

# Infrastructure and Development Select Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting Held on Wednesday 15 March 2023**

**10.00am, held at County Hall, Norwich**

**Present:**

Cllr James Bensly – Chair

Cllr Claire Bowes  
Cllr Graham Carpenter  
Cllr Nick Daubney  
Cllr Chris Dawson  
Cllr Steve Morphew

Cllr Robert Savage  
Cllr Barry Stone  
Cllr Brian Watkins  
Cllr Maxine Webb  
Cllr Tony White

**Also Present:**

Cllr Graham Plant	Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy
Cllr Eric Vardy	Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste

**Also Present:**

Grahame Bygrave	Director of Highways, Transport and Waste, Community and Environmental Services (CES)
Al Collier	Director of Procurement
Jon Franklin	Policy Officer, CES
John Jones	Head of Environment, CES
Nicola Ledain	Committee Officer, Democratic Services
Helen Marshall	Project Manager (Strategy and Delivery), CES
Tom McCabe	Executive Director, CES
Karl Rands	Assistant Director, Highway Services, CES
Sarah Rhoden	Director of Community Learning and Information CES
John Shaw	Developer Services Manager, CES
Jeremy Wiggin	Transforming Cities Manager, CES

## **1. Apologies and substitutions**

- 1.1 Apologies received from Steffan Aquerone (substituted by Brian Watkins), David Bills (substituted by Nick Daubney), Vic Thomson, William Richmond, Jim Moriarty and Chrissie Rumsby (substituted by Steve Morphew).

## **2. Minutes**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2023 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

## **3. Declarations of Interest**

- 3.1 There were no interests declared.

#### **4. Items of Urgent Business**

- 4.1 The Chair took this opportunity to thank Norfolk County Council and the emergency officer that visited as well as the response from Great Yarmouth Borough Council with regards to the coastal erosion that had taken place in his ward of East Flegg and specifically Hembsy. The thoughts of the committee were sent to those residents of Hembsy and the surrounding area that had lost their homes and who were affected by the events.

#### **5. Public Question Time**

- 5.1 There were no public questions received.

#### **6. Local Member Issues / Questions**

- 6.1 There were four local member questions received and these are appended at appendix A. Responses had been given and circulated.
- 6.2 The Chair informed the committee of an email from Cllr Paul Neale regarding his question about no idling signs. He informed the committee that a sign had been costed, supplied and fitted for £150 using Members Discretionary Funding and encouraged other members to use their funds too.

#### **7. School Streets – interim report on School Streets Trial and proposal for the next phase of work.**

- 7.1 The Committee received the report which provided the Committee with an update regarding the School Streets trial which has been up and running since May 2022. The report detailed the next phase of the trial, which would explore different approaches to enforcement of road closures and other complementary school travel related measures.
- 7.2 The following points were noted in response to questions from the Committee:
- 7.2.1 Members were keen for the work to continue. Although cameras were one of the options being considered they were not a default option as some schools were doing well with a volunteer led initiative, but various enforcement options would be reviewed over the next few months. Every school was different and had different ways of interacting with their community and their parents. It was known that a lot of partner agencies were working with schools but often this was in silo. It was hoped that this could be coordinated more effectively so schools were aware of the support available and when in the school year this support could happen.
- 7.2.2 There were several funding avenues such as the Active Travel Fund that could be appropriate for the initiative, and time spent over the next few months would be used to identify and assess these.
- 7.2.3 In terms of timescales, there would be no physical measures before the end of this academic year, softer measures with supporting schools could be considered for a September start.
- 7.2.4 The report indicated that the scheme had been worthwhile and there was an important programme of work for the council to improve active travel in and around schools as well as improving air quality. Members hoped that it would continue and

rolled forward. It was disappointing that there hadn't been a greater take up of the initial six schools involved which could indicate that the scheme couldn't rely on volunteers only.

- 7.2.5 There had initially been a budget of £38k which had been used in full with no overspend.
- 7.2.6 There was some concern expressed regarding enforcement and further investment into this scheme considering the numbers of schools and parents who were engaged with the trial. Congestion affected every school and interventions such as zig zag lines were ineffective unless they were policed. The Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services assured the committee that the emphasis was always about engaging with the community about any measures that were implemented which then self-polices the measures. Government was emphasising active travel and by putting in measures that fitted that criteria there was funding that could be accessed.
- 7.2.7 It was apparent that no one measure would be effective for every school, as it was incredibly difficult to coordinate one system for all.
- 7.2.8 With reference to 1.12, members highlighted that the trial had come from parents and schools that were concerned about the safety of pupils outside the school. It was important to ensure that proper engagement with parents, schools, parishes and the media took place with a clear explanation of what was happening. It was suggested that a progress report came back to the committee later this year with an indicative timescale and more details regarding funding.
- 7.2.9 Officers would be keen to go back to the schools that didn't carry on with the trial, but a lot of data had been collected from. Members asked if local members could continue to be kept informed.
- 7.2.10 Although members were keen to see the trial continue, it would also be beneficial to see some 'softer' options explored with more signage asking for more consideration from the wider community. Hard enforcement options could penalise the ordinary people of the community and it was important to get the balance right. It was highlighted that businesses, residents and other members of the community all had access and were not penalised for living or working near to a school.
- 7.2.11 The following amendment to recommendation 1 was **MOVED** and **CARRIED**; Add 'subject to outside funding made available' to the end of the sentence as follows;

That the Select Committee

1. **NOTED** the interim outcomes of the School Streets trial and the proposal to explore different approaches to enforcement of road closures during the next phase of the trial, subject to outside funding being made available.

### 7.3 **RESOLVED**

That the Select Committee

2. **NOTED** the interim outcomes of the School Streets trial and the proposal to explore different approaches to enforcement of road closures during the next phase of the trial, subject to outside funding made available.

3. **COMMENTED** on the proposals for work to be undertaken during 2023 to identify a package of interventions aimed at encouraging more sustainable and more active travel to school.

## 8. **Winter Service Policy Review**

- 8.1 The Committee received the report which provided an updated version of the policy having been some significant changes, national developments and events in the delivery of the winter service.
- 8.2 It was clarified that the trunk road network such as A11 and A47 was treated by National Highways and not the County Council.
- 8.3 Members complimented the highways teams who looked after the roads in the winter period. It was also commendable that improvements to the gritting routines, salt and vehicles used were always being looked at. Digital technology and innovation put Norfolk County Council at the forefront of winter service delivery nationally.
  - 8.3.1 With regards to paragraph 7.3, and the mention of older and disabled people with mobility issues and the gritting of pathways. Officers reassured the committee that the current arrangements were sufficient and that in times of severe weather conditions, district colleagues could be called upon to assist in the clearing of pathways. There were also nearly 2,000 grit bins around the county which were strategically located for the public to use.
  - 8.3.2 Electric gritter fleet options were not available on the market yet, but there was work being carried out which was looking at alternative fuels and to reduce carbon impact.
  - 8.3.3 Due to limited resources and limited timescales of putting the salt down before the formation of ice, road networks were treated in priority order such as A, B and some C roads. There would be a significant resource required to treat cycleways in icy weather. Members asked if there could be a way of looking into treating more cycleways especially as there was encouragement for the public to use alternative methods of transport.
  - 8.3.4 Discussions were ongoing with district colleagues about the removal of rubbish on the verges of the highways. It was clarified that litter picking was a district / borough council function.
  - 8.3.5 Members asked if the change of grit bin purchasing to local members through their local member fund could be reviewed. Once it was purchased by the local member it meant that there was then an ongoing commitment to maintain the grit bin through the local member fund. Officers agreed to look into this suggestion.

## 8.4 **RESOLVED**

That The Committee **REVIEWED** and **COMMENTED** on the updated Winter Service Policy.

## 9. **Providing Highways and Transport Development Management Advice to Local Planning Authority's in Norfolk**

- 9.1 The Committee received the report which set out how planning consultations with Local Highways Authorities were dealt with, following a request at the Infrastructure and Development Select Committee on 15 November 2022.
- 9.2 The following points were noted in response to questions from the Committee:
- 9.2.1 Officers confirmed that the council do charge external organisations for any planning advice that they offered as part of the income stream of the service, as approved by Cabinet in July 2022. With regards to the national planning applications such as offshore windfarms etc, the cost charged reflected that the most experienced officers were involved and their posts needing backfilling
- 9.2.2 Members asked for the opportunity to look in more detail at the mechanism of the consultee responses and what ~~was~~ the national and local policies were.
- 9.2.3 A task and finish group was proposed to carry this out with a composition of 3-1-1. After a show of hands, this proposal was **CARRIED**.
- 9.3 **RESOLVED**
- That the Committee
1. **ACKNOWLEDGED** the high service levels consistently handled by the teams who provide technical advice to the LPA, which are predominantly responded to with 21 days of receipt.
  2. **ACKNOWLEDGED** that an enhanced training programme for elected members on the role of the LHA in the planning process would be beneficial
  3. **AGREED** that a task and finish group should be set up to look at the mechanisms of the consultee responses on planning application and that the composition on the task and finish group should consist of three conservatives, one labour and one liberal democrat member.

## 10. Norfolk County Council Climate Strategy

- 10.1 The Committee received the report which set out the formal strategy articulating in a single place the council's wide range of actions on tackling climate change. The strategy brings together NCC's strategic approach to address its own estate emissions and support Norfolk's transition to a low carbon and climate resilient future. It also highlights interlinking issues that need to be addressed in a holistic manner, particularly conserving and enhancing Norfolk's unique landscapes and wildlife.
- 10.2 The Chair highlighted that this was a good piece of work and thanked the officers for their hard work.
- 10.3 The Committee heard that some work was being carried out regarding the savings generated from the new hybrid way of working. In essence it had been revealed that the savings on the commute outweigh the savings from heating homes. The possibility of offering employees initiatives in solar power and insulation was being looked at through the Norfolk Rewards project.
- 10.4 Officers explained that the change of working practices as a result of the Covid pandemic had resulted in mileage being half of what it was pre-pandemic. Although

it was the pandemic that had pushed that change, the rebound of mileage returning to its pre-pandemic levels had been avoided.

- 10.5 The Committee were reminded that there was the Environmental Oversight Working Group, which although was felt was limited in its remit, was in place to provide that oversight for members. Engagement with public bodies and industries regarding the strategy would hopefully happen over the Spring and Summer. It was generally agreed that a climate policy was needed which was broader than the environmental policy that currently existed. Members were also reminded that there would be a quarterly update for members which should start soon.
- 10.6 Members welcomed the report and although some still wanted the council to declare a climate emergency, this was a positive sign that the council had started some initiatives that were due to start. The work that and effort that officers had put into the report was appreciated.
- 10.7 Officers explained that there were new planning obligations that were due to be introduced later in the year which required developers to provide biodiversity net gain, and this would become active law in November. Defra was engaging with NCC and NCC's team were engaging with planners to ensure they were prepared, and to ensure that it benefited the public and the wider communities as it would be vitally important. The government were also expecting Norfolk to provide local nature recovery across the whole county which was an ambitious and considerable piece of work. A map would be produced which identified which nature area was best to be recovered, some of which was owned privately and some publicly. Bearing this in mind, it was important that engagement was taken place and the community was involved. It was expected that this piece of work would return to the committee and taken to Cabinet with more detail. Guidance was expected from Defra soon, especially as with the expectation to be ready by November. As soon as the advice was known, elected members would be made aware.
- 10.8 Performance was difficult to compare against others as the benchmarking used was often different. In proposing to set emission targets, NCC had explicitly set a target of reducing gross emissions down by 90%. In comparison, districts were making substantial progress by, for example, moving into efficient buildings. All councils were trying to move together and good progress was being made across the county.
- 10.9 There had been further funding regarding electric vehicle charging points which had been a joint project with District Council due to the positioning of those charging points which were often in market towns.
- 10.10 The Facet project was hugely successful, and in the last week had submitted an UKBI bid, the outcome of which would be known in September. Positive findings from the Facet project would be repeated and expanded upon in the rest of the coastal areas. Strategically, NCC were actively engaging with the Visit East of England and NCC would investigate developing the notion of sustainable tourism such as low impact tourism which was good for economy and good for the tourism. Investment in the Norfolk trails was also a good offering for tourism in Norfolk as well as for the environment.
- 10.11 There were comments made regarding the lack of mention of the Norwich Western Link (NWL) in the report, especially with regards to nature recovery. The Executive Director of Community and Environmental services explained that the NWL would

drop the number of vehicle kilometres as it would provide a more direct route and therefore in turn reduce the carbon made by vehicles. The business case for the NWL which would be judged against the national planning rules which would be tested at public inquiry.

- 10.12 The market had now reached the point where electric vehicles were comparable to purchase due to the lower cost to run them and therefore discussions with District Colleagues were taking place in terms of carrying passengers to schools as licensing etc had to be taken into consideration. However the market hadn't quite achieved this with minibuses which was expected to be at least another 4-5 years. More significantly was the aim to reduce journey lengths and times, from a wellbeing point of view and a carbon point of view, and the expansion of the specialist provision for Children's services was important to achieve this.
- 10.13 With reference to paragraph 2.2.7, it was unsure what the expected cost to the estate would be to replace the fleet with electric vehicles. There had not been the commitment to replace all the fleet, but when vehicles came to the end of their life, there was now the position to replace them with electric types as the price was comparable due to the lower cost to run them.
- 10.14.1 It was proposed that Cabinet considered a request from the committee for council to include a climate policy
- 10.14.2 After a show of hands, the proposal was **CARRIED**, with 7 in favour
- 10.15 **RESOLVED**

That the Committee

**A. REVIEWED** and **COMMENTED** on the attached climate strategy (appendix A), which is to go to Cabinet;

**B. ENDORSED** the inclusion of our vehicle fleet carbon into our estate definition (and hence within our 2030 net zero estate target), and

**C. REQUESTED** Cabinet to consider producing a climate policy for council to include in the policy framework later this year.

## **11. Forward Work Programme**

- 11.1 The Select Committee received the report by the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services which set out the Forward Work Programme for the Committee to enable the Committee to review and shape.
- 11.2 Having reviewed the report, the Select Committee **AGREED** the Forward Work Programme set out in Appendix A.

The meeting closed at 12.40pm

## Chair



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**Infrastructure and Development Committee**  
**15 March 2023**  
**Public & Local Member Questions**

<b>Agenda item 5</b>	<b>Public Question Time</b>
5.1	No questions received.
<b>Agenda item 6</b>	<b>Local Member Issues/Questions</b>
6.1	<p><b>Question from Cllr Steffan Aquarone</b>  What incentives or pressures are being put on bus operators to refresh and improve their current vehicle fleets, not only for the purpose of improving emissions, but to also see the addition of standard features such as luggage racks, seat comfort, and Wi-Fi? I am especially interested in the route that runs through Briston.</p> <p><b>Response from the Chair, Cllr James Bensly</b>  All operators are encouraged to invest in their fleet and they do have an ongoing fleet replacement programme. However, without any specific funding to offer them there is little pressure we can give as we do not control the operators and services that they provide. If we specified a higher specification vehicle as part of any tendering process for County Council supported services, this would lead to cost pressures on our revenue budget (which is the case with the Briston service). However, whilst none of the Bus Service Improvement Plan funding was given specifically for vehicle replacements, we are asking operators to provide their own improvements to vehicles where they either receive BSIP funding for improving one of their services or where we provide a specific bus priority measure on a route. The Council will also proactively look for external funding opportunities, like our recent ZEBRA (zero emission bus) award, which will see 70 new, high specification electric buses coming to Norfolk</p>
6.2	<p><b>Question from Cllr Ben Price</b>  It is good to see that the council is now considering ANPR cameras for school streets. Green councillors submitted a budget amendment to provide capital for purchase of ANPR cameras, but all other parties (Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat) failed to support that. Does the Committee now agree that there is a need for capital to be committed to ANPR cameras so that school streets programmes can go ahead?</p> <p><b>Response from the Chair, Cllr James Bensly</b>  At the current time, the provision of cameras is only an option to consider for the enforcement of temporary road closures outside schools and there are no firm plans to roll this out. The next phase of the School Streets trial will explore different approaches to enforcement and complementary school travel related measures, and will identify funding requirements, both capital and revenue, that would be required to take this forward.</p> <p><b>Second question from Cllr Ben Price</b>  Many residents and taxi drivers have reported that private cars are driving through the multi-million pound bus gates that have been installed recently, apparently with</p>

	<p>no enforcement. Will the ANPR cameras be available to use to ensure that the bus gates are used effectively?</p> <p><b>Response from the Chair, Cllr James Bensly</b> We will continue to monitor traffic using bus gates and implement measures, such as ANPR cameras, that are appropriate to ensuring bus gates are used effectively.</p>
6.3	<p><b>Question from Cllr Jamie Osborn</b> It is good to see seven coherent themes in the Climate Change Strategy. These, and the sectoral focus, provide a decent foundation for a strategic approach to addressing carbon emissions areawide. What is needed now is a more detailed evidence base on which to base policy - eg: the retrofitting skills gap, or the nature, distance and concentration of car journeys, so that policy can be focused on addressing these. Does the Committee agree that a more detailed strategic evidence base is needed?</p> <p><b>Response from the Chair, Cllr James Bensly</b> Thank you for your question. As you highlight, the climate strategy sets out a strategic framework of focus areas for organising the council's efforts to tackle climate change. The use of focus areas reflects a central principle of the council's strategic approach: targeting our efforts and resources where we feel we can have real impact, rather than trying to do anything and everything.</p> <p>In relation to county-wide emissions, it is important to recognise that local areas vary in relation to their building stocks, energy networks, travel patterns, transport infrastructure, industries, and land use patterns, among other things. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to local area decarbonisation and clean growth, nor to adaptation.</p> <p>As the upper-tier local authority for Norfolk, NCC can play a key role in helping shape the county's response to climate change in a way that reflects the local context and priorities. There is much merit in a strong, up-to-date evidence base, which where relevant is specific to the county, is needed for each focus area. This can guide our efforts to bring maximum benefits in line with the needs and priorities of Norfolk's residents and businesses.</p> <p><b>Second question from Cllr Jamie Osborn</b> The Climate Change Committee recommends a roughly 12% reduction in total car mileage in order to meet climate change targets. Will the Committee discuss whether a target for reducing total car miles should be set for Norfolk?</p> <p><b>Response from the Chair, Cllr James Bensly</b> The council is taking a wide range of actions that encourage a shift from private car usage towards public transport or active travel. We refer you to Focus Area 3 of the strategy for detail on these and forward-looking priorities. More specifically to your question, we note that the Climate Change Committee doesn't recommend that local authorities set county-wide sectoral carbon budgets given that there are a range of factors affecting these emissions which are out of councils' direct control. The metric you highlight of reducing Norfolk's car mileage is an equivalent type of target in that many of its determinants lie out of our control. Therefore, a hard target as you propose for the council to deliver on reducing car mileage is not considered appropriate. But it would be appropriate to consider what further interventions the council can make to mitigate the emissions from personal travel, and how the</p>

	intervention designs and measurements of success can draw on the evidence base discussed in the answer to your first question.
6.4	<p><b>Question from Cllr Paul Neale</b>  When children are dropped off or picked up outside schools, far too many cars are left idling, producing enough toxic exhaust fumes to fill one pair of adult lungs 60 times a minute. In my ward I used discretionary funding to produce an initial design for idling signage from drawings produced by local school children, so the cost will be relatively small to roll this out to all schools. Will Norfolk County Council provide no idling signage outside every school in the County?</p> <p><b>Response from the Chair, Cllr James Bensly</b>  We will be happy to consider the impact that no idling signage could have outside schools as part of the complementary school travel related measures being looked at as part of the next phase of the School Streets trial.</p> <p><b>Second question from Cllr Paul Neale</b>  Item 2.27 of the Norfolk County Councils climate strategy says 'retrofitting buildings to improve insulation and replace fossil-fuel heating systems with electric or low carbon alternatives'. Was this ambition applied when County Hall had its recent major refurbishment?</p> <p><b>Response from the Chair, Cllr James Bensly</b>  Members may have seen the Scrutiny papers on the refurbishment – where this was discussed at length.</p> <p>As part of the County Hall refurb – principles around low energy use were implemented. In particular there was significant investment into the fabric of the building and the cladding, windows, and external façade of the building. There are powerful infra-red pictures that show the heat loss pre-and post-renovation works.</p> <p>Gas boilers were largely replaced and there was significant investment into low energy LED lights, as well as modern building management systems to intelligently control and minimise energy usage. This has resulted in a significant fall in the use of gas to power the building – there are however a number of small gas systems (mainly to help pre-heat air), which it is proposed to remove as part of the next phase of the decarbonisation works.</p> <p>County Hall was well ahead of the curve in terms of energy reduction, with this being one of the key project deliverables (for a project that completed in 2016).</p>