

Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Tuesday, 4 August 2020, Online only - 2.00 pm

Minutes

Present:

Mr A A J Adams (Chairman), Mr P Denham (Vice Chairman), Mr G R Brookes, Mr B Clayton, Mr M E Jenkins, Mr A D Kent and Mr J A D O'Donnell

Also attended:

Mr A P Miller, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment
Dr K A Pollock, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure
Luke Willetts, Director of Operations, Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership

Liz Alston (Sustainability Manager, Economy and Infrastructure Directorate), Nick Twaite (Infrastructure and Asset Manager, Economy and Infrastructure), Trevor McGill (Lighting Engineer, Economy and Infrastructure), Samantha Morris (Scrutiny Co-ordinator) and Jo Weston (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)

Available Papers

The Members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 June 2020 (previously circulated).

(A copy of document A will be attached to the signed Minutes).

378 Apologies and Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Meeting, which had been rescheduled from 21 July 2020 due to technical difficulties, and confirmed the arrangements for the remote meeting.

Apologies had been received from Cllr Vale and Cllr A Amos, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways.

379 Declarations of Interest and of any Party Whip

None.

380 Public Participation

The Chairman reported that 8 members of the public had submitted a question or comment in advance of the Meeting and confirmed that all submissions had been circulated to Members. A summary of the key points

from the participants in attendance at the meeting was as follows:

David Whiting

- Mr Whiting referred to a Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy Survey from May this year, which highlighted that 76% of the population was concerned or very concerned about climate change and that he was aligned with this concern.
- Failure to act on climate change would have an economic consequence, with the Bank of England stating that climate risk was also a source of financial risk.

Peter Measham

- Mr Measham acknowledged that Worcestershire County Council (the Council) had a plan to become carbon neutral by 2050 but was concerned that it had not declared a climate emergency, unlike other local authorities, such as Bromsgrove District Council, which was a missed opportunity.
- A recent Met Office report stated that there was now a 20% chance of the world temporarily reaching 1.5°C in the next five years and suggested that the Council should be describing this as an “Emergency” and leading the way for the County.

Pam McCarthy (the Chairman referred to the written submission as the participant attended the 21 July meeting which was abandoned due to technical difficulties and was unable to attend the rescheduled date)

- Whilst acknowledging and welcoming the work of the Council to date in tackling climate change, further progress was required at a faster rate. The Council’s current work programme and role in responding to the Government Report which stated that current rate of activity would not achieve targets by 2050 was questioned.
- The progress of neighbouring Councils, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire was highlighted.
- Much of the business sector was waiting for the Council to articulate plans for a sustainable future and an offer of signposting to good examples of progress was made.

Dan Boatright

- Dr Boatright talked about how heat and electricity

was produced from waste and that both Germany and Sweden were harnessing the opportunity to a much greater extent than the UK.

- The work of Professor Martin Freer of the University of Birmingham (and Director of the Birmingham Energy Institute and the Energy Research Accelerator) was referred to, noting that the UK generated 0.64 MWh/tonne of waste compared to Germany which generated 1.2 and Sweden 2.98 MWh/tonnes. Dr Boatright questioned how the Council planned to rectify this.

Chris Cooke

- Mr Cooke acknowledged that the Council had embraced sustainable and active travel, however, suggested that the current building of new roads and developments contradicted the existing programme.
- It was suggested that any new homes should be built to exacting standards, preferably PassivHaus, otherwise they would need an expensive retrofit to restrain emissions in the future. Norwich's award-winning Goldsmith Street scheme was referred to.
- The Council needed to do more to raise the profile of climate change to residents, highlighting the long-term benefits, such as green space and healthier lifestyles.

Johnny Birks

- Mr Birks recognised the efforts made by the Council, however, there was concern about the lack of urgency and ambition in response to the Climate Emergency and the Council had a strategic, leading role.
- It was suggested that the Council should carry out a campaign to educate residents about the seriousness of the challenge and the need for urgent and transformative changes in the ways that we live, work and play.
- The Council should look wider than its own direct responsibilities and engage with all authorities, businesses and residents and be bold and creative in leading Worcestershire's residents towards a genuinely sustainable and carbon neutral future.

Phillip Oliver

- Mr Oliver referred to page 15 of Agenda Item 5 (The Council's Work and Role in Tackling Climate Change), in particular the graph showing the

“Councils Historic and Projected Carbon Emissions 2009/10 – 2049/50. The line representing “household waste “rises steadily from 2017/18 to 2036/37 before falling rapidly. 3% of UK domestic greenhouse gas emissions came from food waste (14 million tonnes CO2e). The government had indicated that it would bring in legislation to compel local authorities to introduce separate food waste collections so that it can be treated without releasing carbon emissions. It was questioned why the Council was not planning to reduce emissions from food waste in the near future rather than wait for nearly 20 years.

The Chairman thanked participants for their contributions.

381 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 June 2020 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

382 The Council's Work and Role in Tackling Climate Change

Officers attending for this Item were Liz Alston, Sustainability Manager (Worcestershire County Council) and Luke Willets, Director of Operations (Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)).

A detailed presentation had been circulated with the Agenda Papers.

The key points included:

- Worcestershire County Council (the Council) had a history of raising awareness of Climate Change and reducing carbon emissions through a number of strategies, written independently or in partnership, including with the LEP
- Projects included biomass heat at County Hall, solar panels on over 50 Council buildings (mainly schools), electric pool cars and sustainable new builds, such as the Hive in Worcester City
- In May 2019, UK Parliament declared a Climate Emergency and the Government committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050, recognising that much of this reduction must happen by 2030
- Worcestershire’s CO2 emissions had dropped from 4.6m tonnes in 2005 to 3.3m tonnes in 2018, with 49% of the 3.3m tonnes of emissions currently coming from transport

- According to the UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005-2018 & WCC emissions data, the Council had indirect control of around 37,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions (i.e. waste, highways and fleet contracts) and around 12,000 tonnes direct control (i.e street lighting, property, vehicles etc). However, it had an influencing role in respect of around 2.6m tonnes which was emitted through local transport, homes and businesses etc
- Household waste accounted for around 67% of the CO2 emissions attributed to the County Council in 2018/19
- A number of actions to lower or offset emissions were already underway, including energy efficiency measures in buildings and street lighting, the purchasing of green energy and a tree planting scheme
- The Worcestershire LEP Energy Strategy (launched in March 2019) aimed for a 50% reduction in countywide carbon emissions by 2030, to triple renewable energy generation and to double the size of its low carbon economy, which meant that Worcestershire would need to adapt over the coming years
- The LEP had a key role to play in identifying, co-ordinating and influencing opportunities and had a track record of strong stakeholder engagement and business representation, whereas the Council had a key role in development of strategy and was instrumental in project development and implementation, including lobbying and securing funding
- 15 new projects directly related to the targets and themes of energy strategy were underway to an estimated value of £50m and approximately 28,000 tonnes of carbon reduced per year when completed
- Global temperatures were set to rise, with warmer wetter winters, hotter drier summers, increased rainfall and flooding and heatwaves predicted. The Council had initiated a Joint Impact Assessment process which included consideration of the impact of severe weather and climate change, for any new Council project
- Government strategies and consultations were moving on at pace and action locally was required.

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- Noting that some of the data presented was historic, it was clarified that UK data collection was always two years adrift. In addition, when comparing Local Authorities, it was highlighted that there was no standard reporting mechanism, therefore caution was urged
- As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent national Lockdown, it was suggested that global CO2 emissions for 2020 may be up to 7% lower and around 36% lower for Worcestershire County Council
- A Member asked what could be done to reduce household 'green' recycling contamination to be informed that District Councils promoted the 'One Waste Worcestershire' campaign, with Wychavon District Council cited as a good example of positive publicity. In relation to whether an incentive was offered to the contractor, Members were advised that contracts would have to be looked into. In addition, the Council could choose to award future contracts to include some reduction in carbon emissions
- Developments in recycling have meant wider opportunities, such as the ability to recycle crisp packets and supermarkets and manufacturers were moving away from black plastic
- In relation to projected County Council carbon emissions, it was noted that a dramatic drop was projected in 2039/2040, however, the figures were based on successfully implementing carbon capture from energy from waste by that time and a number of assumptions had also been made
- When asked what the lifespan of the Energy from Waste facility was, the Cabinet Member responded by stating the current contract was until 2028 and that the facility was serviced every time it was shut down. Sweden had built a facility on the edge of a City and the heat energy was used in that City. The Panel was reminded that the current Worcestershire facility took around 20 years from inception to completion
- In response to a query as to how Worcestershire compared to other Local Authorities, it was explained that some authorities were more ambitious than Worcestershire and also reported in different ways, therefore it was difficult to make comparisons
- The slight increase in projected household waste carbon emissions was attributed to assumptions

- over future house building in the County
- A Member was interested in seeing statistics over time on the savings achieved from energy from waste, which would be provided
- In response to a query as to whether it was possible to increase the pace in tackling climate change, it was clarified that future innovations would have to work within budgets
- The Panel noted that Bromsgrove was bidding to become a Green Town
- The LEP had engaged in early conversations with businesses around renewable energy and the use of hydrogen, and a map from the evidence base for the Energy Strategy showing all renewable energy sources in the County would be forwarded to the Panel
- An example was given whereby solar panels could have been successfully sited, however, they would have been unable to connect to the National Grid at that time owing to grid capacity issues
- The Panel heard that the national planning framework and local planning policy would need to change to progress change as hoped
- A Member asked that with the expected increase in flooding due to climate change, what is the Council doing to help communities build flood alleviation schemes? In relation to climate change, the Cabinet Member highlighted that flooding resilience was vital for Worcestershire
- Future transportation was also key, with new housing developments requiring appropriate cycleways and footways to promote active travel.

The following information was requested:

- Detail on whether there was merit in sifting through contaminated household 'green' recycling loads
- Guidelines around recycling of plastics and what was acceptable and what was not, in Worcestershire
- KWh from Energy from Waste in comparison to tonnes of waste and how much energy was being generated but lost in heat – with statistics over time and comparisons with other Local Authorities
- County map showing all renewable energy sites.

383 Streetlighting

The Infrastructure Asset Manager and Lighting Engineer talked through the Agenda Report, highlighting that the

information provided had built on that presented at the previous session on 5 March 2019.

Attention was drawn to the following areas:

- In areas affected by the 'Part Night Switch Off' initiative, around 8,000 LED lanterns had been fitted over the last 2 years to replace obsolete low pressure sodium (SOX) lanterns. Despite these lanterns now burning all night, the annual 595,000 kwh saving was around £80,068 per annum, based on 13.445p per kwh
- Regarding possible anti-social behaviour and other crimes being associated with the part night switch off scheme, the Lighting Team had been in liaison with West Mercia Police. Generally turning off street lighting in the majority of areas had little or no impact on crime and disorder, but just occasionally a hot spot occurred and was addressed. on an agreed case by case basis.
- The Street Lighting Programme (Phase 3) for 2020/21 and 2021/22 had been allocated a further £1m per year to roll out additional SOX to LED lanterns, however, no extra capital funding had been awarded, therefore only current maintenance funds would enable replacements to continue, on a worst first basis
- Concrete columns were being reassessed and ranked from 1 (good condition) to 5 (requires immediate attention). The Panel was reminded that around 700 had been replaced to date and there were no category 5 or 4 columns currently. In the last year 387 had been replaced and it was anticipated that a further 300 would be replaced
- Officers were disappointed to report that a 'retro fit' lamp, which had been used to directly replace an old SOX lamp in an existing lantern, had become unreliable and was therefore no longer used. This had resulted in a more costly and time consuming process as the whole lantern had to be replaced
- Prysman, the Council's Lighting Maintenance Contractor, had not been able to complete all of the anticipated LED conversions by 31 March 2020, partly due to individual faults occurring due to failing SOX lanterns and also the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Panel noted that Prysman crews had worked throughout the national lockdown, however, productivity had slowed in line with government guidance and additional precautions
- By September there would be 23,000 LED lamps

in Worcestershire representing 42% of the total number of streetlights equalling the national average for conversions

- Problems with access continued to be of concern, for example in alleyways or divorced footways when hydraulic platforms were unable to access the area. This was a particular issue in Redditch and was a Council priority. A safe ladder solution had been developed by Prysmian and a programme of activity had been developed
- An identified trial site in Worcester City, combining street lighting and electric vehicle charging, had unfortunately not been suitable
- Customer complaint management had been improved following feedback from the previous Scrutiny session and the public were now informed in a timelier manner, in addition to external influences such as those involving Western Power Distribution for example
- New technology was constantly being developed and initiatives, such as solar lighting, central management systems (CMS) and colour temperature of LEDs would be considered if appropriate for Worcestershire.

In the ensuing discussion, the following main points were discussed:

- A Member enquired as to why Major Traffic Routes were exempt from 'Part Night Switch Off' yet Motorways were often lit at intervals. In response, it was reported that there was a duty of care towards road users and obligations in road safety measures
- It was confirmed that in respect of 5G innovation in the last 18 months, the current tranche of all LED replacements would be 5G enabled for smart city future use, in readiness for roll-out of 5G. In order to be able to switch off alternative lamps or dim them, a Central Management System (CMS) was required and the Panel was advised that a trial of a CMS was being carried out at Lea Castle
- During the explanation of how the cost of unmetered supply was calculated, clarification was sought on the price 13.455p per kwh (as per paragraph 35 of the Agenda Report)
- In response to a question about how much funding was required to achieve 100% LED replacement (from 42%), the Panel was advised that there were various options and that Officers would provide the Panel with details

- A Member was concerned about the number of access issues, particularly in Redditch, resulting in alleyways and divorced footways being unlit for a considerable time and asked for further detailed information of the new safe working programme in Redditch in order to report back to residents
- Reference was made to paragraph 37 which showed where the conversions had taken or would take place since April 2019 and the cost of those conversions. Members suggested that it would be helpful to include additional information such as how many conversions were left to do, the payback rate and the costs etc as this would aid the decision making process
- In response to a question about sourcing supplies from within the County, it was reported that there was a track record of working with local businesses, such as TRT Lighting Ltd in Redditch
- A Member reminded the Panel that not all Street Lights were County assets, with some being the responsibility of Parish or Town Councils. What percentage of all street lighting in Worcestershire is maintained by Parish and Town Councils? How can the County Council help Parish and Town Councils upgrade to LED?
- A Member mentioned that his Parish had upgraded their street lighting to LED lights using a UK manufacturer that had supplied a light that fitted in well with their surroundings in a Conservation Area. The Officers asked for the details of the supplier to be sent to them
- The Panel was disappointed that the on street electric vehicle charging trial in Worcester City had not been able to proceed and actively encouraged the Council to establish another opportunity
- The Panel commended Prysmian for working throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following information was requested:

- Clarification on the legal position of 'Part Night Switch Off' on major traffic routes
- Clarification of the 13.455p per kwh cost as quoted in the Report
- Request for an update from the reassessment of

the category 3 concrete columns, specifically the number which have been downgraded to category 4 or 5

- How much investment would be required to increase LED installation from 42% to 100% and what would be the payback period for this
- Further information on the Redditch element of the divorced footway programme.

The Panel agreed to wait until the further information had been received before considering any recommendation to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility, however, on information already received there appeared to be strong economic and environmental benefits to work at pace.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and wished to thank Prysmian for their continued efforts through the national lockdown. A general Street Lighting update would be scheduled for 12 months' time.

384 Performance and In-Year Budget Monitoring

Due to time constraints, this Item was deferred. The Chairman reminded the Panel that performance and budget monitoring was also scheduled for the next meeting, however, Members were asked to submit any questions on the presented information to Scrutiny Officers.

385 Work Programme Refresh 2020-21

The Panel had been asked to refresh its Work Programme for 2020-21 in advance of Council approval on 10 September 2020.

Members agreed to prioritise the following topics, in addition to those areas already scheduled:

- Identification and review of diversionary routes (including routes affected by major roadworks). This could include notification to residents on roads affected through social media, electronic signage, controlling traffic at pinch points etc
- Cycling Update (following on from 8 May 2019 Panel Meeting)
- Briefing on Ringway Contract
- Visit to Lydiate Ash Depot – to see real time reporting.

The meeting ended at 5.10 pm

Chairman