

HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
PANEL

THURSDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Hari Sharma (Chairman), Wisdom Da Costa, Marius Gilmore, Maureen Hunt, Paul Lion and Julian Sharpe

Also in attendance: Councillor Simon Dudley.

Officers: Andy Jeffs, Wendy Binmore, Ben Smith, David Scott and Gordon Oliver

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Jesse Grey.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Sharma declared a personal interest as he works for First Group.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Part I minutes of the meetings held on 20 July 2017 and 29 August 2017 be approved.

CYCLING STRATEGY

Gordon Oliver, Principal Transport Officer explained to the Panel the Cycling Strategy was a 10 year plan which had been developed over time with the Cycle Forum. An extensive consultation had taken place which involved the Cycle Forum, the public and the Area Action Plan. The Cycle Forum was keen to have the plan adopted and the Lead Member wanted to set up a Task and Finish Group for the strategy.

The Chairman stated the UK was lagging behind other countries in promoting cycling. Bradley Wiggins winning the Tour de France had put the spotlight on the sport and so the country should be building on from that success. Councillor Dudley referred to paragraph 4.2 of the report stating the Borough had been provisionally awarded funding from the LEP and there was significant work going on in the Borough with a focus on regeneration. The Task and Finish Group should invite a dialogue with Countryside to ensure there was a joined up approach to cycling provision. Councillor Sharma stated that with the Borough Local Plan (BLP) and the Station Opportunity Area, now was the right time to discuss cycling policy. The focus should be on transport, infrastructure and cycling.

Councillor Hunt said she had read the comments in the report and congratulated Gordon Oliver on the work he had carried out. However, she did not feel people would want to travel to work by bike if the roads remained dangerous. Businesses would step in to provide cycling facilities in the work place but, safe routes needed to be found and seriously considered and not be a token effort. Councillor Dudley stated the A4 Cycle Way was not something the borough was progressing but, Bucks were progressing their side of the route; when the Task and Finish group was established, it would need to form a dialogue with other local authorities for a joined up approach.

Councillor Story said there was an Ascot and Sunnings Area Action Plan and a cycle route from Ascot through to Windsor should be included in the Task and Finish Group's work. Gordon Oliver confirmed there had been extensive work carried out to establish such a route but, there were too many challenges to overcome with landownership issues and lots of ditches. It had got to the stage where it was costing an enormous amount of money with major resistance from third parties. Due to those obstacles, the Crown Estate had agreed to allow cycling through Windsor Great park at night. Councillor Grey suggested leaving the possibility of the Ascot to Windsor route in the strategy as it was a 10 year plan and things changed over time so it may be explored again in the future.

Councillor Sharma said the financial implications were £75k and £30k for 2017 but there was an awful lot more investment going into other areas. Ben Smith, Head of Highways and Transport confirmed there was direct Capital funding and investment from developers and a further bid to the LEP being submitted.

Councillor Da Costa said the plan was at the very early stage of development and when looking at routes there were real challenges. It was a challenge getting cyclists to use shared spaces. He queried whether the Task and Finish Group were to assess issues and consult with groups and cross match those discussions with Regulation 19 of the BLP. Would the Group look at how the Council built in cycle routes to the plan. He wanted the final plan to be brought back to Panel before going to Full Council for the final decision. Councillor Dudley stated the extent of the remit was to have discussions with Countryside regarding the regeneration and the budget from the LEP. Work would be done to achieve further gains to relieve pressure on roads and infrastructure. Andy Jeffs, Executive Director said the Task and Finish Group would draft a plan and use it as a basis to review cycling activity for the next 10 years. It would also be used to speak to groups involved in the regeneration of the Borough.

Councillor Story queries what the Borough was going to do to ensure there was on train capacity for cyclists; there was a point made on page 45 of the report that many adults had not cycled for years; therefore, the Task and Finish Group should look at a Boris Bike style scheme to get adults back into cycling. Councillor Hunt stated the Borough needed to make cyclists feel safe and also needed to take traffic off the roads. A Park 'n' Ride scheme with lots of buses would help so cyclists could cycle into town safer. Councillor Dudley confirmed that Councillor Bicknell had long mentioned setting up a Boris Bike type scheme in the Borough and that now was the time to really look into how the borough could implement such a scheme while a lot of regeneration was going on. The Chairman suggested inviting the Chambers of Commerce to get involved to try and find sponsors for the scheme.

Councillor Da Costa queried if the cycling strategy formed a part of any overall transport strategy, Gordon Oliver confirmed the Borough did not have strategies for particular forms of transport but, the Cycling Plan could be incorporated with the transport strategy.

Councillor Sharpe suggested contacting the CCG's to see if there were any available funding streams for the Cycling Plan. The Chairman agreed it was worth contacting them. Councillor Sharpe also encouraged businesses to pay a nominal amount to those who chose to cycle to work as he had seen this scheme implemented successfully elsewhere to encourage cycling.

The Chairman agreed to open the membership of the Task and Finish Group to members of the public.

The Panel agreed to the Task and Finish Group reporting back in three months to update the Panel on its findings.

- ❖ **Action** – the Principal Transport Officer to bring the Cycling Plan back to Panel with an update on progress in three months.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Panel endorsed the recommendations to Cabinet and wished to make the following additions to the Cycling Plan:

- ❖ **To look into options for a Boris Bike scheme which would be known locally as Bicknell Bikes.**
- ❖ **To maintain inclusion of a possible cycle through route from Ascot to Windsor.**

RIVER THAMES SCHEME

Councillor Dudley introduced the report and explained that the Jubilee River costs were covered by the EA. Following the 2014 dreadful flooding in Datchet and Wraysbury, lots of work had been carried out by the EA on flood prevention. Page 189 of the agenda pack showed the areas that will be protected by the RTS and those areas included Datchet and Wraysbury.

There were several local authorities that the scheme covered, including Surrey and Councillor Dudley had attended meetings regularly on advancing the project. It was a major undertaking to protect 15k homes, with 2,300 of those homes in the Royal Borough. Councillor Dudley stated that during the flooding event of 2014, he was told that if it had rained for one more day, the situation would have been significantly worse than it was.

Councillor Dudley explained that there were several manmade channels that linked with lakes and other channels. Costs identified for the scheme came to £476m and funding of £240m had been sought from central government but, there was a significant shortfall. The Borough was committed to protecting homes and businesses; and there was a checkpoint meeting which will discuss if the scheme was viable to continue with. Each local authority was asked for support to try and plug the funding gap and the Borough should show very clearly, its commitment to the scheme.

The EA had no budget for the operation and maintenance of the scheme so that had to be paid for and there was potential for a flood levy on local authority residents to pay for the operation and maintenance of the flood scheme. That could equate to 1% for each resident of the Borough.

Councillor Dudley stated the report would be going to Cabinet Regeneration Sub-Committee before going to Full Council; he proposed composing a letter of support to go to the Treasury; all local authorities were going forward with the maximum amount of money they could offer. He added that both Windsor and Maidenhead MPs were hugely supportive of the scheme and the EA had confirmed that the flooding seen in 2014 had a high chance of returning again.

The Chairman stated the scheme had been discussed before and had been supported. He added there was a risk element in the form of a funding gap of £208m

and that costs could go up. As a Council, he was happy to contribute towards the scheme but queried what other local authorities were doing to support the scheme. Councillor Dudley stated that was a good question for the other local authorities to answer but, he did not want it to be seen that the Royal Borough was not supporting the scheme to protect residents. Councillor Hunt agreed and hoped the scheme would go ahead. She noted the £2.5m per year for four years and stated the Borough only had a small limited area of the Thames but, the Council were offering £10m; whereas other local authorities were only paying £6m each. Councillor Dudley said he did not want to make it so that the scheme could not go ahead.

Councillor Dudley confirmed that the Borough was prepared to cover costs of operating and maintaining the scheme and the levy of 1% would be for all homes, not just those specifically affected by flooding.

Councillor Da Costa stated it was a very serious commitment, with the impact of flooding on businesses and residents very significant. He questioned how less likely people would be flooded if the scheme went ahead. Councillor Dudley assured Councillor Da Costa that the information would be in the public domain when it was available.

Councillor Dudley confirmed the proposals would go to Full Council which would then allocate budget for the scheme. The EA were to build the scheme so there was no design or delivery risk to the Council. The Borough was part of a group to fund the scheme and he was sure any concerns could be raised with the EA.

Ben Smith, Head of Highways and Transport confirmed there was a lot of modelling carried out and workshops had taken place to provide information on the areas affected; there had been a building up of knowledge which the Council, in conjunction with the EA could walk people through. Councillor Dudley confirmed the paper was requesting an in principal decision on the scheme.

Ben Smith confirmed that there was a chance the scheme was not deliverable and that was a risk. It was not just due to funding that the scheme might not be delivered, but land ownership issues. However, each risk would be looked at over time to reduce and remove risks. At this early stage, there was always going to be risks but, Ben Smith was trying to give comfort that the risks were being addressed.

Councillor Da Costa asked if there were any other feasible options. Ben Smith responded the EA were the experts and this was their preferred option with the maximum benefit. It was also the most deliverable option. Councillor Sharpe stated it seemed there was no other option as the weather was different now and would continue to be so. Councillor Dudley commented the scheme was not a nice to have scheme but a must have scheme.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Panel endorsed the recommendations.

UPDATE ON POOL CARS AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS

Ben Smith, Head of Highways and Transport stated the report was initially presented to Panel back in April 2017 where a number of issues were talked through. Cabinet made some amendments and this was the update following on from that. The report looked at the size of fleet, whether or not it was appropriate and if there were other uses for the fleet.

The contract would reduce the number of cars from 13 down to 10 and with the pool car fleet not used at weekends, there was potential to work with partners and introduce a car club scheme. The third element of the report was to install 10 or more electric vehicle charging points on street to encourage electric vehicles.

The Chairman stated the Panel discussed the report in April 2017 and a few concerns were addressed. He really welcomed the reduction in the fleet from 13 cars to 10. The Chairman said a policy was needed for officers to use pool cars instead of their own cars and he was pleased that was in the process of being produced to reflect that.

The Chairman directed the Panel to page 200 of the agenda pack as that gave a flavour of how to register in order to use the cars. The current system was very complicated to use and staff will have to confirm if there were not pool cars available when they make a journey in their own cars and claimed mileage. Councillor Hunt stated she was pleased to see there was a government grant available for residents to install charging points for their cars. Ben Smith explained there were locations where residents had requested charging points so the Council would start with those. He was happy for Councillors to email him with request for their own wards.

The Chairman said he was concerned during the last meeting regarding the termination of the lease; but the new lease would be for two years so there was no early termination fee. He felt the scheme was good value for money. Ben Smith confirmed no decision had been made as to what cars would be leased, but the figures in the report were based on the BMW i3 and were indicative. Councillor Lion did not feel it was the right time to go fully electric as the technology was still quite new. The Chairman said by 2020 London would only have electric buses and the Council needed to think about this and should order vehicles for the future.

Councillor Da Costa said there were no uniform charging points and there would be restrictions for employees regarding which cars they used for business trips. The cost – benefit analysis was not clear and did not include fuel and electric costs and savings. He queried who paid for residents to charge their cars and if there was government support available for the charging points. Ben Smith stated the staff policy tried to encourage staff to use pool cars and that was being taken to the next level to say they should try and organise a pool car before claiming mileage. He added there were schemes for residents charging points and business charging points in place that could be applied for.

Councillor Sharpe stated if the Borough was installing charging points, it would be beneficial for the Borough to take risks as a potential way to make money. The points should be fast charging points.

David Scott, Head of Communities and Highways confirmed there was no car club scheme currently running. The paper requested permission to carry out a pilot car club and the Borough would need to seek a partner. The scheme would run on an advance registration basis as people could not just turn up and use the cars. Any car club scheme could reduce the number of vehicles in the Town Centre and the scheme could be extended if successful. Councillor Hunt said it was an excellent idea.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That The Panel unanimously endorsed the recommendations to Cabinet and requested that Officers provide the cost:

benefit analysis of the scheme for Panel, and also confirm what type of charging points the Borough is looking to install.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The Panel approved the Part II minutes of the previous meeting.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.50 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....