

ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC PROTECTION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

25 NOVEMBER 2021

PRESENT: Councillor J.D. James (Chair)

Councillors:

J.M. Charles, T.A.J. Davies, J.A. Davies, K. Davies, T.M. Higgins, E. Morgan,
B.D.J. Phillips, J.S. Phillips, D. Thomas and A. Vaughan Owen.
Councillor W.T. Evans - Substitute for Councillor S.J.G Gilasbey;
Councillor D. Jones - Substitute for Councillor P. Edwards.

Also in attendance:

Councillor H.A.L. Evans, Cabinet Member for Environment;
Councillor P.M. Hughes, Cabinet Member for Public Protection.

The following Officers were in attendance:

R. Mullen, Director of Environment;
J. Morgan, Head of Homes & Safer Communities;
S. Pilliner, Head of Transportation & Highways;
R. S. Waters, Highways and Transportation Services Manager;
T. Evans, Transport Planning - Strategy and Infrastructure;
D. King, Highway Services Manager;
C.N. Nelson, Highways Asset Manager;
E. Evans, Principal Democratic Services Officer;
K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer;
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator;
J. Owen, Democratic Services Officer.

Virtual Meeting: 10:00am - 12:00pm

[Note:

- The Chair having received a request from Councillor Hazel Evans, Cabinet Member for Environment informed the Committee that to provide clarity it was necessary to change the order business on the agenda and that Item 7, would be taken prior to Item 6. However, ease of referencing these minutes reflect the order of business itemised on the agenda for the meeting.
- Due to the Chair experiencing technical difficulties during Agenda Item 5, Councillor Aled Vaughan-Owen as Vice-Chair took over as Chair for the remaining business on the agenda.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S.J.G. Gilasbey, P. Edwards E. Morgan and A. Speake.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST INCLUDING ANY PARTY WHIPS ISSUED IN RELATION TO ANY AGENDA ITEM.

There were no declarations of any prohibited party whips.
There were no declarations of interest made.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC PROTECTION TASK & FINISH GROUP 2021/22 – UPDATE

The Committee received an update report from the Environmental and Public Protection Task and Finish Group in relation to the review of the Management of fly-tipping within Carmarthenshire. The report presented by the Chair of the Task and Finish Group provided the Committee with an update on the review, the Group's decision and the reasons.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that;

4.1 the report of the Task and Finish Group be received;

4.2 the Group's decision to defer the review of the Management of Fly-tipping within Carmarthenshire until after the 2022 elections be accepted.

5. CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (CCC) ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY - DECARBONISING TRANSPORT

The Committee received a report which set out a proposal to adopt an Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy for Carmarthenshire. The proposed strategy, presented by the Cabinet member for Environment, contained 13 key policies specific to Carmarthenshire which would help the future development of electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the County to support the delivery of carbon reduction targets.

The report outlined that the strategy and development of the infrastructure aimed to encourage the uptake of electric vehicles for businesses, residents, and visitors. In addition, the strategy would allow for a structured evidence-based network to be created that would demonstrate a commitment to meeting net zero targets by 2030 and 2050.

It was reported that, should the Authority decide not to adopt the strategy it would leave the county vulnerable to losing out on future funding from Welsh Government and inhibit the delivery against the net zero carbon objective. With no strategy in place for this fast-moving area and with the ban of petrol and diesel cars in 2030 there was a danger of not being able to facilitate and encourage a charging network that would support all residents, businesses and visitors.

The following comments/queries were raised on the report:-

- It was asked, if the use of electric bikes could be added to the 13 key policies? The Officer for Transport Planning - Strategy and Infrastructure explained that the provision of shelter and capacity to charge up to 10 e-bikes was or would soon be available at Carmarthen Leisure Centre, Amman Valley Leisure Centre, Llandovery Leisure Centre, Beacon, Eastgate, Pembrey Country Park, St Catherine's Walk – Carmarthen and Pendine. The use of these facilities for e-bikes at these locations would be free to use with Carmarthenshire County Council or third parties covering the energy costs. It was explained that currently this Strategy had concentrated on cars and light vehicles only and that a separate strategy would be required for freight. The Head of Transportation and Highways added that whilst this strategy had concentrated on those vehicles that would be impacted by the significant changes in the near future, he acknowledged the growth in the use of e-bikes and would consider including within the strategy.
- The Officer for Transport Planning - Strategy and Infrastructure, in response to a query raised regarding the charging facility in Crosshands, confirmed that there were four 50kw rapid charges for light vehicles and one 150kw super rapid charger available for use within the Crosshands facility. In addition, as the site provision was available for expansion, the usage would be monitored and should there be a requirement to expand the ability to do so was available.
- Reference was made to the scheme to place charging facilities within public locations, a query was raised as to who pays for the electric, the customer or the supplier? The Officer for Transport Planning - Strategy and Infrastructure explained the current process in relation to applications and funding to install a charging facility for public use. The use of the charging facility would be paid for by the customer by card or via an app. Should community halls wish to seek funds to install charging facilities themselves to generate an income stream, it was explained that specific grants were available from the Office of Zero Emission Vehicles.
- Following an observation raised that the majority of charging facilities were located within towns, it was asked if there were any plans to locate charging facilities in rural villages? The Head of Highways and Transportation stated that the strategy to date was to place charging facilities in rural areas that are within close proximity of the principal road network in order to satisfy local need as well as roads with a high volume of traffic. Several publicly available charging facilities are currently sited within the rural areas signified on the map on page 37 of the report. The Officer for Transport Planning - Strategy and Infrastructure informed Committee members that a list detailing the locations of all the charging facilities that had been installed to date was available on the Council's website. Furthermore, Members were made aware that a further 15 installations focusing on rural destinations and Leisure Centres around the County would be completed in due course.

In relation to the availability of grants to Community/Village Halls the Officer for Transport Planning - Strategy and Infrastructure would be happy to advise and assist those who would be interested in applying.

- In response to a concern raised that some charging points may not be suitable for disabled access, the Head of Transport and Highways highlighted that whilst early installations catered for the majority of cars/light vehicles, some sites required adaptations in order to solve access limitations. In addition, further developments were in hand in terms of catering for the larger vehicle. Reassurance was provided that future design now catered for disabled access which had been factored in the development of the charging hub in Crosshands. As the market develops disabled access would be an area that would be fostered in the future.
- A query was raised regarding the availability of the wider facilities, eg toilets and refreshments to those who wait for their vehicles to be charged and if this was factored into the location plans? The Officer for Transport Planning - Strategy and Infrastructure confirmed that the chargers located in the Charging Hub in Crosshands were 'rapid' chargers which should take up to 30 minutes to full charge with the super rapid taking only 20 minutes resulting in a minimal wait. The Director of Environment added that it was anticipated that the majority of the public would utilise the charging facilities that had been strategically located along routes with comfort facilities and at community halls as a charging boost whilst visiting the location. The Head of Highways and Transport emphasised that this was an area that the County Council could not achieve independently, a significant investment was relied upon from the Government given the scale of the focus which was to develop the electric vehicle infrastructure.
- Reference was made to "EV4 - to encourage use of EV's in the fleet". It was asked if the word encourage was the correct term to use and if something stronger would be more suitable? The Head of Highways and Transportation explained that the Fleet Strategy was complex in that several assessments would have to be completed in terms of infrastructure, operation implications, and service needs with this in mind it was envisaged that the strategy would be brought to the Committee in Spring 2022. The Cabinet Member for Environment added that unfortunately, the Council was unable to mandate the use of electric vehicles, however it would encourage at every possible opportunity by providing the appropriate facilities.
- Reference was made to "EV6 - Investigate ways to Encourage Charge Point Provision through the Planning Process", it was asked what the planning process was in relation to the provision electric vehicle chargers and if politically there was anything that could be done in order to strengthen the process? The Director of Environment stated that the Welsh Government would be looking into new builds both domestic and businesses as part of their Carbon Net Zero Wales Carbon Strategy, therefore the Councils planning department would not be considering this in isolation. The Officer for Transport Planning - Strategy and Infrastructure clarified that as part of the Council's commitment to increase the supply of affordable housing, electric vehicle charging points were included on all Council new build developments.

- Reference was made to the table located on page 18 of the report where it stated that Fast Charging (a) need to have between 30,000 and 55,000 fast chargers available for use by 2030 (currently have less than 1% of this installed). It was asked if the Council was confident that the remaining 99% would be installed in 8 years' time? The Director of Environment stated that there was a National De-carbonisation Panel formulated by the WLGA which consisted of representatives from other regions and included the Chief Executive. In relation to the delivery of the strategy, it was heavily dependent upon the Welsh Government and the national approach. However, it was reported that following a recent meeting with Cabinet Members, Director of Environment and Lee Waters – Deputy Minister of Climate Change, there seemed to be an expression of confidence of a financial commitment which would enable the delivery of the strategies.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET that the proposed Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy for the Council be adopted.

6. HIGHWAYS ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN (HAMP) MAINTENANCE MANUAL

[Note: This item was taken after Agenda Item 7]

The Committee received the Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) Maintenance Manual in support of the Highway Asset Management Plan presented by Cabinet Member for Environment. The report asked that the Committee consider and comment on parts 4.1 to 4.4 attached to the report prior to adoption by the Cabinet.

The following comments/queries were raised on the report:-

- Reference was made to section 4.2 Highway Network Hierarchy on page 13 of the report. In relation to CH4 of the table, a concern was raised regarding the low priority of rural roads, it was commented that many of the rural roads both serve and connect communities located within rural areas and due to this they should be given a higher priority. The Head of Transportation and Highways highlighted the scale of the challenge in terms of the condition assessment and the annual statement of the roads, together with the level of investments required to maintain the road network in Carmarthenshire. Whilst recognising that rural communities were equally as important, the list reflected a prioritised system of assessment, inspection and repair according to the resources available.
- Reference was made to section 4.3 Highway Inspection and Repair Regime of the report. Concern was raised that rural roads were inspected only once a year as stated within the report, it was felt that this was not enough. The Head of Highways and Transport confirmed that whilst a formal assessment was carried out once a year, other methods of intelligence was accepted by way of the public information which was responded to accordingly. The Highways and Transportation Services Manager added that a new online reporting system was now available to the public which aimed for a more efficient response to reported issues.

- Reference was made to the table within the Carriageway: Routine Inspection Frequencies. Clarity was sought on the tolerance range. The Highways and Transportation Services Manager explained that the routine Highway Inspection Frequency was programmed as shown in the report. A tolerance in frequency of inspections was necessary in the case of any disruption such as adverse weather, unplanned incidents and sickness or leave, the programme and tolerance in frequency was managed by the respective Assistant Area Manager.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET that Parts 4.1 to 4.4 of the Highways Asset Management Plan Maintenance Manual be adopted.

7. HIGHWAY ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN - ANNUAL STATEMENT REPORT 2021

[Note: this item was taken prior to Agenda item 6]

The Committee received the Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) Annual Statement Report 2021, presented by Cabinet Member for Environment and supported by a PowerPoint presentation delivered by the Highways and Transportation Services Manager.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:-

- It was asked if the low expenditure in comparison to other Councils was directly attributed to the large road network within Carmarthenshire? The Director of Environment explained that the expenditure allocated to highways was attributed through the conscious decisions made by Council during the budget setting and would have an impact upon the road network under the responsibility of Carmarthenshire Council. The detail cited within this report would be considered when making representations against the other pressures and demands facing the Council.
- Concern was raised that the new method of re-surfacing had failed and had to be re-done and that some roads within Carmarthenshire were still waiting to be repaired after a lengthy period of time. More information on this matter was sought. The Highways and Transportation Services Manager explained that road surfacing carried out by contractors were warranted and that any issues with materials would be rectified at the contractors' expense. The Highways and Transportation Services Manager, in response to the ongoing specific issues relating to road surfaces, stated that he would liaise the Members outside of the Committee meeting.
- In response to a question raised in relation to the conversion of the public lighting to LED's, the Highways and Transportation Services Manager confirmed that the programme was completed in the summer of 2020 and as a result of the conversions, it was estimated that a reduction of 1200 tons of carbon dioxide emissions had been achieved.

- Reference was made to the Drainage Surveys within the report. In regard to the passage “The surveys so far have shown that 32% of our drainage pipes are either severely reduced or blocked and unsafe”, concern was raised that as a result of the reduced and blocked drains, excess water would cause impairment of road surfaces. The Highways and Transportation Services Manager stated that the figure of 32% was concerning it was based on a small sample of drainage surveys undertaken along the A484 and other critical routes that were prone to issues during adverse weather. It was hoped that a high percentage of blockages would be resolved by way of high-pressure jetting, however it was recognised that some drainage networks may have structural issues along pipelines and would therefore require further assessment. The Head of Highways and Transportation added that capital bids had been put forward to help address the issues and in reaction to storm events, further bids for funds from the Welsh Government were pursued to assist in addressing any damage caused.
- The Head of Transportation and Highways, in response to a query raised in regard to the progress of the Cardi Bach footpath, confirmed that the joint project was at feasibility study stage, however, he was unaware of the current position of the project. An update would be forwarded onto the local Councillor for information.
- It was commented that potholes were arising as a result of repair works by utility companies. It was asked, if the warranty of 2-years was considered long enough and if this could be extended? The Highways and Transportation Services Manager explained that the 2-year warranty was a national standard, however the Council was increasing its focus on the inspection regime with utility works. To assist with the inspection regime, Committee Members were informed that an additional resource had been secured on a temporary basis.
- Reference was made to the 3 investment options outlined within the report. It was asked if there was any potential that the Welsh Government would continue to contribute towards the £6m in 2022/23 as detailed within option 3? The Head of Highways and Transportation explained that it would certainly assist with the pressures on the wider capital programme, however Members were informed that the Welsh Government was currently undertaking a highways review and the outcome of the review would determine any future funds. In relation to the budget, the Cabinet Member for Environment acknowledged that the condition of the roads affected all members of the public and encouraged all Members to consider the road network during the budget setting process.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Highway Asset Management Plan – Annual Statement Report 2021 be noted.

8. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee considered the list of forthcoming items to be placed on the agenda for the next meeting scheduled to take place on 22nd December, 2021 and was afforded the opportunity to request for any specific information that Members may wish to include within the reports.

The report reflected the change that the Equestrian Strategy which was due to be circulated by e-mail to Scrutiny Committee members in December, had been deferred to March 2022.

The report also stated that two reports had been circulated to members by e-mail in October, in line with the Committee's 2021 decision to scrutinise outside of the Committee's formal process:-

- Budget Monitoring Report (1st April 2021 – 30th June 2021)
- Public Rights of Way Network Hierarchy

Members were informed that no comments or queries were received.

An update was requested regarding the Dog Breeding Regulations/Licensing conditions – Welsh government review which was referenced on the Committee's Forward Work Programme to be added. As the Cabinet Member for Public Protection was not present in the meeting, due to having to leave early, the Scrutiny Support Officer would convey the request to the Cabinet Member and an update would be circulated by e-mail to Committee Members.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

8.1 that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting on the 22nd December 2021 be noted;

8.2 to note the Committee's revised Forward Work Programme 2021/22.

9. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 4TH OCTOBER 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 4th October, 2021 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE