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Environment, Communities and Fire Select Committee

21 October 2019 – At a meeting of the Environment, Communities and Fire Select Committee held at 2.00 pm at County Hall, Chichester.

Present:

Mr S J Oakley
Mr Barnard
Mr Jones

Mr McDonald
Mr R J Oakley
Mr Purchase

Dr Walsh

Apologies were received from Mr Barrett-Miles, Mr Barling, Lt Col Barton and Mrs Bridges

Absent:

Also in attendance: Mr Elkins, Mr Markwell and Mr Marshall

Part I

123. Declarations of Interest

In accordance with the Code of Conduct the following interests were declared

- Dr Walsh declared a personal interest in item 3 as a Member and Leader of Arun District Council and as a Member and Leader of Littlehampton Town Council.
- Mr Purchase declared a personal interest in item 3 as a Member of Arun District Council.
- Mr Marshall declared a personal interest as a Member of Horsham District Council and as a member of the Storrington Air Quality Steering Group.

124. Minutes of the last meeting

The Committee is asked to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2019 (green paper).

124.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the Environment, Communities and Fire Select Committee held on 20 September 2019 be approved as a correct record, and that they may be signed by the Chairman.

125. Response to Highways England's Further Non-statutory Consultation on Options for the A27 Arundel Bypass

125.1 To inform the Committee's deliberations, a number of representatives from community groups, town and parish councils

and the local county councillors were invited to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

- 125.2 The Committee considered a report by Acting Chief Executive and Director of Highways Transport and Planning (copy appended to the signed minutes).
- 125.3 Darryl Hemmings, Transport Planning & Policy Manager, introduced the report with a presentation (copy appended to the signed minutes), which set out some of the history regarding this scheme and the Government's strategic objectives. A brief description of each option was set out together with the assessment of each on transport, economic and environmental grounds. This is a Highways England scheme and that West Sussex County Council is just a consultee.
- 125.4 The Chairman invited verbal evidence from the invited speakers.
- 125.5 Emma Tristram on behalf of the Arundel Bypass Neighbourhood Committee stated that the Magenta option which is proposed to be supported by the County Council's preference for an Arundel Bypass will completely destroy the community of Binsted and that this had been underplayed in the report. It will require the compulsory purchase of a number of properties and will make it unbearable for many other residents if they choose to remain. The Highways England documents are misleading because the modelling for the Cyan and Beige options overstate the amount of woodland which would be lost. If the correct data is used, the woodland impact figure for the Cyan, Beige and Magenta routes would be the same. The Binsted community is a strong community and currently a haven of peace and at a time of climate crisis should Highways England be continuing with this project.
- 125.6 Kay Wagland on behalf of Arundel SCATE (South Coast Alliance for Transport and the Environment) disputed claims that many people in Arundel just want to get this bypass built. Many are concerned that the damage to the environment, wildlife and communities is just too high. The "predict and provide" thinking from Highways England is now outdated and should be replaced with "plan and provide". Following the Climate Emergency, the Department for Transport is being called out for ignoring the climate and environmental damage that schemes such as this cause. The Arundel Alternative would cost less than any of the Highways England proposals and would result in a smarter integrated transport system including rail improvements.
- 125.7 Derek Waller on behalf of The OneArundel Bypass Support Group stressed the need for this scheme as the A27 is already operating at over-capacity in this area and Arun District is suffering economically as a result. Magenta is the least worst option and the wider regional and national need for improvements to this road must be taken into consideration. The Arundel Alternative option is mainly an online single carriageway road and will do nothing to ease the north/south "rat-running" that happens. Also the Crimson option is now no

longer feasible as this was first suggested before the designation of the South Downs National Park. He asked that the Cabinet Member accept the officers' recommendations.

125.8 Jennie Bradley on behalf of the Tortington Local Community stated that although the community of Tortington feels dependent on Arundel they enjoy living in such a lovely place and are a strong community. There is a huge human impact with the offline options (ie Crimson, Amber Magenta and Grey). A number of businesses, such as farming and camping businesses, would no longer be able to operate with any of the offline options and the residents of Tortington Manor are extremely anxious. None of the residents of Tortington have been notified by Highways England regarding any possible compulsory purchase orders. The community does support the Arundel Alternative option. The Committee was asked to consider the impact on this community, just to speed up average peak hour journey times by 6 minutes, and not support any of the offline options.

125.9 The Chairman invited Darryl Hemmings to comment on what he knew about any possible rail improvements for Arundel. He confirmed that although Network Rail are investigating potential rail infrastructure improvements as part of a study, but no deliverable improvements have been identified and no funding is in place at present.

125.10 Councillor Robin Lovell representing Arundel Town Council stated that they regarded the Magenta option as the best but that none of them are very good. Asked if West Sussex County Council could ask Highways England to think again?

125.11 Suzanne Clark representing Walberton Parish Council stated that the Parish Council and the community of Walberton are vehemently opposed to the Amber, Magenta and Grey options. If any of these options go ahead it will split the community in two. The Crimson option was a viable alternative which should be fully considered, and the Committee should not support the Magenta option.

125.12 Dr Walsh, as Leader of Arun District Council stated that it should be remembered that the A27 is a national and regional strategic option which will have great benefits for existing and new businesses in Bognor Regis and Littlehampton as well as Arundel itself. The A259 is currently also used as a "rat run" to avoid Arundel and that many people live alongside it and that the volume of traffic and pollution is already high. There was a lengthy debate at Arun District Council last week and the only option that had considerable support was Magenta so asked the Committee to listen to the views of Arun District Council and Littlehampton Town Council and support Magenta.

125.13 Councillor Gary Markwell (Arundel & Courtwick) stated that the A27 is one of the central issues that his constituents contact him about and he has been to many meetings on this issue. It is clear that

there is a clear division in the community not just regarding the option but also whether it is needed at all. He acknowledged that the offline options (ie Amber, Magenta, Crimson and Grey options) would be extremely damaging to the communities to the west of Arundel but still believes that a bypass is required and has been for many years. There is also a significant air quality issue in Storrington which would see a reduction when the bypass is built. It appears that the Crimson option is not viable due to the need to remove a much larger area of Ancient Woodland and should this option be chosen then there is a risk that the funding would be withdrawn. He asked the Committee to support the Magenta option.

125.14 Councillor Paul Marshall (Storrington) made it clear that he is here as the County Councillor for Storrington rather than in the role of Leader and stated that this is a major scheme which will have a positive effect on the communities of Amberley, Storrington and Washington. Storrington in particular has major air quality issues regarding particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide which are caused mainly by road traffic. This bypass will therefore have significant benefits to the National Park and Storrington and he is of the firm opinion that the Magenta options the best option for the Cabinet Member to endorse.

125.15 Chairman read out the written submission from Councillor Derek Whittington (Fontwell) which stated that he has been involved in A27 matters for some years and that the Fontwell division includes the parish of Walberton and Binsted but also Barnham, Eastergate, Westergate and Aldingbourne whose residents will also be affected by an Arundel bypass. A preference for a option from Crossbush to Avisford has always presented problems for communities along its option. The views of all these residents need to taken into account and in doing so although he would support the Crimson option he believes that this is highly unlikely to be achieved and therefore with regret supports the Magenta option.

125.16 The Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure was asked to address the Committee. He thanked the officers for the work, and reminded the Committee that West Sussex County Council is a Highways England consultee and not a decision-maker. He also thanked all the community groups, parish and town councils, and local members for their input and will discuss with the officers before the final submission is made.

125.17 The Committee also received a written submission from the Rt Hon Nick Herbert CBE MP for Arundel & South Downs which indicated his support for the Magenta option.

125.18 The Committee made a number of comments including those that follow. It:

- Noted that the scheme was of regional and national importance as it is the only trunk road connecting key locations on the south coast. However, none of the options are perfect.

- Raised concerns that insufficient detail on the design of measures to mitigate impacts on the environment and affected communities has not been provided by Highways England and are mindful that for some people this will have a very significant negative impact on their quality of life.
- Raised concerns that there are other options that could have been presented for consultation with the public, including the Arundel Alternative.
- Requested the inclusion of a left-in-left-out junction at Ford Road in the design options 3V1 (Crimson), 4/5AV1 (Magenta), 4/5AV2 (Amber), and 5BV1 (Grey) if any of these options are taken forward.
- Requested whether the use of Littlehampton Harbour to transport construction materials during the construction phase to minimise the impact of construction due to heavy goods vehicles.

125.19 Resolved – That the Committee:-

Supports that the draft response is sent to Highways England. A vote was taken and the results were as follows.

5 in favour
1 against
1 absention.

126. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

126.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan dated 8 October 2019 (copy appended to the signed minutes).

126.2 The Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure stated that item 2 on page 68 is in the process of being changed to a November decision.

126.3 Resolved – That the Forward Plan be noted.

127. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that its next scheduled meeting will take place on 7 November 2019 at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester. The agenda items will be:

- Exploitation Strategy
- Preview of the draft electric vehicle strategy
- Update on progress in re-procuring the Highways Maintenance Contract
- Review of consultant's report, and recommendations for Restructure of Highways, Transport and Planning

- Review of consultant's report, and recommendations for future improvements of Major Projects Cost Estimating

The meeting ended at 4.19 pm

Chairman