

Communities, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee

10 June 2022 – At a meeting of the Communities, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee held at 10.30 am at County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ.

Present: Cllr Britton (Chairman)

Cllr Oakley
Cllr Ali
Cllr Baldwin

Cllr Greenway
Cllr Kenyon
Cllr Oxlade

Cllr Patel
Cllr Baxter
Cllr Burgess

Apologies were received from Cllr Albury, Cllr Milne, Cllr Oppler and Cllr Quinn

Also in attendance: Cllr J Dennis

1. Election of Chairman

1.1 Cllr Britton was proposed for the position of Chairman for one year by Cllr Patel and seconded by Cllr Greenway.

1.2 Resolved – that Cllr Britton is duly elected as Chairman of the Communities, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee for a period of one year.

2. Election of Vice-Chairman

2.1 Cllr Oakley was proposed for the position of Vice-chairman for one year by Cllr Baldwin and seconded by Cllr Britton.

2.2 Resolved – that Cllr Oakley is duly elected as Vice-Chairman of the Communities, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee for a period of one year.

3. Business Planning Group

3.1 Resolved – that the Committee appoints the following members to its Business Planning Group: Cllr Britton, Cllr Oakley, Cllr Kenyon, Cllr Milne and Cllr Oxlade.

4. Declarations of Interest

4.1 In accordance with the County Council's code of conduct, the following declarations of interest were made:

- Cllr Ali declared a personal interest as a member of Crawley Borough Council under the Integrated Parking Strategy item.
- Cllr Baldwin declared a personal interest as a member of Horsham District Council.

- Cllr Burgess declared personal interest as a member of Crawley Borough Council.
- Cllr Oakley declared a personal interest as a member of Chichester District Council under the Integrated Parking Strategy item.
- Cllr Oxlade declared a personal interest as an employee of the Manor Royal Business Bid under the Integrated Parking Strategy item.

5. Urgent Matters

5.1 No urgent matters were raised.

6. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee

6.1 The Committee were asked to agree the minutes of the meetings held on 24 February and 2 March 2022.

6.2 With regard to the minutes of 24 February 2022, comment was made on paragraph 48.2, first bullet point, that the words "should be industry led" were ambiguous.

6.3 Resolved – that the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 24 February 2022 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

6.4 With regard to the minutes of 2 March 2022, paragraph 55.2, second bullet point, it was agreed to add "and conditions are complied with" after "forward for use".

6.5 Resolved – that the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 2 March 2022 be approved as a correct record with the addition of the point raised under 6.4 above and signed by the Chairman.

7. Responses to Recommendations

7.1 The Committee noted the response to recommendations made at the meetings on 24 February and 2 March 2022.

7.2 Concern was raised on the following items:

7.3 Page 26, West Sussex Transport Plan, first point on the cycling network as to whether the County Council really were joining up cycle lanes.

7.4 Minute number 54.5, of the minutes of the meeting on 2 March 2022, recommendation 2, that there had been no response from the Cabinet Member. It was asked that this be followed up with the Cabinet Member.

7.5 West Sussex Transport Plan, Page 27, last paragraph, the question was raised under what circumstances would the County Council support new road building?

8. Integrated Parking Strategy

8.1 The Parking Manager, Mr Davy, talked the Committee through a presentation on the Integrated Parking Strategy (IPS) review (appended to the signed minutes). As the Highway Authority for West Sussex, the County Council has an IPS that sets out its approach to managing parking. This mainly includes the management and enforcement of on-street parking controls and regulations but also sets out the County Council's view and role in off-street parking provision, primarily provided by district and borough councils, as well as how its approach to parking management relates to other policies and strategies. The IPS was last updated in 2014 and this latest review, covering the period from 2022 to 2027, seeks to ensure that the County Council's approach to managing parking remains appropriate and effective.

8.2 The Committee thanked officers for the report and were asked to scrutinise the report and draft IPS, to ensure it contained the right aims and objectives, and was appropriate and achievable. A summary the questions raised by the Committee and answers follows.

8.3 The Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee had fed back that parking restrictions in town centres were impacting businesses. Problems with **loading and unloading** and easy access were affecting trading, particularly in Worthing, during what was already a challenging time for businesses. It was asked that consideration be given to a permit parking scheme for independent traders in town centres and shopping parades. Mr Davy agreed to discuss the issue directly with County Councillors in Worthing as well as share information with the Committee on a new Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) policy, which sets out how requests can be made to change existing schemes.

8.4 A number of issues were raised in relation to **footway and verge parking**, particularly that rural areas needed to be considered differently to urban areas. In response, Mr Davy outlined the current approach of the County Council and the alternative policy options that were being discussed at a national level. Mr Davy agreed to share a position paper with the Committee and update Members as soon as there was any further information from the Department for Transport (DfT). It was requested that should there be an update from the DfT on the alternative options, Members have an opportunity to consider this. It was noted that the IPS referred to the use of physical barriers to deter footway and verge parking at particular locations, and this could be an option open to the County Council in the future, particularly where there is a risk to life.

8.5 It was also hoped that the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process for proposing new waiting restrictions would be a quicker process in the future, as this was still the most appropriate way of dealing with footway parking issues. It was noted that responsibility for determining whether an obstruction exists currently lies with the Police.

8.6 Members reported that feedback from Arun District Council was that they did not have a sufficient number of officers to enforce all-day parking restrictions in Bognor Regis. Mr Davy reported that the **enforcement services** delivered by district and borough partners were monitored by the County Council, including the number of hours that Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) were deployed and how many Penalty Charge Notices were being issued. Mr Davy said he would investigate the matter with Arun District Council and asked that Members let him know of any specific areas where enforcement was not perceived to be meeting the expected standard. Other enforcement options such as CCTV, camera vehicles, automatic number plate recognition, etc, could be an option in the future. Members were keen to know what resources might be available for cameras and maintenance and would seek for them to be prioritised around schools. Mr Davy agreed to update Members if/when plans progressed.

8.7 The Committee members were supportive of **park and ride** facilities but requested more information on what support might be available in financial and partnership terms.

8.8 Members felt it essential that all **planning permissions** for new residential and business developments should consider very carefully road width and parking, particularly the impact on surrounding areas. There were examples of residential areas in Crawley where, in the evenings, many business vehicles were being parked on grass verges, causing damage and obstruction. Mr Davy acknowledged that overnight parking was a problem in many residential areas and highlighted that some options were available to the County Council such as TROs that applied later into the evening and verge hardening measures. Mr Davy agreed to share information on potential parking studies in Crawley. Members were keen to see the wider parking impacts of new developments to be considered as part of the planning permission process and reflected in County Council planning policies.

8.9 With regards to the reporting of **defective on-street parking signs and lines**, Mr Davy confirmed that Members and members of the public can do this via the parking pages on the relevant district/borough council website. Mr Davy added that rather than use the County Council's highways inspectors to identify defects, the current process relied upon CEOs as they are the eyes on the ground for the service and are trained to identify particular problems while deployed. Mr Davy agreed to detail the process behind defect reporting. Members questioned the level of defect reporting in areas that used private companies to enforce on-street parking and Mr Davy agreed to share monitoring data with the Committee.

8.10 Mr Davy confirmed that the powers to enforce obstructions to **dropped kerbs** are available to the County Council but had not been enacted. He outlined that a blanket approach towards dropped kerb enforcement would not necessarily work as, in many cases, it might be legitimate and safe to park across a dropped kerb eg a resident parking across their own private driveway. Mr Davy added that if the powers were ever to be enacted, the enforcement response would likely be a responsive one. However, he would be keen to ensure that dropped kerbs regularly used by mobility vehicles or wheelchairs were given a high priority.

8.11 Currently a large number of **disabled parking bays** across the county were advisory, and therefore not enforceable. Mr Davy reported that the service would like to formalise as many disabled parking bays as possible in the future. This would mean ensuring bays were the correct width and length and had the correct signage. The bays would need to be reviewed annually so that any unneeded bays could be returned to normal parking arrangements. Mr Davy agreed to keep Members informed of any progress in relation to this matter.

8.12 Mr Davy confirmed that where possible, consideration would be given to parking arrangements that optimised traffic flow so that buses could keep services to their timetable.

8.13 Mr Davy agreed to include more information on the balance between parking policies and the environment, economic and social policies in the IPS document.

8.14 Mr Davy also agreed to append the response to the Department for Transport consultation as background to the County Council position on footway and verge parking.

8.15 Mr Davy agreed, on page 54, first priority, to add in a reference to the need to facilitate bus and cycle travel as a priority.

8.16 Mr Davy agreed to add in reference to the Highway Code rule to not park within 10 metres of a junction.

8.17 Resolved – that the Committee thanked Mr Davy for the report and accepted the scale of the work involved.

9. Bus Enhanced Partnership Plan TFG

9.1 The Chairman of the Bus Enhanced Partnership Plan Task and Finish Group (TFG), Cllr Oakley, introduced the item by reporting that the TFG had met on 11 April to look at Bus Enhanced Partnership Plan and the considerable challenges bus companies were expecting at the end of the financial Covid support from the Government in September 2022. The paper included the Cabinet Member's responses to the recommendations suggested by the TFG.

9.2 The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Cllr Joy Dennis, thanked the TFG for their work in such a tight timeframe. The work aimed to improve bus service delivery in a time when consumers were changing their usage habits, in a climate of increased costs and labour shortages. She reported that an important part of the bid planned for some of the funding received to be used to encourage young people to use bus services by offering children's fares for all those under 21 years of age. This scheme would be limited to within West Sussex and operate for up to three years whilst funding was available with the intention that the operators continue to provide such discounts commercially thereafter.

9.3 Members of the Committee asked questions on the report and below is a summary of the questions and answers.

9.4 There are areas of the county that have no bus services, both rural and urban areas. Concerns were raised as to how services could be improved to help relieve problems of isolation. Cllr Dennis reported that routes were altered, reduced and expanded based on patronage. Members were reminded that demand-led **community transport services** were also available in some parts of the county. Community Transport Sussex (CTS) provides support to local community groups as well as development expertise to help them sustain existing services and grow where they can. CTS funds this from a service level agreement with the County Council and also district/borough/parish/town councils through a paid membership scheme. Many of the community groups are looking to expand their services from elderly and disabled customers to include those with social isolation and those who did not have access to conventional services. Discussion was ongoing on improving access through the introduction of new Digital Demand Response transport schemes for isolated people.

9.5 The proposed **A259 bus lane** was very much in the early planning stages yet and work would need to be done with National Highways to facilitate. There had been clear indication that the funding of such a scheme would not be allowed in the County Council's bid for funds at this time as it could not be delivered by March 2025. However, the County Council would continue to explore this proposal with the view that central future funding may become available later.

9.6 **Bus usage data** was collated by bus companies from ticket sales, driver intelligence and contactless payment data. It was hoped in the future to collect data on where journeys ended through the introduction of readers to be used when passengers alight in the same way as the London Underground. This would allow fares to be capped to their lowest level and encourage greater bus use.

9.7 The knowledge on **viability of bus routes** was with the commercial bus companies. Officers were in discussion with bus companies on future risks, their plans and challenges etc.

9.8 **Accessibility of bus services** for disabled bus users was an area of concern raised by the TFG but not covered in this round of work. It was agreed an audit of facilities could be picked up within the planned bus stop facilities audit.

9.9 Resolved – that the Committee:

1. Agreed that any revisions to the details of the final bid should be shared with the Committee virtually.
2. Agreed that the TFG continue to meet over the coming year, firstly in the autumn to see where work on the viability of current services and the development of projects within the bid had reached. If the TFG felt there were wider issues they could refer them to the scrutiny committee.

3. Agreed that the membership of the TFG could change depending on the specific subject matter.

10. Work Programme Planning and Possible Items for Future Scrutiny

10.1 The Committee received a tabled copy of the most recent Forward Plan of Key Decisions dated 9 June 2022 and Work Programme from the Business Planning Group (BPG).

10.2 The following requests were made:

- To note the slippage of the Speed Limit Policy item from the September meeting to the meeting on 18 November 2022, in order to ensure a proper consultation is undertaken.
- The future of the County Archive service be an item for consideration by the BPG.

11. Requests for Call-in

11.1 There had been no requests for call-in to the Scrutiny Committee within its constitutional remit since the date of the last meeting.

12. Date of Next Meeting

12.1 The next meeting would be a virtual meeting held on 8 July at 2.15pm.

The meeting ended at 1.25 pm

Chairman