

Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5 October 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Alex Anderson (Chair), David Van Day (Vice-Chair), Tom Kelly, Martin Kerin, Graham Snell and Lee Watson

In attendance: Shane Hebb, Ward Councillor Stanford-le-Hope West
Julie Nelder, Assistant Director of Highways, Fleet and Logistics
Leigh Nicholson, Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection
Keith Rumsey, Interim Assistant Director, Regeneration and Place Delivery
Sarah Bennett, Assistant Fleet and Logistic Manager
Phil Carver, Strategic Lead Enforcement and Community Protection
Matthew Ford, Chief Engineer
Mat Kiely, Transportation Services Strategic Lead
Lisa Preston, Enforcement Operations Manager
Navtej Tung, Strategic Transport Manager
Grace Le, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

The Chair stated that there was a time limit for the use of the Beehive venue which was until 9.30pm. He said that if the items on the agenda were not concluded by 9.30pm, the meeting would be adjourned and would recommence at the next Planning, Transport, Regeneration (PTR) Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 7 December 2021.

As the Extraordinary PTR O&S meeting on 15 September 2021 had been postponed to the 5 October 2021 meeting, the Chair opened the agenda for 15 September 2021. He stated that the items on the agenda had been rearranged for the 5 October 2021 meeting and that he had agreed for the Thurrock Transport Strategy and Vision update to be circulated to Members as a briefing note. He closed the agenda for the 15 September 2021 meeting and went on to open the agenda for the 5 October 2021 meeting.

10. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2021 were approved as a true and correct record.

11. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The Chair asked the Committee if they were happy to approve the Thurrock Transport Strategy and Vision Briefing Note that had been circulated to Members. The Committee did not agree this briefing note as it had only been circulated the day before the meeting.

12. Declaration of Interests

In regards to item 6, Councillor Snell declared that he lived in a Permitted Parking Area (PPA).

13. Flooding in Thurrock

The report was presented by Navtej Tung.

The Chair queried how effective the 'innovative techniques' would be in preventing future flood events. Navtej Tung explained that the purpose of the project was to identify how effective these techniques would be. He said that some implemented measures had shown to be effective and there were some measures to be implemented as it required more work with Riparian land owners. The project was currently at a business case scenario and more details would be brought back to committee.

Referring to 3.5 on page 17, Councillor Kerin sought further detail on whether the test cases had been completed yet and asked for a briefing note to update the committee on the test cases. In regards to the action plan, he asked what actions had been completed for the committee to endorse and queried whether there was flood strategy in place before the flooding incidents that had occurred in January 2021. Navtej Tung answered that the test cases were not completed yet and that the service was working with the Enforcement Team to manage these. The next step would be to issue the section 25 process. He said that an update would be shared with a full list of the measures and processes to be implemented. He went on to say that there were processes for flooding issues in place before January 2021 but there had not been many flooding incidents before this time. Since the incidents, it had enabled the service to work better with other council departments to improve the council's flooding strategy.

Councillor Watson queried the timeline for the action plan. She highlighted concerns of the coming winter season, climate change issues and that parts of Thurrock were at higher risk particularly areas that were on a flood plain. Navtej Tung answered that the timeline was dependent on a number of factors that included resourcing as there was currently one staff member in the Flood Team. Some measures were easily undertaken such as updating the flood information on the Council's website and some measures would take longer such enforcement processes as it involved legal input. He said that the action plan was constantly reviewed and would ideally be implemented by the end of the year. The biggest challenge was in how to make residents more

aware of managing and preventing flood issues. Mat Kiely added that the service was looking at the service's internal structure to find the resources to support the Flood Team.

Councillor Snell queried the process that followed a flooding report from residents and the contact number for flooding reports. Navtej Tung said that the Highways Team would provide sandbags to reported flood issues for immediate protection. He explained that the protection of the home would be the responsibility of the homeowner. He stated that the improvement on the website would provide a number to call for these sandbags and to report flood issues.

The Chair invited Councillor Hebb to speak as the Ward Councillor for Stanford-le-Hope West where most of the flooding incidents in January 2021 had occurred. Councillor Hebb thanked officers for the report and the discussion that had taken place which had given context to the flooding issues. He thanked Julie Nelder for her support and help in the flooding incidents in January 2021. He mentioned that these flooding issues had not occurred in his ward before and many of his constituents had felt stressed and upset and he pointed out that the flooding strategy would need a multi-agency approach going forward to prevent potential future flooding incidents. He requested that the Committee look into sending a representative to sit on the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee to ensure that Thurrock was equipped with the right flood defences. He highlighted the need for the service to work with the Enforcement Team on the flood prevention processes and asked that the phone number for flood management issues be included in the Members Induction handbook. He asked whether there would be flood drills and if residents could be included in these. The Chair agreed and asked if the phone number would be easily searched online through Google search. Navtej Tung answered that the phone number would be easy to find and designed to be easily located if searched on the Thurrock website.

RESOLVED:

Members of the committee were asked to note this report and endorse the action plan set out at 3.1.

14. Parking Policy and Strategy and Parking Design & Development Standards

The report was presented by Navtej Tung.

The Chair noted that there were 1.5 spaces per dwelling in flats with medium accessibility and commented that the bare minimum was too low as page 38 showed that there was an increase in car ownership. He questioned whether it was unreasonable to ask for a higher minimum of car parking spaces.

Matthew Ford explained that extensive research had been undertaken in the car parking standards which had been based on Chafford Hundred as a viable research area. The research had looked at how various government parking

policies had affected the development over the past 20 years. There had been a very high level of parking provision until 2013 when the government applied the Planning Policy Guidance 2013 (PPG2013) for maximum parking standards and developers had to reduce the level of parking demand by providing a lower parking standard. The research had identified on the eastern side of Chafford Hundred, there had been a very high level of parking provision at the start but most of that relied on off street parking or garage spaces due to people converting their garages or extending out onto their driveways. In western Chafford Hundred, there were more on street parking and allocated parking spaces so the level of parking was quite consistent.

Matthew Ford went on to say that since 2013, the PPG2013 had been removed as a policy statement and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provided guidance on a more reasonable approach to parking spaces which should be based on local circumstances. The Council had considered a range of parking scenarios for flats and houses to ensure the right mix in the right location.

Referring to page 39 on car ownership figures in Thurrock from the 2011 census data, Matthew Ford gave examples of Aveley Upland and Grays Riverside which showed a level of consistent car ownership with the one to two parking provisions. He pointed out that the increase in car ownership between 2001 and 2011 was not enough to change parking standards. He said that the service worked with developers on parking spaces to reduce car ownership for their sites otherwise they would not be able to provide the density needed on the site. Parking provision was taken into consideration on certain sites such as a recent development near a school which had a rigid one space per unit provision for two, three, and four bedroom properties. The Highways Team had identified that there was a very high level of on-street parking provision that would overspill onto the road network so they had requested for more parking spaces as part of these standards. This would also enable people to install electric vehicle charging points on their properties. The service encouraged developers from providing garage spaces to avoid conversion of these into rooms which would reduce a parking space on a property. For four or more bedroom properties, the service requested for an additional parking space due to larger amount of people living in those properties. The Council's parking standards was evidence based on the census 2011 data and the research undertaken and would be looking into the census 2021 data once it was ready.

In regards to flats with high accessibility, the Chair noted that zero spaces were allocated per dwelling and questioned this. Matthew Ford answered that this was an opportunity for a car free development where the use of a car club could be provided. He said that based on research did not necessarily wish to own a car but to have access to one instead. This was ideal for people who commuted regularly but only needed a car for the weekend.

Referring to pages 56 and 124 in regards to school parking, Councillor Kerin queried how the Council supported schools and residents in school areas with parking issues. Matthew Ford answered that there was a parking standard for

schools and that schools had to provide an adequate drop off and pick up point within the school's site. He said that it was for schools to provide a travel plan to the Council and there was a Road Safety Team that worked with schools. There were planning and transport policies that schools needed to comply with.

Councillor Kerin pointed out that in some schools that had expanded, there was not enough space for a drop off and pick up point and that this was only possible in a newly built school who had that space. He felt that this was a highways issue as it required making the roads around schools accessible. Navtej Tung said that there were measures in place to resolve these issues such as closing a road during school rush hours which the service had undertaken recently through working with residents. The process was to engage with schools on these issues and to improve road safety whilst minimising traffic impact to local residents.

Referring to page 52 in regards to parking permits, Councillor Kerin noted that the Council aimed to be more sustainable but pointed out that public transport was not ideal for families. He said that it was not the right time to increase permit fees either and was not happy to endorse these increases as set out in the report's recommendations. Phil Carver explained that the fee increases were only applied on the third permit and not the first and second permits.

Referring to page 69, Councillor Snell said that whilst there were parking facilities at train stations, people did not use these and parked in residential areas around the station. This was the issue for Ockendon hence why a PPA was implemented. He felt it was unfair to make residents pay for their own permits. He noted the charges on electric vehicles and pointed out that the infrastructure for electric vehicles in Thurrock was not ready yet. He went on to say that people needed a car to drive around Thurrock as the bus and rail links were not good and people were only to get around Thurrock but not outside of Thurrock. The Chair agreed and noted an introduction of a new tax on vehicles as reported on page 61. He stated that he could not endorse the recommendations in the report either.

Referring to the new tax on page 61, Matthew Ford explained that the tax was in regards to air quality and that the charges would encourage use of electric vehicles. This was a strategy for the Council to possibly explore but would not necessarily implement. The Chair felt that this option should not be explored until 5 to 10 years later.

Councillor Watson agreed with Members and said that there were not enough electric vehicle charging points in the borough. She said that there were planning issues with parking spaces and decreasing the amount of spaces did not help. She noted that London boroughs had limited parking spaces and pointed out that Thurrock was not part of London and the Council should only be considering what Thurrock needed. Councillor Kelly said that it was good to see the parking standards refreshed but felt that the standards needed to be increased and referred to recent developments of The Springhouse Club and Thames school. In regards to school drop off and pick up points, he said

that parents did not go into school sites to use these as it was hard for them to get out afterwards. He did not agree with the use of a car club as it may not work in Thurrock and said that he would not endorse the report's recommendations. He also suggested that there should be large parking bays for delivery vehicles to use on large developments.

In regards to the Springhouse Club, Matthew Ford explained that the development was in a medium accessible zone and had complied with parking standards but noted that Members had been able to compel the developers to increase the parking spaces. He went on to say that the parking standards had been implemented since 2012 and had been tested in planning appeals and that the standards were based on evidence. He also explained that the service was currently in the tender process for an electric vehicle partner to install the charging points as outlined in the report to PTR back in January 2021. Navtej Tung added that the car clubs were based on research.

Mat Kiely explained that the wider vision of the parking standards was set out in the Transport Strategy which encouraged people to use other modes of transports. The service was exploring ways to improve walking and cycling networks with more accessible routes as well as opportunities to encourage greater use of sustainable travel modes such as bus and rail. He said that with more homes, there would be an increased pressure on the road network, if active Travel and sustainable travel alternatives were not supported and enhanced as Local Plan growth aspirations were developed. There needed to be a balanced approach.

The Committee stated that they could not endorse and agree the recommendations as set out in the report.

UNRESOLVED:

1.1 To note and endorse the Parking Policy and Strategy document for adoption by Thurrock Council.

1.2 To note and endorse the Parking Design & Development Standards document for adoption by Thurrock Council.

1.3 To note and endorse the Parking Enforcement Strategy document for adoption by Thurrock Council

15. Procurement of Fuel Cards

The report was presented by Sarah Bennett.

The Vice-Chair asked if there were other fuel card providers that the service had considered. Sarah Bennett explained that other fuel card providers were considered in the procurement process but the service had to be particular in who to choose in regards to fuel station locations that accepted fuel cards and costs.

RESOLVED:

Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee were requested to:

1.1 Note the content contained within the report and;

1.2 To provide Cabinet with any relevant observations or recommendations to aid their consideration of this proposed procurement.

16. A13 Widening Project

The report was presented by Keith Rumsey.

The Chair sought clarification on the completion date of the project. Keith Rumsey answered that the forecasted date was February 2022.

Councillor Kerin felt that the report was short and did not have enough details considering the number of issues with the project. He referred to the July 2020 report on the project which had given a completion date of Autumn/Winter 2021. He said that the completion date was constantly pushed back from the original date of 28 October 2019. He noted that the report in July 2020 had costs on the project and questioned the current cost of the project. Keith Rumsey explained that the figures were being looked at and there were compensation events to negotiate with the contractor so was unable to provide the costs yet. He would provide information concerning the number of compensation events.

Councillor Snell pointed out that the costs of the project would need to be known soon. He mentioned that a barrier had been completed on the project but was demolished shortly after and questioned if this was a compensation event and whether it had caused a delay to the project. Keith Rumsey explained that the cause was likely to be a design element which was the Contractors responsibility but this was complicated by a number of parties contributing to the design inputs. This could have a minor impact to the schedule which was why the forecasted date for completion was February 2022.

Councillor Watson raised concerns on the completion of the project which was now delayed by two years and also wished to know the costs. She said that the A13 was closed every weekend for the works which caused traffic issues in Thurrock. She asked whether there were more planned weekend closures. She also requested that the report come back to every committee meeting for the rest of the municipal year and for a breakdown of the costs to be included in those reports. Keith Rumsey answered that there would be three more planned weekend closures.

Councillor Kerin proposed a recommendation to be added – ‘To request Cabinet to commission a LGA peer review into the A13 project’ which

Councillor Watson seconded. He said that the review should provide the service with learning outcomes. The Chair, Vice-Chair, Councillors Kelly and Snell voted against the proposed recommendation.

RESOLVED:

That the Planning, Transportation and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and commented on the report content.

17. Stanford-le-Hope Interchange Report

The report was presented by Keith Rumsey.

Councillor Kerin stated that the report was not detailed enough and pointed out that the July 2020 report on this project had reported no delays and had a completion date of August 2021. He questioned when the project and each of its phases would be completed and the final estimated budget. He also asked if the Daybreak Windows site would be part of the hub. Keith Rumsey answered that the completion dates were indicative only and subject to the tender process which was currently in process. The commencement date for phase 1 was potentially September 2022 with potential completion around December 2023 and phase 2 would start afterwards. He was unable to give further details due to the confidential nature of the tender process.

The Committee asked that the report be brought back to each meeting with the milestones completed on the project timeline along with costs. The reports needed to include completion dates for each phase and more details of the project.

RESOLVED:

That the Planning Transport Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and commented on the information provided relating to the Stanford le Hope Interchange project.

18. Bus Service Improvement Plan

The report was presented by Navtej Tung.

At 8.27pm, the Committee agreed to suspend standing orders to allow the agenda to be completed.

Councillor Snell noted that there was a total of 100 responses on page 190 and commented that this was not enough people to give a representative view of the bus service in Thurrock. He stated that bus services could be better and that it was mostly used by people who did not have a car and that it would be hard to persuade car users to take a bus instead of driving. He pointed out that Thurrock was not similar to London or other cities so the bus network would not necessarily work in Thurrock. He also raised concerns over traffic issues with buses. Navtej Tung said that it was worth trying to persuade

people to use a bus instead of a car and this could be done by providing more bus services in Thurrock. He said that buses should be used and not seen as a last resort mode of transport or for non-car users only.

Councillor Kerin commented that integration was a key point and that Thurrock needed to work with neighbouring boroughs to join bus routes as people wanted to travel outside of Thurrock as well. He questioned the amount of funding that the Council could receive from the £3 billion from government. He also asked when the bus services plan would be implemented. Navtej Tung answered that the service was looking into integrated fares and engaging with other boroughs to explore options with other bus operators. He stated that funding was needed to explore these options. He explained that the first step was to develop the BSIP and integrate this into the Thurrock Transport Strategy which would be revised as part of the submission to government for the funding. He went on to say that there were a number of measures needed to support the BSIP that included the Local Plan.

Councillor Snell stated that he did not agree with or endorse the recommendations.

UNRESOLVED:

To note and endorse the Bus Service Improvement Plan for adoption by Thurrock Council.

19. Approach to the Local Plan

The report was presented by Leigh Nicholson.

Councillor Kerin stated that the Local Plan needed to include specific details on social housing in addition to affordable housing. He also said that the cultural assets of Thurrock needed to be preserved. Leigh Nicholson said that a report on the Models of Housing was due in the next Local Development Plan Task Force meeting which could be circulated to the Committee as a briefing note.

Councillor Watson said that the housing strategy and green spaces strategy needed to be included in the Local Plan. Regarding the technical studies in 3.6, she asked when these would be ready. Leigh Nicholson answered that these strategies were linked to the Local Plan and also fell in with the design charrettes. He referred to 3.5 and said that the service continued to work on the technical studies and the evidence from these would help to support the Local Plan which was constantly refreshed.

RESOLVED:

1.1 That the Committee noted the report and provide comment on the approach being adopted by the Council in preparing a new Local Plan.

1.2 That the Committee continued to receive regular progress reports on the preparation of the Local Plan and provides oversight of the Plan making process.

20. Work Programme

The following reports were added to the work programme:

- A13 Widening Project (to include costs, completion dates and more details) – 7 December 2021 and 1 February 2022.
- Stanford-le-Hope (to include costs, project timeline, completion dates for each phase and more details) – 7 December 2021 and 1 February 2022.
- Paid for Car Parking – 7 December 2021.

The Committee agreed for the Approach to Local Plan report on 7 December 2021 to go as a briefing note instead.

The meeting finished at 8.59 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**