

Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 January 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Alex Anderson (Chair), John Allen (Vice-Chair), Robert Gledhill, Tom Kelly, Kairen Raper and Lee Watson

In attendance:

Michael Dineen, Assistant Director Counter Fraud, Enforcement and Community Safety
Matthew Ford, Chief Engineer
Jonathan Keen, Principal Planner
Mat Kiely, Transportation Services Strategic Lead
Leigh Nicholson, Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection
Peter Wright, Strategic Lead of Highways and Infrastructure
Rhiannon Whiteley, 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.

27. Minutes

The Minutes of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 23 November 2022 were approved as a correct record.

The Minutes of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 6 December 2022 were approved as a correct record save that on page 12 where it refers to members seeking a consultation with ward members regarding parking permit fees this should have also said a consultation with residents was sought.

28. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

29. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Gledhill confirmed that with regard to the potential change for parking permits, he declared that he does live within one of the zones.

30. Portfolio Holder Annual Report for Transport and Public Safety

Councillor Maney presented the report to the Committee. He confirmed that whilst his portfolio covers highways, transport and community safety, the

community safety part of the report is not relevant to this Committee and that the appropriate Committee to discuss those parts of the portfolio would be at the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Maney summarised that Thurrock has an extensive road network with 545km of carriage way that require year-round maintenance. He confirmed that 5087 inspections have been completed as a result of people reporting issues on the highways on the Council's website. He stated that every school in Thurrock has been offered some sort of road safety training. He highlighted that there is a bus shelter replacement programme underway to replace 71 bus shelters.

Councillor Maney confirmed that car cruises around Lakeside remains an ongoing problem and a task force has been set up to try and find a solution to this.

Councillor Maney stated that the parking enforcement officers team is growing and they are close to doubling the size of the team and they are working towards a 24/7 operation. 6434 PCN's have been issued for HGV parking infringements.

The Chair thanked Councillor Maney for attending the Committee.

Councillor Kelly noted that there will be increased freight trains to Tilbury docks and questioned whether there will be infrastructure put in place in East Tilbury to reduce pressure on the network.

Councillor Maney agreed that the crossings are at capacity now and with the freeport coming and more homes being built, investment in the rail infrastructure is essential.

Councillor Raper noted that there were a lot of abbreviations and acronyms in the report and she requested that the names are given in full in the future. She queried how projected projects will be affected by the Council's financial situation.

Councillor Maney responded that he could not answer the question at this time.

Councillor Allen raised concerns regarding increased transport around the Thurrock ports in particular the ASDA roundabout and queried the future for that roundabout.

Councillor Maney stated that there were incidents on that roundabout with trailers overturning, it is taking too much traffic and something needs to be done. It is a major entrance and exit into Tilbury. He referred the question to officers.

The Chief Engineer responded that the junction is a National Highways asset and not a Thurrock Council asset. He confirmed that they will be lobbying for enhancement of that junction and tying it into the local plan.

Councillor Allen noted that he had raised concerns to National Highways about debris around the ASDA roundabout but nothing has been done.

The Strategic Lead for Transport Services responded that he will pass the comments on to National Highways and Connect Plus as they are the contractor for National Highways who completes this work.

Councillor Gledhill noted that it was positive the Tilbury cycle path opening times were extended but questioned the lack of quantitative measurement of its success.

Councillor Maney stated that the information he has received from officers is that it is a success and as it is open for longer it is reaching more people. Councillor Gledhill queried why not one electrical vehicle charging point was installed at the new Beaconsfield development.

Councillor Maney responded that electrical vehicle charging points are something being looked at in the planning process and the local plan. The current focus is on providing charging points at central locations such as town centres and other strategic locations rather than individual streets.

Councillor Gledhill highlighted that in his view it had been better dealing with portfolio holder reports at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting rather than at Cabinet meetings as a lot more questions can be asked.

Councillor Watson queried what it would require to get more electric charging points installed as quite a few residents have asked about this.

Councillor Maney stated that he had also been approached by residents requesting electric charging points outside their homes and whilst he agreed they need to make them as accessible as possible in the Borough they are focussing now on putting them in strategic places.

The Chief Engineer confirmed his team is responsible for electrical vehicle planning and it is being included in the local plan as a policy. The focus is on main town centres such as Grays, Corringham and South Ockendon. They will also be looking at provision for those who don't have off street parking. The Council has commissioned 4 charging points in two locations. A bid has also been completed for 13 locations with a total of 70 charging points.

Councillor Watson complimented the work completed regarding road safety.

The Chair passed on his thanks to the Highways Infrastructure Team for their support in filling in the tunnels produced by the Just Stop Oil protestors and for acting swiftly.

31. Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy 2023/24

The Assistant Director of Planning and Growth confirmed that this item has come back to the Committee due to two areas only concerning building control fees and parking permits and paragraphs 5.4 and 6.3 of the report have been updated.

The Chair queried if there has been any consultation with residents about the parking permit charges since the last meeting.

The Assistant Director for Counter Fraud, Enforcement and Community Safety responded that they have not engaged with the entire community regarding the permits.

The Chair stated that he did not like the charges for home owners to park outside their property and he was not comfortable with this without sufficient consultation with residents.

The Assistant Director for Counter Fraud, Enforcement and Community Safety responded that it is not a charge for parking outside your own home. It allows priority parking for residents over commuters and visitors so they can park outside their home or close to it. The Assistant Director for Counter Fraud, Enforcement and Community Safety stated that the proposed parking charges are extremely low and a lot of research has been completed with neighbouring boroughs regarding their charges and the charges being proposed are a lot cheaper. The closest charge is 50% more and the most expensive was 400% more.

Councillor Allen commented that he saw it as a fee to park outside your own home. For many years residents have been able to park outside their home for free. It is commuter parking that is forcing this and in his opinion it is a stealth tax put on residents due to the Council's financial situation.

The Assistant Director for Counter Fraud, Enforcement and Community Safety responded that these discussions have been ongoing for a long time and are not linked to the Council's financial situation. It is a realistic policy and one that has been thoroughly thought out.

Councillor Allen stated that he supports a full consultation with residents that live in the parking zones on this.

Councillor Watson queried if the Commissioners had agreed to it.

Councillor Maney confirmed that they have seen it and they are not opposed to it.

Councillor Watson confirmed that she is also against the charges and queried why the third permit is so much more expensive and what the situation is with HMO's.

The Assistant Director for Counter Fraud, Enforcement and Community Safety responded that the purpose of the charge is to promote non-vehicular

use and the knock-on effect is people will hopefully not own that many vehicles. He was unable to answer the question regarding HMO's and confirmed he would provide an answer to members tomorrow on this.

Councillor Watson raised concerns that those who don't want to pay this will park their cars in areas where the charges and permits don't apply and she is aware of estates where this is happening. She stressed that she could not agree to this right now as it is not affordable with the energy crisis.

Councillor Gledhill stated that he lives in a parking zone but he is not a driver. He took the view that the charge was about the ability to exclude others from parking where you live. He did not agree that the £80 fee will put someone off owning a third car. He confirmed that the charge should reflect what it costs and other residents should not be paying for this through council tax. There should also be an option to opt out.

The Assistant Director for Counter Fraud, Enforcement and Community Safety confirmed he would take that away. He responded that it is difficult to cost the service of enforcement for the parking permit service. Their case management software to issue the permits is £40,000 per annum although it is used for other types of work too, the cost of the employee to consider and issue the applications would cost £17,000 per annum and having someone out on the street to enforce this will cost £50,000 per annum. The money generated by the permits won't cover the full costs but it is a contribution towards it.

Councillor Raper queried if there was a way to apply for a permit through the post or another way not online.

The Assistant Director for Counter Fraud, Enforcement and Community Safety clarified that if residents contact the contact centre they will complete the application for them online and post it to them.

Councillor Gledhill proposed a further recommendation is added at 1.3 that *the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee disagreed with the recommendation to charge for parking permits in controlled parking areas for the reasons discussed above and requested that these are given to Cabinet.*

This was seconded by the Chair.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the revised fees, within the Parking Permits and building control sections 5.4 and 6.3 and comment on the proposals currently being considered within the remit of this committee.**
(All other charges remain as seen at the previous O&S committee)

- 1.2 **That Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee note that Director delegated authority will be sought via Cabinet to allow Fees & Charges to be varied within a financial year in response to Legal or Regulatory requirements only.**
- 1.3 **The Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee disagreed with the recommendation to charge for parking permits in controlled parking zones for the reasons discussed above and have requested that these are given to Cabinet.**

32. Integrated Transport Block (ITB) Capital Programme 2023/24 & Highways Maintenance Allocation and Programme 2023/24 - TO FOLLOW

The Strategic Lead for Transport Services presented the report. He explained that the report sets out how the Transportation Services team will prioritise funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) Integrated Transport Block Capital Programme (ITB) to enhance transport infrastructure and service provision within the Borough in 2023/24. He explained that paragraph 2.4 sets out the key areas of policy direction for delivering the programme.

The report also sets out the Highways Maintenance Block Allocation for 2023/24 for the Highways Maintenance Service within the Public Realm Directorate is to be prioritised in alignment with Thurrock Council Highways Assets Management Strategy and Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme.

The Strategic Lead for Highways Infrastructure confirms they receive funding which is ring fenced for maintenance. They look at the condition of the network and usage and come up with schemes that are in accordance with the asset management policy.

Councillor Allen queried why drainage was going into ditches and not into the water system. Thurrock parkway near ASDA has seen constant flooding and also Lansdowne road which is outside a school and complaints have been received from parents. He noted that the Council is not always responsible for these roads but it seems that these issues are not been addressed.

The Strategic Lead for Highways Infrastructure responded that in relation to Thurrock Parkway they are working with their colleagues in the Flood Management Team regarding enforcement. They do try and engage with partners to resolve these issues. There are lots of challenges with drainage, they are often antiquated systems and our systems feed into Anglian Waters systems and their systems are at capacity too. We cannot connect to Anglian Water systems without their permission and they need to upgrade their systems. He agreed Thurrock Parkway cannot remain as it is and assured members they are pushing for it to be sorted and it is a priority.

The Chair queried how each figure is allocated and why £150,000 has been allocated to electric vehicles.

The Strategic Lead for Transportation Services confirmed that they use a data led approach to identifying areas of intervention which need to be prioritised across the programme. They have data which looks at incidents and accidents regarding road safety. They also look at safe routes around Thurrock's schools. In relation to electrical vehicle charging there is an opportunity to take advantage of the OSEF funding and by putting money into EV charging they can gain more from the grant.

The Chief Engineer explained that the main routes attract more accidents, and they receive data on accidents from the police. If a fatality occurs it gets the highest rating and becomes a priority as the more serious the accident the more it costs society.

Councillor Gledhill commented that he had struggled to comprehend the report and why certain amounts of funding are allocated to certain schemes. He stated that elected members need more detail.

Councillor Allen was very pleased to note the Marsh Foot injunction will be re-designed and requested whether a roundabout or traffic lights were being considered.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that they are working on the design of it now and it is likely to be a proper roundabout which HGV vehicles can navigate. Implementation is likely to be next year.

The Chair proposed that a Sub-Committee is put together to go through in more detail the ITB and AIP with a view to coming up with recommendations for Cabinet. This was seconded by Councillor Gledhill.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 Note and provide comment on the 2023/24 ITB capital programme allocations, policy and prioritisation direction for the DfT ITB Block funding under the key Policy areas of Road Safety Engineering, Safer Routes to School, Area Intervention Programme and EV Charging programme (as detailed in Appendix 1).**
- 1.2 Note and provide comment on the 2023/24 Highways Maintenance Block Allocation Programme (as detailed in Appendix 2).**
- 1.3 Note that delegate authority to the interim Director of Place and the Director of Public Realm, will be sought in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport and Public Safety to make any required changes to the ITB programme and the Maintenance programme, for 2023/24, within the overall programme budget, as well as other government funding**

allocations that may arise within the year to ensure delivery of the programme and to ensure spend of the grant allocations.

- 1.4 A Sub-Committee is put together to go through in more detail the ITB Capital programme and Area Intervention Programme,**

33. Work Programme

Councillor Watson raised the issue of the Stanford-Le-Hope interchange task and finish group and requested an update. The Chair responded that he did not have an update and will contact Kevin Munnely about this tomorrow.

Councillor Gledhill requested a briefing note on electric vehicle charging points and the logic of where they are going.

The meeting finished at 8.58 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