Herefordshire Council

Minutes of the meeting of Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Monday 23 September 2024 at 10.00 am

Present: **Councillor Louis Stark (chairperson)**
Councillor Justine Peberdy (vice-chairperson)

Councillors: Dave Davies, Robert Highfield and Richard Thomas

In attendance: **Councillor Phillip Price (Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure)**

Officers: **Ben Boswell (Head of Environment Climate Emergency and Waste Services), Ed Bradford (Head of Highways and Traffic – Remote Attendee) Simon Cann (Committee Clerk), Joelle Higgins (Governance Support Assistant), David Land (Head of Transport and Access Services), Richard Vaughan (Sustainability and Climate Change Manager – Remote Attendee), Danial Webb (Statutory Scrutiny Officer).**

93. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There had been no apologies for absence.

94. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There had been no named substitutes.

95. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

96. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were received.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 22 July 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairperson.

97. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A document containing questions received from members of the public and the responses given was attached as a supplement to the published agenda for the meeting on the Herefordshire Council website.

A record of supplementary questions asked during the meeting, and the responses given, is included in Appendix 1 to the minutes.

98. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

No questions had been received from councillors.

99. ACTIVE TRAVEL MEASURES

The committee received the report on 'Active Travel Measures.

The Chairperson provided a broad outline of the four objectives of the item which were:

- To consider active travel measures including road safety for all users.
- Explore the county policy on implementing active travel measures where new road build is being proposed.
- Explore where the council is on implementation of active travel measures across the county.
- Explore the benefits and challenges of active travel measures around key buildings such as schools and hospitals and residential roads in Herefordshire.

The principal points of the discussion included:

1. The committee discussed the work that had been carried out in Denmark since the end of World War II to integrate active travel with other transport measures. It was acknowledged that Denmark had thrown significant time and resources at getting its transport infrastructure to where it currently was and that implementing workable active travel measures in Herefordshire, in an affordable manner, presented numerous challenges.

2. The committee noted the need for active travel measures to provide an alternative, but complementary means of moving around the county, that would sit alongside existing means of transport rather than replacing them.

3. A committee member suggested that incorporating active travel measures and including a solar farm within the Council's bypass project plans might garner more support for the bypass from the current government.

4. The committee raised concerns about active travel feeling quite 'distant' as a concept. It regularly seemed to feature as a component of other policies, but was not clearly synthesised anywhere in the council's plans.

5. The committee referred to paragraph 5 of the main report and noted the four main objectives for active travel:

    - Increase the percentage of short journeys in towns and cities that are walked or cycled
    - Increase people's annual walking activity
    - Double rates of cycling
    - Increase the percentage of children aged 5 to 10 who usually walk to school

as given by the Department for Transport, were not being discussed in any detail within the council.

6. The committee noted that there was a need to establish whether the purpose of active travel was to provide health benefits to the public or to provide an alternative means of getting people from A to B - the latter of which could be adversely impacted by poor weather.

7. A committee member suggested active travel could provide both an alternative means of travel and health benefits, and also highlighted the importance of active travel measures as a useful tool for reducing traffic congestion.

8. A committee member stressed the importance of keeping active travel measures and 20mph speed limits as separate issues.

9. The committee enquired as to whether any separate/dedicated paper or policy was going to be put to council outlining what the administration wanted to achieve in terms of aims and objectives for active travel.

    - The Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure pointed out that active travel was a very large topic with a considerable amount of debate around it.

    - The Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure expressed bemusement for historic Hereford bypass plans that had seen active travel measures routes running alongside A-roads. The cabinet member expressed a preference for active travel measure routes that ran separately from existing infrastructure, which would potentially remove safety and pollution risks for walkers, cyclists and other users.

    - The Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure suggested that the Department for Transport's objective of increasing the percentage of children aged 5-10 who usually walk to school was, as had been discussed earlier in the debate, hostage to the weather.

    - The Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure suggested that active travel as a means of solving congestion had to be integrated with other congestion-easing design measures focusing on where cars and buses could and couldn't go and that how to best go about bringing this together was a topic for consultation with residents and other stakeholders.

    - The Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure suggested that with regards to 20mph zones, it could be that in the next 10-15 years technological advances would mean that speed reductions were implemented and controlled by vehicles rather than drivers. It was suggested this might remove the potential danger of drivers paying more attention to their speedometer rather than the road ahead.

10. The committee asked again whether it would be helpful to have a dedicated active travel measures document setting out council objectives, rather than the topic being included as a complement to other plans.

    - The Head of Environment Climate Emergency and Waste explained that active travel measures cut across various high level strategy elements within the Corporate Plan including growth and safety, and the environment. Below that, it featured within the Core Strategy and Local Transport Plan, and LCWIP (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan).

    - The Head of Environment Climate Emergency and Waste suggested that the articulation of the active travel measures in the wider documents would potentially sit within the Local Transport Plan.

    - The Head of Transport and Access Services echoed that the Local Transport Plan should be able to articulate where active travel was and

what the council wanted to achieve from it, and added that the LCWIP would be able to demonstrate what was going to be done to support the plans.

11. The committee pointed out that active travel measures were about more than just transport and also impacted areas such as: public health, pollution and behavioural change. It was suggested that to restrict the subject to just the Local Transport Plan and LCWIP would potentially lose the richness of it and it shouldn't be viewed as an afterthought o be added to existing transport plans and documents.

12. The committee considered whether a single active travel measure policy could apply equally to all parts of the county and concluded that it probably couldn't, but that not having a separate policy on the subject might potentially stymie debate on it.

13. A committee member stated that they felt active travel should enrich the lives of everybody including; pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users and motorists. It was suggested that consideration could be given to introducing dedicated bus lanes, which could also be used by cyclists, motorcyclists and taxis to reduce traffic congestion within the City of Hereford.

14. The committee acknowledged the potential benefits of dual/multi user lanes, but pointed out that such routes and paths would require pedestrians, cyclists and other groups to be educated and given certainty about the safe use of them.

    - The Head of Transport and Access Services described guidance from the DFT (Department for Transport) contained within Local Transport Note 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure design, which was about the DFT's preference for segregating cyclists from pedestrians wherever possible.

    - The Head of Environment Climate Emergency and Waste Services reassured the committee that through the strategic hooks of the Corporate Plan the council did look at active transport in a joined-up way, bringing together officers and departments from areas including: environment, climate, transport, road safety and public health.

15. A committee member suggested that the council should never be considering new road builds without active travel siting alongside it.

16. The committee debated whether or not active travel measures were adequately covered off as set out within the Local Transport Plan or whether active travel measures should sit as a standalone high-level policy.

    - The Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure highlighted the issues presented by the rurality of Herefordshire as a county, and the challenges of dealing with cars journeys that needed to be made into the centre of Hereford and those that did not.

    - The Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure suggested that dedicated bus routes/lanes could not be implemented within the city without removing every piece of traffic that had no right to be there and that the introduction of such lanes would only be potentially feasible were a bypass to be built.

    - The Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure highlighted the significant amount of cycling and quiet routes due to be delivered in the

south of Hereford, across the river and into the city centre within the next 12 months.

- The Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure urged the committee to be mindful of how a recommendation around one element of the county's transport infrastructure would inevitably have an impact elsewhere.

17. The Committee raised concerns about the perceived focus of policy on Hereford rather than Herefordshire and articulated that active transport measures should not solely be about transport, but should be about a way of life and a joined up approach around planning, which included the needs of pedestrians and different modes of transport.

    - The Head of Environment Climate Emergency and Waste Services pointed out that active travel was already a golden thread that ran through many of the council's policies and strategies, and that it would be possible to provide the committee with an organogram illustrating this.

    - The Head of Environment Climate Emergency and Waste Services explained that creating multimodal transport choices and educating people across the county about them, could draw from policies/strategies such as the: 'Choose how you move' behavioural change campaign, Bus Improvement Strategy and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

18. The committee enquired if there was a list or map of all the active travel schemes that were going on within Herefordshire presently.

    - The Head of Environment Climate Emergency and Waste Services pointed out that the LCWIP (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan) essentially fulfilled this function. Around the LCWIP were a set of behavioural change campaigns, which included dedicated officers working with schools and businesses on developing their own travel plans. Work was also being carried out with Bikeability, along with aligning road safety schemes, which would all be brought together within the Local Transport Plan.

19. The committee felt that there might not be an equal measure of focus on active travel measures across the county.

20. The committee enquired whether there was a need to rebalance the funding that was going into active travel away from Hereford and into market towns/rural areas.

    - The Head of Environment Climate Emergency and Waste Services pointed out that the LCWIP was focused across the whole county and was taking an areas-based approach with schools and businesses across Herefordshire to help them look at their options and make informed travel choices, which would enable them to get the best out of the network.

21. The committee enquired as to where pedestrianisation was being addressed within the County Plan?

    - The Head of Environment Climate Emergency and Waste Services suggested that this would likely fall within the Core Strategy in terms of the overarching place document and strategy for the county. Information

relating to the city would be contained within the Economic Master Plan and Big Economic Plan.

22. The committee debated the potential impact of pedestrianisation on local and independent businesses and raised concerns about individuals being able to transport large purchases back with them if they couldn't park near or in town/city centres.

    - The Head of Environment Climate Emergency and Waste Services suggested that certain transport studies had indicated that walkers and cyclists often spent more time and money in pedestrianised shopping centres.

    - The Head of Transport and Access Services pointed to the Mini-Hollands programme in London, where shop keepers had often seen profits soar as a result of a Dutch-style infrastructure being introduced within their boroughs.

23. A committee member stressed the potential benefits of introducing a park and ride scheme within Hereford City and pointed to Cheltenham as an example of how this had been successfully implemented in a nearby city.

24. A committee member pointed out concerns around public engagement with the Beryl Bikes scheme and its suitability for an ageing population.

    - The Head of Environment Climate Emergency and Waste Services detailed Herefordshire's 'Park and Choose' Strategy, which enabled people to park for free at out of town/city sites and then choose from a variety of different transport modes to enter the city, whether it be walking, cycling (using Beryl Bikes and e-Bikes), car sharing or public transport. This was a county-wide strategy that had used active travel funding money obtained from the Department for Transport and was not just focused on the city centre of Hereford.

    - The Sustainability and Climate Change Manager pointed out that there were 300 Beryl Bikes available across 70 bays around the city and that in the last week around 2,700 journeys had been made using Beryl Bikes. The scheme was proving to be popular and successful across a broad demographic.

    - The number of e-bikes available through the scheme had risen from 30 to over 100. These had enabled people who were less physically able or confident in using a pedal bike to use and benefit from the scheme.

    - The Sustainability and Climate Change Manager explained that leisure trips using Beryl Bikes did drop during periods of adverse weather, but the core user base continued to make essential trips on them even in stormy conditions.

25. The committee raised concerns about the safe use of e-scooters within the county and whether there was any policy in place to offer guidance on what part they could play in an active travel strategy.

    - The Head of Transport and Access Services explained that currently e-scooters were not a legal mode of transport in England and therefore there was no council policy for them, but they could be easily obtained by the public and policing their use was an ongoing challenge.

- A number of local authorities were involved in pilot schemes trialling the use of e-scooters, but even then they could only be used on roads and by people holding an appropriate licence. Herefordshire Council had registered an interest in being involved in the pilot schemes and in future the e-scooters could potentially be introduced in bays alongside Beryl Bikes, however their introduction would need to be backed up with strong communications about their safe use.

- The Sustainability and Climate Change Manager pointed out that research had shown that the introduction of additional modes of transport into Park and Choose/Beryl Bike schemes had led to people who had initially joined up to use one type of transport gradually beginning to explore and take up other options.

26. The committee raised concerns that road and pavement use was becoming very congested and felt there was a free-for-all that needed to be addressed within a separate active travel measures policy, including the increased use of mobility scooters.

    - The Head of Transport and Access Services described the Department of Transport's 'Hierarchy of Road Users' policy, which placed road users most at risk in the event of a collision (such as pedestrians) at the top of the hierarchy.

    - The Sustainability and Climate Change Manager described an historic scheme that had been funded by money from the Department of Transport, which had provided learner drivers with a free driving test if they engaged in cycling workshops – the idea being that it would encourage drivers to give greater consideration to the needs of other road users, such as cyclists and pedestrians. Uptake for the scheme had been quite high with young learner drivers, but lower in groups such as heavy good vehicles drivers. However, it had been hard to quantify the outcomes and impacts of the scheme.

    - The Head of Environment Climate Emergency and Waste Services stated that officers would be keen to focus on bringing in an educational element to future collaborative policies involving transport, road safety and public health.

At the conclusion of the debate, the committee discussed potential recommendations and the following resolutions were agreed.

Resolved that:

1. **The executive should set out its policy on active travel in one plan, and to ensure its alignment with other relevant Council plans;**

2. **An inventory and map of on-going or proposed active travel projects should be drawn up by the executive and published;**

3. **A review should be conducted of active travel projects planned and the executive should come forward with proposals to reduce the overly Hereford focus of current projects and ensure that active travel measures are implemented across the county, including market towns.**

4. **Active travel needs to reflect the demarcation of cycling/pedestrian bus/taxi ways. All future developments need to actively consider all users of the highways and pathways with appropriate consideration to the ability of movement of the population not forgetting those with lower levels of mobility.**

5. **That any business case for new road builds should contain proposals for offsetting the carbon impact of them.**

6. **To consider solar farms being incorporated into any planned new road route.**

100. WORK PROGRAMME

The committee agreed to reschedule the November item 'Bus service improvement plan' to allow additional time for anticipated government proposals around bus services to be released, it was felt that this would allow for a fuller and wider debate on bus services around the county. The item was deferred from November to an unspecified date in 2025.

The committee agreed to schedule the Tree and Hedgerow management item for its November 2024 meeting. A committee member suggested that road ditches policy should also be included as part of the topic.

The committee considered Mr Peter McKay's earlier supplementary question relating to updating records on footpaths and highways. The committee felt that it did not consider it a topic that was appropriate for scrutiny or one that the committee could add value to - as it essentially concerned a local operational matter.

It was suggested by the Statutory Scrutiny Officer that the question would be better dealt with through a service request via customer services.

The committee agreed to redirect Mr McKay's question, as it was too specific for the scrutiny work programme.

The committee agreed to look at 'Road safety and speed limits' in its May 2025 meeting.

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer suggested that an informal work programme discussion be arranged for committee members before the next committee meeting to discuss which items from the longlist should be included in the committee's work schedule.

Resolved:

That the work programme, as amended and subject to periodical reviews, be agreed as the basis of the primary focus for the committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2024/25.

101. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Monday 18 November 2024, 10am

102. APPENDIX 1 - SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WITH RESPONSES

Supplementary Questions from members of the public – Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee, 23 September

Question Number	Questioner	Supplementary Question (delivered verbally by Mrs Protherough during the meeting).	Question to
SPQ 1	Ms Carole Protherough Leominster	Have the consulted views of the various stakeholders including: parents students and disabled people who use mobility vehicles - and who may share the two-way cycle lane at some risk on Aylestone Hill - been incorporated into the design. How does a child on a bicycle get from the shared-use footpath, which appears to finish at the entrance of Broadlands Lane to complete their journey safely to arrive at Aylestone and Broadland schools, and how does this destination link to the homes children live in in the local catchment area - the origin of their journey.	Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee

Response by Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure (delivered verbally during the meeting).

Thank you for the supplementary question I will take what you've just said to the officer who's in charge of the design and the consultation process that is currently coming towards an end and ask them to consider your view, as to whether the design is adequate or needs upgrading. We will aim to give you a written response from the officer who is right at the at the heart of delivering this scheme. Thank you Mrs Protherough.

Question Number	Questioner	Supplementary Question (delivered verbally by Mr Hardy during the meeting).	Question to
SPQ 2	Mr Jim Hardy Hereford	According to the council's website, local cycling and walking infrastructure plans were introduced seven years ago and most local authorities now have one in place. Even when this Council finally has one in place it is still giving itself 10 years to implement it, how soon does it plan to have a truly comprehensive cycle network in Hereford and how much government funding does it anticipate receiving towards it.	Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee

Response by Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure (delivered verbally during the meeting).

Thank you for that question. The LCWIP (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan) will be delivered on the schedule that we have published. How that is interpreted going forward will be no different to any other council. We have to have an LCWIP in place to be able to get active travel funding, we still await for a number of changes from the new government coming forward as to what their policies are going to be around this, but we are in no different a place to any other authorities at this moment in time as to what we can and can't deliver, but it is all in the mix, we are looking at it we are proactive in it and we will deliver accordingly. Whether or not active travel and cycling is funded to a greater or lesser degree going forward will depend on what is found in that consultation. It is in the mix at the present moment, I can't answer further than, but you will hear in due course what we find with our LCWIP thank you.

Question Number	Questioner	Supplementary Question (delivered verbally by Mr Milln during the meeting).	Question to
SPQ 3	City Councillor Jeremy	So your response says this Scrutiny Committee had decided it wont now consider the relationship between vehicle speed and active travel, citing	Environment and Sustainability

	Milln	the additional benefits (such as accident reduction and liveability) for not doing so, when normally these would be the reasons **for** doing so. It is frankly astonishing this Committee is not currently minded to consider the enormous cost, health and public safety benefits for active travel which accrue from addressing vehicle speeding. More than four years has elapsed since Full Council passed the motion to progress this. I therefore ask again will this Committee seek to bring this work back on track with an appropriate recommendation to support active travel by urgently investigating area wide urban 20mph including around schools and accident blackspots?	Scrutiny Committee
Response by Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee (delivered verbally during the meeting) The committee hasn't given up on the topic of 20mph speed limits, in fact it is still very interested in looking at it, but it wants to look at it in a different way. We have had discussions on it within the committee and while we haven't taken the specific link between the 20mph speed limit and active travel forward today, what we are minded to do is to look at speed limits generally in the context of road user safety - that's of particular concern to me as a pedestrian, because I do find speeding of real concern when I'm actually walking into Ross or walking out of Ross. So, what the committee has done, it hasn't stopped its investigation of 20mph speed limits, what it wants to do is to look at it in a different context and that will be a candidate for our work programme next year. I can assure you we have not lost sight of it, we are just going to look at it in terms of road safety measures next year. I hope that's that satisfies your concern.		

Question Number	**Questioner**	**Supplementary Question (via email)**	**Question to**
SPQ 5	Mr Peter McKay Leominster	If you will not scrutinise the identified issue of concern in isolation, my suggested topic having being accepted by the Government Support Team and passed to your committee for scrutiny, will you scrutinise the upkeep of highway and path records in general, this not having been covered by your earlier scrutiny of public right of way matters, with it reported in Hereford Times in April this year that some applications for corrections are still undecided after 27 years, if you will persue your seeking a change to the legislation to enable a more efficient process to be used, with a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan being raised that will require accurate information?	Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee
Response by Chair of Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee The Chair thanked Mr McKay for his question and gave an assurance that the committee would consider whether or not to incorporate the suggested topic as part of its work programme.			

The meeting ended at 12:38 **Chairperson**