

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **COMMUNITIES, ENVIROMENT AND HIGHWAYS SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 7 February 2024 at Woodhatch Place, 11 Cockshot Hill, Reigate, RH2 8EF.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Monday, 29 April 2024.

**Elected Members:**

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

\*present

r = Remote Attendance

*Meeting started 10:04 AM*

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

There were no apologies or substitutions.

**2/24 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS: 4 DECEMBER 2023 [Item 2]**

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

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

None received.

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

None received.

## **5/24 ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE (ETI) PERFORMANCE REPORT [Item 5]**

### Witnesses

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth – *in person*

Natalie Bramhall, Cabinet Member for Property, Waste and Infrastructure – *in person*

Marisa Heath, The Cabinet Member for Environment – *in person*

Katie Stewart, Executive Director for Environment, Infrastructure & Growth – *in person*

Jo Diggins, Deputy Chief of Staff, Environment, Infrastructure & Growth (report author) – *in person*

Carolyn McKenzie, Director Environment - *in person*

Paul Millin, Assistant Director, Strategic Transport – *in person*

Lucy Monie, Director, Highways and Transport – *in person*

Richard Bolton – Assistant Director Highways Operations and Infrastructure – *in person*

Doug Hill – Flood and Climate Resilience Manager – *remote*

Richard Parkinson – Resources and Circular Economy Group Manager - *remote*

Paul Wheadon (also attending remotely) Strategic Contract Group Manager - *remote*

### **Key discussions**

1. The Chairman asked witnesses what areas rated as red they were the most concerning. The Executive Director for Environment, Infrastructure & Growth said that for all areas identified in red, plans to resolve them were in place. The RED RAG rating for Road Safety and the increase in numbers of 'killed or seriously injured' incidents (KSIs) was concerning. The work underway to develop a new road safety strategy for Surrey was really importance. The Executive Director urged communities to engage with the upcoming consultation. Customer enquiries was assessed as RED. Improving engagement with customers across all areas of the Council was also a big priority. Work was underway to improve and professionalise the customer experience for residents.

#### *Highways Keeping the network safe road defects, KSIs, streetlight repairs)*

2. A Member asked what the target repair time was for potholes. The Director of Highways and Transport said that there were three targeted response times based on the severity of potholes. Repairs had a guarantee of 2 years but as repairs were conducted reactively where weather conditions varied, the life expectancy could be shorter. Defects would be picked up in inspections annually.
3. A member queried if contractors would fix potholes at no extra charge if they did not last the 2-year quality guarantee. The Director of Highways and Transport said that it would not be an additional cost if it was proved that the issue was a failure to repair properly on the contractors end. The highways inspection staff were able to identify failure to repair.
4. A Member noted that there was a 49% increase in the number of potholes from 2022 to 2023 and asked if Ringway had provided insight on this and if the data could be used to project long term trends in defect volumes. The Director of Highways and Transport said that the increase was largely due to rapid changes in weather conditions and climate change. The Executive Director for Environment, Infrastructure & Growth noted that other authorities in the country also experienced the same rise in numbers and emphasised the need for climate adaptation to better respond to changing weather patterns.
5. A Member asked if it would it be necessary to implement special measures such as 'find & fix' pothole repairs considering the increase of road defects from 2022 to 2023.

The Director of Highways and Transport said that in the last four weeks, there had been 2000 defects reported by the public compared to 8000 in the same period in 2023. The Director noted that the Service had become a more resilient force with better capacity.

6. A Member asked how much the Council had spent on pothole payouts. The Director of Highways and Transport said that 2023 had seen a large surge with payouts totalling £171,000 compared to £10,300 in 2022. The Member queried how many claims were refused and asked for the process of claiming to be made clearer to residents on the Council's website. The Director agreed to provide a written response on the number of claims and would feedback the comments on the claims process to the relevant team.
7. A Member asked if there was a team of inspectors inspecting the quality of work done on repairs. The Director of Highways and Transport said that there was a team that did compliance checks on a proportion of repairs who would flag issues with the supplier.
8. A Member noted an incident where residents were told that it would take 6 weeks to fix a felled tree and said that this was not a timely response considering felled trees raised safety issues. The Assistant Director Highways Operations and Infrastructure offered to speak to the Member about the incident.
9. A Member noted that the Highway Team's emergency response was excellent but asked how their capacity was being increased considering the impact climate change would have on the demand of the Service. The Assistant Director Highways Operations and Infrastructure said that there were emergency response plans in place and the Service held meetings regularly with officers and contractors.
10. A Member asked if there were solutions around tree roots damaging pavements. The Assistant Director Highways Operations and Infrastructure said that the Council was investing to clear areas such as tree stumps. The Cabinet Member for Environment noted that the Council had to navigate the line between clearing stumps but also providing good habitats for Surrey wildlife. The Cabinet Member asked for Member support and input in the new Tree Policy.

*Highways routine maintenance improvement (Gullies, pedestrian & cycle routes, lines)*

11. A Member asked how much work had been paid to Ringway when there was work still outstanding. The Director of Highways and Transport said that in the vast majority of cases the contractor was only paid after the work had been completed.
12. A Member noted that Ringway and sub-contractor resource issues were flagged as contributing factors for red performance indicators and asked what the Council could do to resolve those issues. The Assistant Director Highways Operations and Infrastructure noted that issues around the Gullies Cleaning Programme would be resolved in 2024 but the delivery of the lines programme had been challenging but was receiving fortnightly updates for the delivery of that programme. A Member noted that the 85% target for gullies to be free flowing was low. The Assistant Director Highways Operations and Infrastructure said that the intention was to be realistic and that it would be increased to 93%.
13. A Member asked if all the gullies in Surrey were maintained by the Council and that it would be helpful for Councillors to be aware of maintenance timelines. The Assistant Director Highways Operations and Infrastructure said that if a gully was on a public highway, the Council maintained them. Gullies were cleaned every year and every six

months in flood risk areas. The Assistant Director offered to speak to the Member on issues in his division.

14. A Member asked a question on the Signs Maintenance Scheme. The Assistant Director Highways Operations and Infrastructure noted that there were difficulties in installing new signs such as resourcing and the Traffic Sign Manual which meant there had to be consistency across the country.
15. A Member noted that the parking enforcement deployment remained below the 95% target. The Assistant Director Highways Operations and Infrastructure said that NSL, the contractor, was paid for hours deployed and as such, there were incentives for reaching the target number of deployment hours. Past problems had been due to low levels of staff. Surrey now exceeded the average number of parking tickets issued previously by Districts and Boroughs. The Assistant Director said that the Parking Line backlog would be complete by the end of the financial year.
16. A Member said that the target bus passenger journeys was 2 million and asked why that was different from the target for bus patronage. The Strategic Transport Group Manager said that Bus Service Improvement Plan set out targets and was first published in 2021 and updated in May 2023. The Department for Transport had issued a new set of bus guidance and tasked local transport authorities to provide another update in June 2024. The Group Manager offered to send the Committee the number of bus journeys taken in Surrey which was accessible on the County Council website. A Member asked for a written response on the Digital Demand Response Transport service and the Strategic Transport Group Manager agreed.
17. A Member noted that the target for new pedestrian and cycle routes was 5km per annum but asked if that should be more ambitious considering LTP4. The Member also asked if the Council was considering other metrics for measuring active travel. The Strategic Transport Group Manager said that the target was still contextually ambitious due to the standards required in delivering these new schemes. The Local Transport Plan Delivery Plan that was going to be brought to the Committee in July 2024 would include Active Travel metrics.
18. A Member asked for an update on the Local Cycle Walking and Infrastructure Plans. The Strategic Transport Group Manager answered that each District and Borough would have completed a LCWIP by the end of the financial year which meant Surrey would have Countywide coverage. The Manager offered to send a Programme summary to the committee.
19. The Chairman noted that the proportion of waste to landfill had dropped to less than 1%. The Resources and Circular Economy Group Manager explained that waste that had originally gone to landfill was now directed to shredding sites and expressed confidence that the low levels would be maintained.
20. A Member asked if community recycling centres could operate at pre-pandemic levels again. The Resources and Circular Economy Group Manager said that the amount of waste had reduced compared to before by almost 60%. Sites were currently able to handle the amount of waste coming through and were actively trying to recycle as much as possible. A Member queried if as only 1% of waste was going to landfill if it meant that 99% was recycled. The Resources and Circular Economy Group Manager said that recycling wastes in Surrey were about 55% and the rest could be recovering from waste such as waste being composted so the energy value could be recovered. The Member asked for a written summary of waste and recycling handling in Surrey.

21. A Member asked if the Council was on track to meet the target to reduce residual household waste per household by 50% by 2042. The Resources and Circular Economy Group Manager said the first step was actively encouraging residents to use the right bins, encourage recycling and reduce waste in the first place. Legislating and encouraging manufacturers to reduce the amount of packaging or to produce recyclable materials was also important.

#### *Flood risk management*

22. A Member asked if there should be additional metrics to capture the effectiveness of the Council's response particularly to any severe flooding events such as those experienced by residents following Storm Henk in January. The Flood and Climate Resilience Manager noted that the Council recorded 60 properties flooded and 180 externally flooded by Storm Henk. Better measurements could improve management of flood risks, community resilience and planning. An annual impact report would be produced by the end of financial year reporting on delivery of the Flood Risk Management Strategy. This could be brought to the Committee. It was noted that the Council was the Lead Local Flood Authority although responsibility also rested with the Environmental Agency and Districts and Boroughs also had authority for evacuations.
23. A Member asked how the Service was proactively contacting homeowners to clear ditches to reduce road flooding. The Flood and Climate Resilience Manager said that the service had ran media campaigns before winters to remind landowners of their responsibilities. The Service had also worked with residence associations in the past which had been helpful.
24. A Member noted that the report stated that performance around management of enquiries were not being addressed in a timely manner. The Member asked if these issues were being addressed. The Executive Director for Environment, Infrastructure & Growth said that a lot of work was being done to improve customer satisfaction and better integrate the handling of customers. The Highways online reporting tool would be introduced in late 2024. Improvements were underway to improve management of enquiries and trying to anticipate peak demand to be better prepared. The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth said that a focal point was communication and getting things right the first time.
25. A Member asked if the Committee could be sent a simple written response on the different areas of responsibility of the Highways Department as well as a breakdown of spending compared to previous years.
26. Committee Members discussed a set of draft recommendations, including the recommendation that a special public scrutiny session be held on Ringway, to review the performance of the contractor and the Council's performance in managing the contract in light of the problems experienced with roads last year and escalating costs. The Executive Director for Environment, Infrastructure & Growth suggested that a visit to the Ringway depot be arranged instead. The Chairman agreed but reserved the Committee's position, highlighting that a formal scrutiny session may still be required if the informal visit was not satisfactory. The depot visit would provide an opportunity for Ringway to explain its operational challenges and for Members to see the quality assurance that is taking place.

#### **Actions:**

1. The Assistant Director Highways Operations and Infrastructure to hold a conversation with Cllr John Beckett about fallen trees in his division.
2. The Assistant Director Highways Operations and Infrastructure to hold a conversation with Cllr Jan Mason about gulleys in her area.
3. The Assistant Director Strategic Transport to provide a summary report on the Digital Demand Response Transport (DDRT) service including details of passenger journeys to the Committee.
4. The Highways Service/Head of Highways to liaise with the claims team to find out: i) of the claims made how many are paid? ii) what more can be done to ensure the claims process and claims eligibility is made clear to the public through the claims webpage and application process. Feedback on both points to be circulated to Committee members.
5. The Strategic Transport Group Manager to share the LCWIP programme summary with the committee.
6. The Executive Director for Environment, Infrastructure/Head of Highways - to share a plain English Summary of the different areas of responsibility of the Highways Department plus the amount of money being spent this year and next. Focus on promoting positives and providing something that can be shared with residents.

## RESOLVED

That the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee:

1. Welcomes the performance framework and the range of credible and useful KPIs which provide transparency over performance in a number of vital service areas.
2. Notes that it highlights a mixed performance picture with a number of challenges particularly in respect of the number of killed and seriously injured on Surrey roads, the lines programme, bus reliability, and customer/Councilor enquiries.
3. Expresses concern around the efficiency and efficacy of road repairs which is an issue residents care deeply about; and the efficacy of services that have been brought back from the Bs & Ds for example parking enforcement and verge-cutting.
4. Expresses concern about the results of the National Highways & Transport Services Public Satisfaction survey which reports that for overall satisfaction, Surrey is ranked 94<sup>th</sup> out of 111 authorities taking part. Surrey should have an ambition to be in the top quartile.
5. Welcomes increased investment following Task & Finish to deliver improvements in a number of areas including customer experience, the lines programme and gully cleaning; and welcomes plans to publish the gully cleaning programme next year and the new Highways online reporting tool.
6. Requests further work to improve signage on the highways network to improve information to residents; and to publicise mechanisms for residents to report issues and faults.
7. Requests that additional KPIs/metrics be developed in respect of cycling and active travel and a target for reducing the number of car journeys on our roads.

8. Requests scrutiny by this Committee of Climate Change adaptation and flood risk management in light of severe extreme weather and flooding suffered by residents and that this be scheduled by the end of 2024.

*Marissa Heath joined 10:20 AM.*

*Natalie Bramhall left 11:34 AM*

#### **6/24 ADVERTISING & SPONSORSHIP POLICY MOTION [Item 6]**

Witnesses

Lance Spencer, Chairman of the Greener Futures Reference Group

Key discussions:

1. The Chairman of the Greener Futures Reference Group noted that the Group did not endorse the recommendations of officers and recommended that the motion be referred to Cabinet for further consideration and debate.
2. A Member noted that some fossil fuel companies like Shell did offer renewable energy options to consumers.
3. The Cabinet Member for Environment said that fossil fuel companies shifting to greener models should be encouraged and revenue generated could be used for positive change.

*Break at 12:35 meeting resumed at 12:40.*

#### **7/24 MINERAL AND WASTE LOCAL PLAN [Item 7]**

Witnesses

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

Marisa Heath, The Cabinet Member for Environment – *in person*

Katie Stewart, Executive Director for Environment, Infrastructure & Growth

Caroline Smith, Planning Group Manager

Ibrahim Mustafa, Principal Planning policy officer

**Key discussions:**

1. The Chairman noted that there had been 15 potential sites for mineral and waste management sites but only 1 was shortlisted and queried the reason. The Planning Group Manager said that waste management development was seen as a bad neighbour, and it was difficult to find land for future waste management. It was also up to private landowners to see if they would nominate land for waste management.
2. The Chairman asked what results had been found for the nation-wide call for sites at the end of February 2024 and if witnesses anticipated better success than the first call. The Planning Group Manager said that they were expecting more nominations by the end of the month. The success of a call would depend on the quality of nominations and not the number of nominations. The Principal Planning policy officer said that the call for sites were an exercise that was integral to the planning process.
3. A Member asked how Surrey's predicted shortfall in waste management capacity compared to other authorities and if there was any scope to share facilities with

neighbouring counties whose demands may be less. The Planning Group Manager said that other counties in the South East were also experiencing a short fall. 30% of locally collected waste was sent to Kent from Surrey. Surrey must find sufficient capacity for its own waste although some waste may still have to be dealt with out of County.

4. A Member asked for witnesses to expand on how they were proactively looking to identify land suitable for waste management facilities. The Planning Group Manager noted the Service were in discussions with land management authorities, neighbouring waste management authorities and existing facilities in Surrey to discuss potential for expansion.
5. A Member asked to what extent changes in legislation affected biodiversity. The Planning Group Manager noted that as of the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 2024 it was a requirement for sites to have a 10% biodiversity net gain. Many mineral sites were restored to an even better quality than when it was first implemented. The Manager was confident the Council would exceed the expectation of 10%.
6. A Member asked if there were any external factors that would present a challenge of the development of Mineral and Waste Local Plans. The Planning Group Manager identified Government wide management policies, reviews of the Surrey Hills national landscape and Environmental Impact Assessments as external factors.
7. A Member asked what the implications of the Gatwick incinerator closure would be and what additional pressure this would put on waste facility capacities. The Planning Group Manager said original expansion plan had an expansion of the incinerator, but this had now been scrapped and but was unsure of the scale of impact this would have.
8. A Member asked if Councillors would be alerted to new sites coming to their divisions. The Planning Group Manager said that Members would absolutely be aware when sites were nominated in their areas. New sites would be considered against a long list of impacts and new facilities would be state of the art and expected to comply with planning permission. The Principal Planning policy officer directed Members to the area of report that outlined Member engagement.
9. A Member asked witnesses how confident they were in reaching the revised timetable of the public consultation by June 2025 and how many suitable sites were needed to proceed with the consultation. The Planning Group Manager answered that under the current framework, the Service was confident in reaching the 2025 plan. The exact number of sites would depend on their individual capacity. This would be determined after the call for sites had ended and sites and their capacity were reviewed.
10. A Member asked what the impact of further delays had been to the development of MWLPs. The Planning Group Manager said that the Service was confident in the level of impact and that the plan would be extended until the end of 2026.
11. A Member asked about the possibility of oil and gas extraction sites. The Planning Group Manager said oil and gas licences were issued by the North Sea Transitional Authorities and the Council did not have control over them but would expect applications to comply with national framework.
12. A Member asked how consultations and engagement events were planned for specified site options and if the Service would engage Members during the consultation. The Principal Planning policy officer said that specific consultations and



events were planned in each District and Borough. They would be in person events and have Q&As with possibilities of online feedback too.

*Marissa Heath left at 12:51.*

## **RESOLVED**

That the Communities Environment and Highways Select Committee:

- I. Notes with concern the ongoing difficulty in identifying suitable land for waste management facilities to bridge the forecast capacity gap in Surrey beyond 2035 and the further additional 'call for sites' underway and applauds the efforts that are being made.
- II. Urges the Service to prioritise proactive discussions with Surrey's LPAs and other partners to identify suitable land and/or alternative ways of increasing capacity at existing suitable sites through expansion, diversification or improvement or use of facilities in neighbouring counties.
- III. Commends the project management approach and the detailed communication and engagement plans which include steps to keep members fully informed during the preferred options consultation; and invites officers to provide an update to the Committee at an appropriate time.

## **8/24 CABINET RESPONSES TO COMMITTEE REPORT ON ROAD SAFETY & SFRS [Item 8]**

### **Key discussions:**

1. The Chairman noted that two Reports had been submitted to Cabinet outlining the Committee's recommendations in relation to Road Safety and Surrey Fire and Rescue Service improvements. Formal Cabinet responses had been provided. In its report the Committee had highlighted the need for appropriate funding of new Road Safety Strategy initiatives and the accessibility of public consultations on 20mph speed limits. The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth thanked the Select Committee for its input on the issue. Cabinet had agreed with most of the Committee's recommendations.

## **9/24 RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 9]**

### **Key discussion**

1. The Chairman noted that the Committee held a constructive private session with water utility companies in January and thanked the Executive Director for Environment, Infrastructure & Growth for her work.
2. A Member asked if there would be new bus services planned in the next year. The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth said that the whole of Surrey would have a DDRT option from September 2024. A Member asked if an interim report on DDRT could come to the Committee in April. The Executive Director for Environment, Infrastructure & Growth agreed.

3. A Member asked for a written update on the rollout of electric vehicle and on-street charging infrastructure ahead of the April Select Committee date. The Executive Director for Environment, Infrastructure & Growth agreed that something could be provided in April as part of the LTP4 item.

Actions:

1. EIG Directorate to organise a Ringway depot site Visit for the Committee.
2. The Infrastructure & Major Projects Group Manager to provide a written update on the rollout of EV and on-street charging infrastructure ahead of the April Select Committee date. [Annex to the Local Transport Plan 4].
3. Update on DDRT to be provided to the Committee in April.

**10/24 GREENER FUTURES REFERENCE GROUP MEMBERSHIP [Item 10]**

Key discussions

1. The Chairman of the Greener Futures Reference Group invited Members of the Committee to nominate themselves to the group. Cllr Weerasinghe volunteered to join.

**11/24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 11]**

The next meeting to be held on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April 2024.

*Meeting ended at 13:34*