

Minutes

of the Meeting of

The Transport, Climate and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 30 November 2023

New Council Chamber - Town Hall

Meeting Commenced: 2.00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 4.30 pm

Councillors:

Steve Bridger (Chair)

Peter Burden

Ciaran Cronnelly

Nicola Holland

Sue Mason

Robert Payne

Terry Porter

Michael Pryke

Luke Smith

Dan Thomas (substitute for Stuart McQuillan)

Joe Tristram (substitute for Tom Nicholson)

Apologies: Councillors: Stuart McQuillan (Vice-Chairperson), Tom Nicholson

Officers in attendance: Esther Coffin-Smith, Gemma Dando, John Flannigan, Jenny Ford, Rebecca Kinnersley, Stephen Matthews, Philippa Penney, Jason Reading, Leo Taylor .

TCC 8 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Standing Order 37)

None.

TCC 9 Minutes

Resolved: that the minutes of the Transport, Climate and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Panel held on 20 July 2023 be approved as a correct record.

TCC 10 Strategic Asset Management Plan updates, including Development Programme

The Interim Assistant Director (Placemaking and Growth) presented the report which set out a progress update on the actions of the Projects and Property team with regards the delivery of the ten-year SAMP programme, with a commitment to rationalising, developing, and maintaining the Council's asset portfolio through the actions described. The report also included an update on the Council's

Development Programme for the delivery of homes and jobs on land that it owned.

Members sought and received clarification/assurance on the following:

- Account taken in the assessment process of environmental and social value (as well as income).
- Resourcing of the Asset team.
- Leisure centre business cases progress - Members noted that work had been commissioned to get a complete picture (see conclusions below).
- Estate management plan progress – decarbonisation surveys and the prioritisation of North Somerset offsetting schemes where decarbonisation may not be possible. Members noted that this was still under development (see conclusions below).
- Development Plan progress – Members noted that the Placemaking, Economy and Planning Policy and Scrutiny Panel would be leading on scrutiny engagement with the Plan.
- Consideration of a procurement partnership with a local authority owned company (eg Aequus) - officers clarified that this would not be a “joint venture” in that the company would merely be commissioned to deliver work specified by North Somerset Council.
- Green field sites and scope for lease holdings if development were not forthcoming.
- The (“red book valuation”) process for valuing land.

Concluded:

- (1) that the report be received and the Panel’s feedback provided to officers in the form of the minutes;
- (2) that officers confirm at the earliest opportunity timescales for the development of Leisure Centre business cases so that corresponding engagement with the Panel on options can be arranged; and
- (3) that the Panel be updated on the Estate Carbon Management Plan in due course.

TCC Rights Of Way Improvement Plan

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The Natural Environment Manager presented the report updating Members on the delivery of the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan including prioritisation of the £100k capital allocation spend.

Members sought and received clarification/assurance on the following:

- The time of year that paths were cleared of overgrowth (there had been complaints from walkers in the Portishead area, particularly on the coastal path).
- The rationale for installing movable electronic counters on paths – this was for the purpose of evaluation but also provided useful asset management data, particularly “before and after” footfall following interventions/maintenance.
- How the plan was funded (in addition to the Shared Prosperity Fund

allocation) - the Council had a source of funding for longer distance routes from the Hinkley development and could provide some top-up resource where required.

- Funding for the safe route to Churchill Academy.

Concluded:

- (1) that the report be received and the Panel's feedback provided to officers in the form of the minutes; and
- (2) that the Panel review progress on the delivery of the ROWIP annually going forward.

TCC 12 Green Infrastructure Strategy update

The Natural Environment Manager presented the report updating Members on progress in the delivery of the Green Infrastructure Strategy Action Plan.

Members sought and received clarification/assurance on the following:

- the basis for the "biodiversity unit" used in Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessments – this metric was based on Government guidance and calculated using a prescribed tool.
- Further clarification of the Council's plans to establish biodiversity unit trading and the corresponding creation of a first "nature park".
- Would the trading scheme require developers to purchase units within the development locality? No, there could be geographical separation between developments and corresponding biodiversity units. Natural England was supportive of using schemes for strategic protection.
- Rewilding outcomes – officers confirmed that a report had demonstrated biodiversity improvements (e.g. between mown and unmown verges) following the introduction of the policy.
- Officers confirmed that, subject to capacity, progress was being made on developing support for community-based biodiversity schemes. The Rewilding Champion was seeking to build links with local community leaders.
- Further clarification on the Clevedon boat slipway (in the context of the Great Lakes project).
- Engagement with landowners on tree planning and the support available – new information was available on the Council's website.
- the annual cost of ash dieback and clarification on the different approaches taken to addressing dieback.

In concluding the discussion, the Panel agreed that there were many elements to the strategy and action plan and that it could be very useful for local residents and businesses if these could be pulled together into an annual "state of nature" report, providing a practical framework for communities and businesses to build on.

Concluded:

- (1) that the report be received and the Panel's feedback provided in the form of the minutes;
- (2) that the Panel review progress on the delivery of the GI Strategy annually; and

- (3) that officers consider and respond to the Panel's proposal that an annual "state of nature" report be produced as outlined above.

TCC 13 A38 MRN progress update

The Senior Project Manager presented the report outlining progress on the delivery of the scheme and engagement with key stakeholders and the market ahead of the delivery of the Final Business Case (FBC).

Members sought and received further clarification/assurance on the funding of the scheme, noting that some elements were being delivered using BSIP or S.106 funding together with speculation that additional funding may be available following the cancellation of northern section of the national HS2 project.

Although officers gave assurance that the core scheme was being funded by the Department of Transport, Members remained concerned about potential risks including around current pressures on the Council's capital budget, a perceived lack of clarity around funding sources and the complicated joint arrangements with neighbouring local authorities (noting Somerset Council's current financial position). It was agreed that further engagement and careful scrutiny would be required going forward with the involvement of the relevant local Members.

Concluded:

- (1) that the report be received and the Panel's feedback provided in the form of the minutes; and
- (2) that the Chair meet with officers as soon as practicable to agree an approach to ensuring effective scrutiny of the project going forward (noting that there would be a statutory consultation on the FBC).

TCC 14 The Panel's Work Plan

In considering the work plan, it was:-

Concluded: that the following additions to the work plan be agreed:

- **Flood Risk** - following concerns raised at the 14 November 2023 Council (Council minute COU 86 refers) about a lack of routine maintenance on structures by the Environment Agency.
- **Clevedon Seafront review** – it was agreed that this be considered by the Panel prior to a decision by the Executive and placed on the agenda for the next full meeting in March 2024
- **One Front Door** (new multi-agency approach to domestic abuse)

Chairman
