North Downs line. There should be flexibility in the Council's approach to accommodate changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- II. A Member requested that paragraph 40 – Environmental Sustainability Implications – of the Cabinet report also reference the range of positive implications for climate change that the schemes and interventions brought forward by the council in delivering the New Rail Strategy for Surrey would have. This was to further indicate how the New Railway Strategy supported other council priority areas, such as achieving net carbon.

#### **Recommendations:**

- I. The Committee recommends that the Cabinet Member for Highways ensures that the Service identifies any small schemes in the county that could improve residents' access to railway stations quickly and that a commitment to do so is included in the report to Cabinet on 30 March 2021.

## **6 SURREY CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY [Item 6]**

#### **Witnesses:**

Natalie Bramhall, Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change

Carolyn McKenzie, Director – Environment

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

1. The Cabinet Member stated that the report was a summary of work that had taken place to date on the Climate Change Delivery Plan (CCDP). The final CCDP was to be published, with approval by Cabinet, in June 2021 following further development of the funding mechanisms and businesses models needed to finance and monitor reduction activities. Work on the Land Management Framework (LMF), summarised in the report, was a key part of the CCDP linked to the climate change adaptation agenda that would deliver multiple benefits. The council was positioning itself to capitalise on investment opportunities that were likely to arise when the government's Environmental Bill was published. Officers were developing a set of carbon reduction metrics which could be applied to programmes and schemes in the CCDP, and in the

meantime were working on identifying immediate benefits such as Active Travel and decarbonisation of the corporate estate. The CCDP was to be updated and reviewed annually.

2. The Director – Environment added that joint ownership of the CCDP was vital in ensuring effective engagement and emphasised the scale of the challenge which would only be overcome by the involvement of the private sector, public sector and residents and communities. The council should take a clear leading role in enabling and inspiring people to make changes.
3. The 100% CO<sub>2</sub> target reduction, against 2019 levels, by 2050 was a challenging target and the government needed to make big policy shifts to help local authorities meet these national targets. The council's success would also depend on partner engagement and attracting investment. There had been significant improvements and changes and the Director stated that it was important not to undermine the difference that smaller initiatives, such as the streetlighting initiative, could make in meeting targets. The Director also added that if the electrification of cars and transport proceeded, the council could meet its target by 2040.
4. A Member requested further explanation of the Greener Futures Investment Multiplier Framework. The Director explained that this was being developed as the overarching Framework to draw in investment from numerous organisations to one platform to fund a range of programmes. It was also important to bring in the agendas and investment of other applicable strategies and programmes, such as the Rail Strategy and Local Transport Plan 4, to maximise outcomes and take forward the council's climate change agenda and achieve multiple benefit outcomes. For example, the River Thames Scheme flood defence programme included the creation of new habitats, and considered health, leisure and amenity purposes as well as carbon sequestration and biodiversity.
5. The council's relationship with Surrey Wildlife Trust and Surrey Nature Partnership was important and Members wanted to see evidence of this and the organisations' involvement in the report and referred to in Phase 2 of the Framework, particularly with regard to planning considerations. The Director assured the Committee that Surrey Wildlife Trust was involved with the LMF from the outset and that the nature recovery strategy would be embedded into this framework.
6. A Member asked whether there was sufficient focus on Surrey land as a whole and whether the LMF would identify sites where it would be preferential to allocate different types of developments, for example the location of new renewable energy sites or appropriate land for woodland management, in the county to ensure the rural countryside was better valued. The Director responded that the LMF was unique and considered rural, countryside and high-quality green spaces in urban areas. The first piece of work would look at the natural capital and value of all land across Surrey. Initially, the Service was to undertake deep dives in public sector land around renewables and

biodiversity and then study all private and community-owned land to develop one land use approach.

7. A Member questioned whether the council was allocating sufficient funding for the countryside and woodland management given the planned closure of the council's sawmill. The Director responded that supporting wood fuel was a key aspect of the LMF work, however it was not appropriate for the council to lead on and deliver. The council would support the woodland industry, but it was not financially viable for the council to deliver. The council was supporting activities within Norbury Park to date had received 17 expressions of interest from people wanting to deliver related activities on this site.
8. A Member requested that the specific role taken by the Council, government, and other organisations in each item of the CCDP be listed, and that officers state which current plans would not meet targets, and what strategies were in place to meet those targets, in the final CCDP. The Director responded that the final CCDP would include wherever possible how targets were to be achieved, detailing specific action and who needed to be involved. The Service needed to identify other sources of investment with a timeline of when those funds would be available to ascertain how much flexibility the council had in how it was to achieve net zero.
9. A Member requested that the Select Committee consider a private meeting in June 2021 to review the final CCDP before its consideration at Cabinet meeting on 21 June 2021.

Recommendations:

- I. The Select Committee recommends that the newly appointed Committee reviews the final delivery plan before the Cabinet takes its decision on 29 June 2021.

## **7 SURREY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE IMPLEMENTATION OF MAKING SURREY SAFER - OUR PLAN 2020 – 2023 [Item 7]**

**Witnesses:**

Denise Turner-Stewart, Cabinet Member for Community Protection

Steve Owen-Hughes, Director – Community Protection Group

Sarah Kershaw, Chief of Staff

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The witnesses were asked by the Select Committee to comment on the industrial dispute with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU); this was ongoing albeit some items were resolved. Regular meetings were held with FBU representatives and every effort was being made to resolve all issues raised. The FBU suspended their Action Short of Strike in March 2020. The Chief Fire Officer stated Surrey Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) desire to have good

industrial relations with all unions, and it was encouraging more unions to recruit members from SFRS for wider representation of the workforce.

2. A Member asked whether officers could provide trend data on SFRS's establishment data to show how it changed over the previous five-year period. The Chief Fire Officer explained that the workforce was divided into four categories: control staff, support staff, wholetime firefighters, and on call firefighters, and the Service was now 100% across all those areas apart from on call , which was 83.3% and subject to an ongoing recruitment drive. Prior to 2019, there was no fixed establishment and from 2016-2018 SFRS depended on overtime to provide the required staffing levels.
3. The Chief Fire Officer went onto say that there was an organisation development department whose job it was to forecast the Service's leaver profile. This was being monitored and the Service encouraged retiring frontline staff to transfer to other service departments, such as fire safety, to retain experience Establishment figures were now fixed, and the risk of relying on overtime significantly reduced. In 2016, the Service was funded to a headcount of 646 on call and wholetime firefighters but, having undertaken data and risk analysis, the Service now knew that it needed 595 firefighters.
4. SFRS was still able to meet its statutory requirements during the Covid-19 pandemic despite deploying staff into different service areas. Fulltime firefighters who delivered statutory response functions were deployed less frequently than parttime and volunteer service fire fighters. Most of the community resilience activities (i.e. prevention and protection measures) were impacted by the pandemic. Face to face Safe and Well visits to businesses and residents' homes and school visits ceased temporarily at the beginning of the pandemic except for those safe and well visits for high risk vulnerable persons which continued. The Youth Cadet Scheme was delayed until September 2021 and community events and the Youth Engagement Programmes were reduced or delayed. Community engagement and staff engagement was also impacted by the pandemic and the Service undertook a recovery review starting in June 2020 to understand all areas impacted by the pandemic and develop a return to normal plan for catch up in those areas.
5. The Chairman asked whether some ways of working had fundamentally changed due to Covid-19. The Chief Fire Officer responded that SFRS had learned over the last year that there were effective ways of doing things differently. Engagement with business post-Grenfell helped SFRS understand different ways to engage with partners in the business and construction area. The Service also expanded the way it carried out Safe & Well visits and contacted residents - however high-risk groups were always contacted face-to-face. The Chief Fire Officer hoped that the new ways of working would mean that more residents could be contacted in a variety of ways.
6. A future priority for SFRS was 'reviewing and improving our culture' and the Select Committee wished to understand further what that entailed. The Chief Fire Officer stated that the Service was dedicated to improving the trust and honesty with its staff and to implement changes based on feedback. Staff

training around management and leadership was underway and would continue after lockdown. There was a plan in place that focused on improving how the Service engaged with its workforce and how to continue positively recognising the work of staff. The results of the culture survey were forthcoming, and they would set Key Performance Indicators that the Service would monitor improvement against. Tangible changes resulting from the culture changes would be a more accountable and diverse workforce that better represented the community it served.

**Actions:**

- i. Select Committee to receive the following information regarding SFRS establishment:
  - The current establishment of the SFRS
  - In what Service areas there is a staff shortage
  - Annual staffing of SFRS for the last ten-year period to give a longer perspective of improvements made
  - When the establishment figures changed
  - How the composition of staffing has changed and for what reasons (for example, changing priorities and workloads)

(Owner: Steve Owen-Hughes, Chief Fire Officer)

**Recommendations:**

- I. It is recommended that the Select Committee adopt the following points identified by the Working Group as the basis for future scrutiny of the SFRS:
  - Areas of ongoing improvement work that form part of the 'Making Surrey Safer' Plan such as improving workforce diversity and recruitment to on-call positions
  - Analysing comparative data showing the relative performance of SFRS with other suitable peer Fire and Rescue Authorities
  - Analysis of incidents where the first appliance to critical incidents exceeded 10 minutes
  - Analysis of satisfaction levels with the Service's communications
  - Qualitative evidence from frontline staff on changes to the SFRS

## **8 SCRUTINY OF ALTERNATIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL [ITEM 8]**

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Committee noted the report.
2. The Chairman and the proposer of the alternative budget were satisfied with the scrutiny process of the alternative budget proposal and thanked officers and Members for their contributions.

## **9 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER [ITEM 9]**

1. Members requested that the Select Committee review the council's streetlighting policy and implementation of the LED lighting.
2. Members requested that the Select Committee review the final Climate Change Delivery Plan before its consideration at the June Cabinet meeting.

*Meeting closed at 12:22*