

Environment Select Committee

MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 7 SEPTEMBER 2021 AT ONLINE MEETING.

Present:

Cllr Jerry Kunkler (Chair), Cllr Bob Jones MBE (Vice-Chair), Cllr Paul Sample JP, Cllr Tony Jackson, Cllr Mel Jacob, Cllr Dr Brian Mathew, Cllr Charles McGrath, Cllr Ian McLennan, Cllr Dr Nick Murry, Cllr Bill Parks, Cllr Rich Rogers and Cllr James Sheppard

Also Present:

Cllr Chuck Berry, Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Dr Mark McClelland and Cllr Graham Wright

47 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Ian Wallis.

48 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Resolved:

The minutes of the Environment Select Committee meetings held on 15 June 2021 and 14 July 2021 were approved and would be signed at a future meeting.

49 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

50 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman announced that In July 2021, Full Council approved the following changes to this Committee's membership:

- Cllr Mary Webb and Cllr Liz Alstrom were removed from the Committee's membership and replaced by Cllr James Sheppard and Cllr Mel Jacobs.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Webb and Cllr Alstrom for their contribution to this committee's work and welcomed Cllr Sheppard and Cllr Jacobs to the Committee.

51 **Public Participation**

The Chairman explained the rules of public participation and acknowledged a request to speak had been received from Colin Gale, on behalf of the Pewsey Community Area Partnership, in relation to the Future Bus Strategy report being considered later in the agenda.

The Chairman confirmed that the question would be deferred until the agenda item was being considered by the Select Committee.

52 **Future Bus Strategy - Connected Wiltshire**

The Select Committee considered a report of Jess Gibbons, Director for Communities and Neighbourhood Services which provided detail about a National Bus Strategy for England, and associated funding, aimed at improving and increasing bus usage.

The Select Committee receive a request from Colin Gale, on behalf of the Pewsey Community Area Partnership, to speak on the Strategy. The Chairman welcomed Colin to the meeting and asked him to speak. The Select Committee noted that PCAP welcomed the restoration of the Pewsey area bus service. Their main concern centred around the £1.2m funding available and the potential for limited improvements to the service, and a request for detail surrounding the allocation of costs of the call centre. Cllr Dr Mark McClelland, Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste, Street Scene and Flooding and James Salter, Head of Passenger Transport confirmed that additional funding was available and that it was the intention of the proposals that the bus operator would be responsible for the costs of the call centre.

Cllr Dr Mark McClelland introduced the report and explained that the Strategy for England is a central government policy aimed at improving and increasing bus usage. It required Local Transport Authorities to work in legal partnership with local bus operators to achieve this growth. It was noted that the Council had successfully bid for £1.2m to enhance the demand responsive bus network in the Pewsey Vale.

Cllr Dr Mark McClelland and Head of Passenger Transport responded to a number of questions and comments from the Select Committee which included the following areas:

- The use of electric buses to achieve the key objective of carbon reduction. It was noted that the larger bus companies had committed to coming on board with the use of electric buses in the future. Long term plans were emerging, and a number of bus groups had committed to not purchasing diesel powered buses in the future. One challenge included the distances travelled by electric buses, especially in Wiltshire and its rural landscape.

- Potential for initial free bus travel to encourage greater use of the service. The Select Committee noted that this would be included in the marketing and ticketing of the service.
- Possible issues with the early termination of the of the Rural Mobility Fund contract. It was noted that the current contract contained a 3-month termination clause which the current provider had accepted.
- The Rural Mobility Fund was a hybrid model and a long term strategy. Fares and timetabling were dependant on the needs of the community.
- The use of alternative vehicles to buses in more rural areas, for instance taxis and minibuses, to meet transport needs. Flexible approaches would need to be considered further although some schemes were currently in operation, for instance, a route from West Ashton into Trowbridge.
- Park and Ride Schemes in Salisbury would be reviewed alongside the Parking Strategy.
- Use of empty sites as transport hubs to include EV charging stations. It was noted that a joined-up approach was necessary for all modes of transport and Cabinet would be considering the Council's EV Charging Strategy in October 2021.
- There was a decline in the number of bus passengers of 1%-2% year on year.

Resolved: To note:

- 1. the intention for Cabinet to agree the Subsidised Bus Service Fund be committed as defined in the table in paragraph 21.**
- 2. the progress on the Rural Mobility Fund (RMF) project and that a further progress report will be submitted in the future.**
- 3. the emerging ambitions outlined in the Wiltshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), which will form the backbone of our future Bus strategy – Connected Wiltshire – and is to be submitted to the Department for Transport by 31 October.**

53 Community Area Transport Groups (CATG) Review

The Select Committee received a report of the Director of Highways and Waste which reviewed the operation of the Community Area Transport Groups (CATG) that have now been operating since 2011.

The Chairman and Cllr Dr Mark McClelland, Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste, Street Scene and Flooding, suggested that as the data provided in the report related to information gathered in January 2020, prior to COVID and the election of new Councillors and Cabinet, that the consultation exercise should

be repeated in order for the Select Committee to be satisfied that consideration was being given to the most accurate data possible.

In supporting the above proposal, the Select Committee also suggested that the report could include how CATG funding links into the draft Business Plan, whether CATG schemes could give an emphasis on carbon neutral delivery, consideration to an increase in CATG funding, and the potential for CIL funds to be included in the CATG budget.

Resolved:

To note the information provided and to receive a more up-to-date report at a future meeting of the Select Committee.

54 **Wiltshire Council Draft Business Plan 2021-31**

The Select Committee received a verbal update on the Council's draft Business Plan 2021-2031 from Cllr Richard Clewer, Leader of the Council, and Cabinet Member for MCI, Economic Development, Heritage, Arts, Tourism, and Health & Wellbeing.

Cllr Clewer reported that the draft Business Plan was in the process of preparing the plan and will be available for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 21 September 2021. The draft Business Plan will contain the priorities of the administration in relative detail, with delivery plans updated accordingly, all backed up with measurable plans which will be monitored on a regular basis. The Draft Business Plan will then be considered by Cabinet on 27 September 2021 and Full Council on 19 October 2021.

The Select Committee noted that arrangements could be made for an informal meeting to consider the draft Business Plan further if needed.

Resolved:

To note the update on the Business Plan development process and the timescale for Overview and Scrutiny's input.

55 **Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group**

The Select Committee received a report from the Senior Scrutiny Officer, Simon Bennett, which provided an update of the activities of the Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group since May 2021.

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Graham Wright, Chairman of the Task Group, who introduced the report.

Cllr Wright commented on the Task Group's new membership agreed in July 2021, the 5 priorities, including the Local Plan Review, the work being undertaken alongside, and support offered to the Select Committee in achieving its priorities and working with all Councillors especially the Area Board Leads on climate change. Cllr Wright responded to a number of questions and comments from the Select Committee which included the following areas:

- The influence of the Task Group on future Local Plan strategy. It was noted that the Task Group's Terms of Reference allowed them to develop recommendations for other Committees to approve and implement. Discussions about influencing the Local Plan would be held outside of this meeting.
- The Environment Select Committee would be asked to consider and approve any recommendations from the Task Group and ensure their implementation through the normal Committee process.
- Ensuring competing strategies link up with the overall aims of the Council in relation to climate change. Cllr Wright confirmed that the Task Group worked very closely with the Climate Team and reassured the Select Committee of the links between the Climate Strategy and other Council Strategies including the Blue and Green, and the Local Plan.
- Details about a strategy for walking and cycling would be discussed after the Select Committee meeting.
- The Task Group would be considering the connection between business and industry and farming in Wiltshire.

The Select Committee also received an update from Cllr Richard Clewer, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for MCI, Economic Development, Heritage, Arts, Tourism, and Health & Wellbeing, and Cllr Botterill, Cabinet Member for Development Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change. Members were reminded that 75% of Wiltshire residents lived in a defined rural area with 50% living in villages. This demographic provided challenges when considering the modes of transport relevant to these areas. The Leader acknowledged that farming was an important element which was being driven nationally. Long term sustainable plans were expected from the government to enable Wiltshire to decarbonise, alongside the provision of appropriate assistance.

Resolved:

- 1. To note the update on Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group activity provided.**
- 2. To note that the following councillors have been appointed to the Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group:**

- Cllr Clare Cape
- Cllr Sarah Gibson
- Cllr Tony Jackson
- Cllr Jacqui Lay
- Cllr Brian Mathew
- Cllr Nick Murry
- Cllr David Vigar
- Cllr Ian Wallis
- Cllr Graham Wright (Chairman)

56 **Forward Work Programme**

The Select Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

Resolved:

To note the Forward Work Programme.

57 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

58 **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Environment Select Committee will take place at 10:30pm on Tuesday 9 November 2021.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.15 pm)

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