

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Climate Change Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 27 February 2020 at 6.30 pm

Councillors Present:

K L Jaggard (Chair)

T Lunnon and A Pendlington

Also in Attendance:

Councillor P C Smith

Officers Present:

Heather Girling Democratic Services Officer

Louise Skipton-Carter Sustainability Manager

Darryl Hemmings Planning and Transport Policy Manager, WSCC

Steve Sawyer Executive Director, Manor Royal Business District (MRBD)

Patrick Warner Head of Innovation Strategy, Metrobus

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor R S Fiveash and J Hart

1. Disclosures of Interest & Whipping Declarations

The following disclosures of interests were made:

Councillor	Item and Minute	Type and Nature of Disclosure
Councillor P C Smith	Witness Sessions (Minute 3)	Personal Interest – a Local Authority Director of the Manor Royal Business Improvement District.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Climate Change Scrutiny Panel held on 28 January 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Witness Sessions

The Chair provided some background information on the Panel then witnesses were asked to offer views on providing sustainable transport and eco-friendly vehicles and to understand the challenges the services face – now and in the future, together with the provision of initiatives and support currently being provided.

Patrick Warner, Head of Innovation Strategy (Metrobus), Darryl Hemmings, Planning and Transport Policy Manager (WSCC), Steve Sawyer, Executive Director (MRBD), together with Councillor Peter Smith (Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development - CBC), updated the Panel as follows:

Metrobus

- The company had an innovative approach to reducing emissions. The current ultra-low emission diesel buses were amongst the cleanest vehicles on the road, particularly compared to passenger cars.
- Trials of pure electric buses have previously taken place in Crawley and Brighton however there were limitations with battery range and operating hours and consequently impractical for intensive commercial operation.
- There was an ambitious target to full zero emissions bus operation fleet powered by clean hydrogen made from renewable wind energy and water by 2030. Crawley could see introduction by 2021, or much earlier for the high frequency services. Until this time, some areas were seeing a new generation of extended range of hybrid electric buses, with on-board Euro6 diesel generator and the ability to geo-fence an area of electric only mode.
- The future brings challenges; cost and behaviour change. It will be important to make bus travel an attractive choice; making them easily accessible, include free wi-fi, promote the advantages and improve the waiting environments.
- It was important to work with partners to maximise and enhance the potential, including working with the Road Haulage Association for example with refuse trucks.

Panel Members raised a number of queries. The issues raised and the key responses included:

- It was acknowledged that the primary reasons for lack of bus travel was convenience, cost and lack of understanding. There was a need for innovation and collaboration in reducing journey times, increasing journey speeds and creating a choice to drive modal shift.
- It was recognised that whilst the introduction of the zero emission fuel cell electric buses was costly, it had advantages over retrofitting the vehicles as the technology would be compliant. 2030 was an ambitious target for the whole fleet however the fact the whole fleet would be powered by hydrogen was seen as an asset.
- The partnership working was praised, together with the benefits for any sustainable transport links in new developments to be considered in the future.
- With regards to network development, it would be beneficial to take a holistic view for the wider network. There would be variation of existing routes but there was a need to serve the needs of the public, cut congestion whilst reaching key destinations.

- There was recognition that “Superhubs” were a good example of how to improve the waiting environment and change behaviour. Additional benefits included free trial travel in new neighbourhoods or employment and working in partnership when new routes were development and major road work disruption took place.
- Further information was provided on the air filtering bus that had recently been trialled in Southampton. Crawley may soon trial a similar system whereby the air filtration technology was incorporated into the bus itself.
- Metrobus constantly monitors fleet, passenger numbers and volume to ensure routes are efficient as possible, although it recognised the longer routes (100) were inclined to suffer delays. It was acknowledged that the majority of operator costs were wages.
- The current partnership working was welcomed and it was hoped there would be more opportunities to further strengthen this in the future.

WSSC

- WSSC liaises with strategic partners in terms of transport.
- It was recognised that Crawley had approximately 11% of bus use. This was compared with other West Sussex use of approximately 4%.
- Currently there was a West Sussex Transport Plan (2011-2026) which was currently being reviewed to include reference to the Climate Change Strategy and provide equal weight to access to services and health.
- There was a question as to what transport infrastructure needed to be in order to meet the future needs of climate change.
- The current challenges were highlighted that presently within the annual capital scheme and Crawley Growth Programme (CGP) there was no prioritisation for climate change and there was no discretion as to how the money was spent. It was recognised that the funding had to be spent on specific schemes. Potentially in future the criteria may alter. The deliverability of the schemes was key in order for them to be successful but also change travel behaviour. Partnership working was paramount.
- There was an acknowledgement that the current Crawley Borough Local Plan 2015-2030 included a transport strategy.

Panel Members raised a number of queries. The issues raised and the key responses included:

- It was confirmed that whilst that there were different areas within the county such as the densely populated town of Crawley and towns with more rural areas such as Horsham, there would be one Transport Strategy covering the whole county. There would be different approaches able to respond to each area.
- WSSC was responding to increased use and developing infrastructure. There has been an increase in the number of electric vehicle charging points following the increase in usage.
- It was anticipated that the new Transport Strategy would be out for consultation 2021.
- The Panel suggested some alternative proposals for reducing carbon emissions throughout the town such as free parking for electric vehicles and pedestrianisation of areas. Whilst WSSC would be happy to consider proposals there would be a need to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of any suggestions.

MRBD

- Manor Royal Business District covers over 600 businesses – 80% of people travel by car.
- Gateway 1 in Manor Royal was the busiest entrance.
- It was important to consider what kind of transport was necessary – there was a need to design a place for people “People & Places”.
- Irrespective of the environment it had to be accessible, comfortable, cost-effective and services had to be effective.
- How people use a space was important; safe, welcoming, well maintained. In terms of buses this equated to the waiting environments or Superhubs.
- The place making in Manor Royal, along with the partnership working and pedestrianisation had benefited the economy.

Panel Members raised a number of queries. The issues raised and the key responses included:

- There was a recognition that the environment was paramount in changing behaviour.
- Whilst it was acknowledged that it would be an expensive infrastructure project, further information was requested on a possible “park and ride” for Manor Royal and/or the town. The number of commuters into the town on a daily basis would require multiple “park and ride” locations which unfortunately was not viable.
- It was recognised that parking was an issue within Manor Royal and some companies incentivise their employees, some have parking management plans.
- Freight was a contributing factor to Manor Royal’s success and yet also a large generator of traffic. In terms of climate change the planting of trees and slowing of traffic speed assisted without impinging on businesses. Although it was noted that Metrobus work in partnership with other agencies to share improvements beyond bus travel in relation to fleet vehicles.

Councillor Peter Smith, CBC

- It was acknowledged that the town had its challenges; parking, congestion, pollution, Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), following by the climate change declaration. The council’s policies and strategies such as Planning and working with partners ensure that the right infrastructure is in place to meet the needs of the town and well as conserving natural resources.
- The ‘New Directions for Crawley’ document provided issues and options for Crawley Transport Strategy. It set out a vision for future transport infrastructure and services in Crawley whilst also presenting an outline of proposals for the first phase of delivery towards that vision.
- It was acknowledged there was a need to transform transport and access throughout the town, whilst reducing carbon emissions, improving safety, air quality and reducing congestion.

Panel Members raised a number of queries. The issues raised and the key responses included:

- It was recognised that behaviour change was a key concern. There was an incentive needed to publicise sustainable transport improvements (possibly through CGP). It was commented that on average bus travel was more consistent.

- It would be beneficial to advertise and promote the benefits of public transport, including using the rail network more regularly (through CGP).

RESOLVED

That Panel Members thanked all witnesses for their attendance and contribution. The presentations had been most interesting and informative.

4. Consultation with the Public and Organisations (15 minutes)

Councillor Jaggard thanked the public, interested parties and organisations for attending and commented that it was now their opportunity to inform the Panel on the areas identified in relation to transport and what they felt could be improved in this respect. The public were reminded of the Panel's scope focusing upon the workings and activities of Crawley Borough Council in relation to carbon emissions.

Listed below were many of the key issues and themes that were raised during the consultation:

- The council was commended for the 'New Directions for Crawley' document.
- There would be a need for the council to consider how to deal with the use of petrol and diesel usage, both now and in the future.
- Consider the potential for an emissions charge within the town.
- There was support for promotion and education to highlight the advantages of use of sustainable transport, particularly bus and rail use.
- Whilst it was acknowledged that it was important to have the finances to deliver the changes, it would be beneficial if Metrobus could roll out the entire fleet to fuel cell electric buses powered by clean hydrogen by 2025 instead of 2030.
- There was support for greater pedestrianisation of the town centre.
- It was questioned if funding could be ring-fenced for climate change in the future.
- It was noted that Luxembourg had just allowed free cost transport across the country.
- An acknowledgement that the traffic flow throughout the town needed improving and this would assist in reducing congestion and carbon emissions.
- There was support for further solar panels to be introduced wherever possible.
- There was support for ride share/car clubs.
- Acknowledged that campaigners had won a Court of Appeal ruling over plans for a third runway at Heathrow Airport on environmental grounds.
- Ifield Colleges designed, built and raced a solar car from Darwin to Adelaide in 2019. Would the council consider investigating this further for possible partnership. (NB - in partnership with Ardingly College www.ardinglysolar.com)

The Chair thanked the public for attending and expressing their views and it was reiterated that what had been discussed would certainly help shape the Scrutiny Panel's recommendations.

5. General Update and Actions for Next Meeting

The Chair updated Panel Members on work that had been recently undertaken:

- Additional information had been provided in relation to the West Sussex Pension Fund. Whilst the borough council already had its Ethical Investment Policy there was an opportunity at the next meeting (which was concentrating on commercial and business activities) to look at this in more detail and which social and environmental issues are considered by the Fund.
- Witnesses for next session:

- Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services
- Head of Partnership Services
- Executive Director MRBD

The date of the next meeting would be Wednesday 25 March 2020 at the Town Hall on the Council's commercial and business activity. The agenda would be published on the council's website and details for registering to speak would again be included.

6. Recommendations

Following the witness sessions and the action points, it was agreed that the following be determined for possible inclusion in the draft report.

RESOLVED

1. That consideration be given to investigating the pedestrianisation of the town centre (The Boulevard).
2. That consideration be given to either extending the current AQMA towards Three Bridges or implementing a new AQMA.
3. That as part of the ongoing New Directions for Crawley, consideration be given to promotion of the benefits and advantages of sustainable transport use (bus and rail) and engage working with partners (eg Metrobus and through CGP).
4. That as part of any fleet replacement, an innovative approach is considered including the option to work with other partners in other sectors (eg Metrobus and Road Haulage Association to discuss hydrogen fleet).

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Climate Change Scrutiny Panel concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 21.06 pm.

K L Jaggard (Chair)