

MINUTES of the meeting of the **COMMUNITIES, ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 15 October 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 Tuesday, 15 October 2024.

Elected Members:

	Keith Witham (Chairman)
v	Mark Sugden (Vice-Chairman)
*	Lance Spencer (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair)
*	Cameron McIntosh
v	Stephen Cooksey
*	Catherine Baart
*	Andy MacLeod
*	Jan Mason
	John Beckett
	Liz Bowes
*	Richard Tear
*	Buddhi Weerasinghe
*	Luke Bennett
*	present
v	present, virtual

34/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Beckett, Liz Bowes and Keith Witham (Committee Chairman).

35/24 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS: 17 JULY 2024 [Item 2]

The Committee **AGREED** the minutes from the previous meeting as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

36/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

None received.

37/24 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

There was one question received from a member of the public and two received from Members of the Council, in writing, prior to the Committee meeting. The questions and answers were provided in the supplementary agenda circulated at the meeting.

Councillor Andy MacLeod, on behalf of Councillor Catherine Powell, asked a supplementary question.

“Part 3 of my questions related to how residents will be able to manage their exemptions online, it is obviously important that the school street works in terms of protecting children walking and cycling

to school. However, it is also important that whichever IT system Surrey County Council (SCC) determines to operate also works for residents and is efficient and effective for SCC/NSL to manage. The answer to the question does not commit to the system having a web portal that residents can use to manage their number plates and advises that documentation will need to be provided for each vehicle confirming it is registered to their address. This will require Officer intervention and will also reduce the flexibility for residents, for example those that need carers to visit them multiple times a day to help with their care. Please can officers look again at providing a system that will allow residents the flexibility to manage their own number plates without Officer intervention, the number of plates will obviously need to be limited to ensure school street will work and if abuse of the system occurs then clearly additional checks and balances will need to be introduced. I do however firmly believe we should start from a position of trusting are residents to behave in a reasonable manner.”

In reply, Duncan Knox, Road Safety & Sustainable Scheme Travel Team Manager, said that SCC had been committed to making a system that would be easy for residents to use when registering vehicles. While it could not be said what the system would look like, it would most likely be like what other local authorities used. This could be a web portal allowing for the selection of property and uploading of vehicle and street data. NSL, the Council's enforcement agent already manages similar systems in other areas. The system would likely include options for registering exemptions as well, which would still need officer intervention to verify documents.

38/24 CLIMATE CHANGE DELIVERY PLAN ANNUAL UPDATE [Item 5]

Witnesses:

- Marissa Heath, Cabinet Member for Environment
- Simon Crowther, Executive Director - Environment, Property & Growth
- Carolyn McKenzie, Director for Environment
- Katie Sargent, Greener Futures Group Manager
- Cat Halter, Climate Change Strategic Lead
- Paul Millin, Strategic Transport Group Manager

Key points made in the discussion:

1. The Chair asked which areas of performance caused the greatest concern. In reply, the Greener Futures Group Manager explained that, although they had used grants to support decarbonisation, upcoming projects would be harder and more expensive, and that funding was the biggest challenge moving forward.
2. The Chair asked about the potential job opportunities in Surrey as the county transitioned to a green economy and tackled climate change. In reply, the Climate Change Strategic Lead noted that job prospects in Surrey's green economy were very good, with 23% more green jobs than the UK average and an expected annual growth rate of 8% until 2030. She also mentioned the potential for SCC to focus on green tech innovation.

3. A Member asked whether the external funding was costing or saving money in the long term. In reply, the Greener Futures Group Manager explained that grant funding covered 20–25% of the scheme costs, and there was a shift towards using the Facilities Management (FM) budget for financing. She noted that while not all measures might fully pay back, they contributed to revenue and savings.
4. A Member asked if the funding of £4.7 million is a one-time amount or if it is provided per year, whether the funding could be expected to continue, and if there would be a penalty if SCC did not meet the target. In reply, the Greener Futures Group Manager stated that funding was for decarbonisation over a two-year period. While they have been successful in applying for funding, future opportunities are uncertain. She further clarified that if SCC do not meet the decarbonisation goal, they will need to find ways to offset the shortfall, which could be costly. The Cabinet Member noted that offsetting could be seen as a penalty and emphasized the need to consider its costs versus achieving net-zero.
5. A Member asked how the skills gap, particularly regarding upskilling professionals, is being addressed and the potential to upskill local authority building control staff to enhance sustainability. In reply, the Climate Change Strategic Lead described efforts to help workers shift to low carbon technologies like heat pumps, noting a successful funding bid of £2 million secured for subsidized training that provided around 500 placements. Although there had been no specific upskilling for building control staff, guidance on low carbon planning policies was developed to help local boroughs meet national standards.
6. A Member asked, in relation to Green Flag status, how does the County stand in relation to other parts of the country, is SCC exceptional, and is SCC achieving well in terms of progress. In reply, the Cabinet Member said the County ranked higher with 98 schools, with the next closest authority being 69 schools. The Climate Change Strategic Lead added that she worked with 99 local authorities to support eco schools and were making progress in achieving environmental outcomes.
7. A Member asked about the methods used to measure the impact of cycle and walking training in schools, specifically in relation to how this training affects the way pupils travel to school afterwards. The Strategic Transport Group Manager explained that relevant programmes promoted independence and safety. He noted that they tracked changes in students' transportation habits informally. The training targeted various age groups and involved parents and schools for feedback and recording.
8. A Member asked if the Council is making meaningful progress in increasing the mileage of cycleways and walkways and is there a noticeable benefit in traffic reduction because of these developments considering these programs for children. The Strategic Transport Group Manager said that highway

improvement plans often added walking and cycling features, especially for safety near schools. He offered to share a map of projects to the Committee.

9. A Member asked if SCC is still on target to install 10,000 EV charging points by 2030. The Cabinet Member highlighted the need for more accessible charging options. She confirmed that various stakeholders were working toward the 10,000 charging points, with the Council responsible for 2,500 and on track to meet this goal. However, she worried that slowing EV sales, influenced by vehicle demand and budget decisions, could affect progress. The Climate Change Strategic Lead explained that the target came from a report estimating the public charging points needed in Surrey by 2030, with half on private land and others in car parks. The program also aimed for 2,000 on-street charging points by 2028.
10. A Member asked whether the delays in installing electric vehicle charging points were due to the Council or the supplier. The Cabinet Member replied that the slow progress was linked to existing legislation that complicated installations on public land, and she noted that the government aimed to simplify the rules. The Climate Change Strategic Lead explained that the legislation had not originally planned for electric charge points on public land, but the current approach was in response to resident feedback, with acceptance rising from 50% to 75%, and enabling more efficient installations.
11. A Member asked how we can determine the number of installed EV charging points that are underutilized, as well as how many of these points are currently operational or not operational. In reply, the Cabinet Member reported that the number of charging points grew from 6 to 196 since 2020, with 486 more planned and 500 scheduled for next year. The Climate Change Strategic Lead noted that usage more than doubled in the last 15 months. She would send related data to the Committee for review.
12. A Member asked how the Council is addressing the carbon footprint of its transport fleet, given that there is no direct budget for the EV charging on the Council estate. In reply, the Greener Futures Group Manager explained that fleet emissions made up about 6% of total emissions and were part of the goal to reduce carbon by 2030. However, progress was slow because there was not enough infrastructure for electric vehicle charging.
13. A Member asked if officers believed that the Council had a compelling engagement plan to implement the reported Engagement Strategy. In reply, the Climate Change Strategic Lead said the Greener Future initiative's Engagement Plan was strong and could succeed if fully implemented. She noted the challenge of scaling efforts with fewer resources and need for targeted actions.
14. A Member asked what resources the Council plans to allocate to volunteering and engagement plans in the future and whether the volunteering network is expected to become self-sustaining in the future. In reply, the Cabinet Member said that they had five staff

members working on engagement. She explained that they were creating a plan for environmental volunteering to make opportunities clearer. The Climate Change Strategic Lead added that several projects had been started as part of these opportunities. She was unsure if the volunteering networks could support themselves, but she pointed out the need for a framework and future planning for them.

15. A Member asked about the funding sources for the Together for Surrey project, wondering if it came mainly from the University of Surrey or the Council, and if there was a risk of losing funding as the project progressed. The Climate Change Strategic Lead confirmed that funding for the Together for Surrey project was secured, with money from SCC and support from the University of Surrey. The project was planned to run for four years.
16. A Member asked about the involvement of parish councils in local environmental initiatives, specifically regarding net zero and decarbonization efforts. The Climate Change Strategic Lead explained that the team worked with six parishes to resolve challenges in starting local climate action, such as lack of knowledge and limited engagement with the public. The project will now help six to eight parishes create climate plans, build skills, and share knowledge through a peer network. A toolkit would also be introduced at the South Conference in November 2024.
17. The Chair asked if the officers could suggest recommendations that the Committee could make that would help the Service stay on track. The Cabinet Member suggested the Select Committee's support in reaffirming the commitment to the 2030 net zero goals. She urged the Committee to advocate for increased government support and address funding issues while promoting clarity in solar energy projects to identify weaknesses in their strategy. She emphasized the challenges faced by districts and boroughs and called for a collective approach to ensure success. The Director for Environment supported bringing the five-year plan forward and supported discussion within the Council to integrate net zero goals across all Departments, highlighting the need for a coordinated approach to community and growth plans.
18. A Member asked about the alignment of the new facilities contractor's low carbon ambitions with those of the Council. The Greener Futures Group Manager said that the procurement process for the new provider intentionally embedded the Council's net zero requirements into the service specifications and key performance indicators (KPIs).
19. A Member asked about the apparent increase in carbon emissions from electricity consumption despite the Council being on a renewable tariff. The Climate Change Strategic Lead explained that renewable tariffs could not count in greenhouse gas reports unless connected to renewable sources, which is why carbon emissions stayed high.

20. A Member asked about the plan for addressing the reduction in resources for green skills in the Service amid the recruitment freeze. The Climate Change Strategic Lead responded that, although the dedicated Green Skills Officer role ended due to funding constraints, the team established a strong foundation, and the focus shifted to integrating green skills into the future economic growth strategy.

Conclusion:

RESOLVED, that the Communities Environment and Highways Select Committee,

1. Welcomes the framework that facilitates the Council to remain on track with the 2030 and 2050 net zero carbon targets.
2. Requests that the Cabinet reconfirms the commitment to the targets for 2030 and 2050.
3. Encourages the Cabinet to secure more resources from central government to meet these targets.
4. Considers that engaging children and young people in green initiatives is crucial and recognises the high performance by Surrey in its schools' engagement.
5. Recommends continued work with parish councils, volunteers and engagement with the public.
6. Requests that the Cabinet brings forward the second five-year Climate Change Plan and delivers a draft by mid-2025.
7. Recommends that the Council supports the Department with funding and takes a whole Council approach that integrates green targets across all services; this includes cycleways and walkways.

Actions and requests for further information:

- Climate Change Strategic Lead: Provide data on the number of installed EV charge points, how many are currently underutilised, and how many are non-operational.
- Strategic Transport Group Manager: Provide an update the Local Cycling & Walking Implementation Plans.

39/24 SURREY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE RESPONSE TO THE GRENFELL TOWER PHASE TWO REPORT [Item 6]

Witnesses:

- Kevin Deanus, Cabinet Member for Fire and Rescue, and Resilience
- Dan Quin, Chief Fire Officer – Surrey Fire and Rescue Service
- Lee Spencer-Smith, Area Commander for Protection – Surrey Fire and Rescue Service

Key points made in the discussion:

1. A Member asked about the risks of not pursuing enforcement actions regarding the high-risk residential buildings, the legal advice that indicated enforcement would likely be unsuccessful, and the implications of this. The Chief Fire Officer explained that only 7 of the high-rise residential buildings in Surrey needed mitigation measures, which were already in place. He explained that it was the Responsible Persons (RP) role to ensure those measures worked well. The Chief Fire Officer added that the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) inspected the buildings and confirmed that the mitigation measures met the required standards.
2. A Member asked if the 263 mid-rise buildings in the County were safe, the timeframe for addressing potential fire risks in the 14 flagged buildings and questioned the actions to be taken if building owners did not respond regarding the cladding issues. The Chief Fire Officer explained that inspections began prior to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 2 report/findings. Fourteen buildings were identified for further investigation due to concerns about their external wall systems. The Area Commander for Protection noted that under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the 'RP' must ensure fire safety. He added that SFRS would continue to work with premises and offer advice and, where necessary, issue notices to ensure compliance before considering other enforcement options.
3. A Member asked a supplementary question about what powers the fire authority holds if property owners choose to ignore their advice. The Area Commander for Protection said that the authority has enforcement powers under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order. This means they can issue notices which require premises to notify the enforcing authority of any proposed changes which may increase risk to their premises and in serious cases can prohibit or restrict the use of unsafe buildings. He mentioned that this Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 applies to most buildings/workplaces in England, except single private dwellings (homes), but covers common areas in premises where there are 2 or more private dwellings like high-rises. The Chief Fire Officer added that the fire and rescue authority uses its full suite of powers to enforce the law when necessary.
4. The Chair asked about the implications of creating a single regulator for the construction industry, including its potential advantages, disadvantages, and risks to stakeholders during the development process. The Chief Fire Officer stressed that this was a heavily caveated opinion and the difficulty of creating a new regulator for the construction sector, noting the benefits of a consistent regulatory approach across England while also cautioning against potential losses in local oversight and context. He assured the Committee that current regulatory activities will persist until changed, with the possibility of safety improvements as new measures are integrated.

5. A Member asked about the gap between building regulations and guidance, and what could be done about it. The Area Commander for Protection responded that clarity in the regulatory framework is essential and that SFRS is consulted primarily under Approved Document B. He emphasized the importance of distinguishing between building regulations requirements and the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order in consultations and welcomed any improvements in clarity to enhance compliance.
6. A Member asked whether the suggestion to have building control managed by a national body is supported by SFRS. The Chief Fire Officer explained this was a heavily caveated opinion and that building control is currently handled by local boroughs and that they are involved in the process. He noted that a national body could provide consistency but might lose local understanding.
7. A Member asked a supplementary question about whether independent bodies rely solely on SFRS for fire safety assessments. The Chief Fire Officer stated that these bodies should not depend entirely on SFRS and emphasised the need for a more robust approach to ensuring that individuals involved have the appropriate qualifications and skills.
8. A Member asked if SFRS could provide feedback to the Committee after the Local Resilience Forum met on 3 October 2024, to discuss the Grenfell Tower Inquiry report recommendations. The Chief Fire Officer, in his role as Local Resilience Forum Chair, said that the Local Resilience Forum had met and an agenda item was to discuss the Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase Two report and the need to share individual agency action plans. All agencies agreed to review the recommendations, especially Volume 7, which focused on local authorities. They planned to report their findings at a future Local Resilience Forum Executive meeting.
9. A Member asked whether there were any concerns regarding the tenant management organisations running buildings in Surrey and if those concerns had been flagged. The Area Commander for Protection stated that they would continue to engage with the RP under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, which could be the owner, leaseholder, or tenant management agencies, to ensure they were communicating with the right people.
10. A Member asked whether improvements have been made in communication practices between SFRS and other emergency services considering the criticisms highlighted in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase Two report. The Chief Fire Officer acknowledged the concerns and outlined measures already in place. He emphasized the need for training to make informed decisions and highlighted a recent mutual aid agreement among boroughs, districts and SCC to formalise incident support mechanisms.
11. A Member asked whether SFRS had ensured that the Crisis Management Plan was simple, easy to read, and accessible to everyone who needed it in emergency situations. The Chief Fire

Officer confirmed that the Local Resilience Forum has a single and joint Emergency Response Plan, that all agencies are familiar with and have access to via a secure portal. The design of the plan is such that it is easy to refer to, split into two key parts.

12. A Member asked whether SFRS is checking and managing the ventilation systems in buildings. The Chief Fire Officer responded that it is the RPs responsibility to ensure that the ventilation systems (used for smoke extraction) are properly managed and functioning, and that these would be reviewed as part of the fire safety inspections; he emphasised the importance of management roles for RPs, occupiers, Fire Safety Inspectors and operational staff in maintaining fire safety measures.

Conclusion:

RESOLVED, that the Communities Environment and Highways Select Committee,

1. Welcomes the work done by SFRS in preparing its current response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase Two Report.
2. Recognises the key role that SFRS plays in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Surrey's residents, including utilising the full range of powers to ensure that buildings are maintained to a safe standard.
3. Recommends that SFRS provides a further update once its thinking is finalised on recommendations arising from the Grenfell Tower inquiry in 2025.
4. Strongly supports the use of an independent panel with regard to Building Control (SFRS supports the National Fire Chiefs' Council's approach with regard to this initiative); and the Committee would like the Cabinet to pursue this panel by approaching central government through the appropriate process.

**40/24 CABINET RESPONSE TO SELECT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS
[Item 7]**

The Chair invited the Committee to review the response to the July 2024 Select Committee report and recommendations on the New Draft Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy and 20 mph Speed Limit Policy.

1. A Member asked about the Cabinet's response, focusing on paragraph 5 and the discussions about funding for road safety programs like Vision Zero and 20 mph speed limits. He wanted to know when more details would be available and stressed the need for clear funding. Paul Millin, the Strategic Transport Group Manager, said that the Select Committee had reviewed Vision Zero, and it was part of the ongoing budget talks. The Council aimed to cut deaths and serious injuries by 50% by 2035, requiring enough funding for safety projects. Recent budgets included £3 million each for school road safety and speeding control.

The Committee **NOTED** the Cabinet response to recommendations.

**41/24 RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
[Item 8]**

The Chair invited the committee to review the progress and updates related to the actions and recommendations tracker and forward work programme.

The Committee **NOTED** the action and recommendation tracker and the forward work programme.

42/24 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING: 5 DECEMBER 2024 [Item 9]

The Committee **NOTED** its next meeting would be held on 5 December 2024.

Meeting ended at: 12.14 pm

Chair