

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday, 19th May, 2014

Present:- Councillors Marie Longstaff (Chair), Lisa Brett (Vice-Chair), David Martin, Douglas Nicol, Liz Richardson, Roger Symonds and Brian Webber (In place of Les Kew)

Also in attendance: David Trigwell (Divisional Director - Planning and Transport), Peter Dawson (Group Manager, Planning Policy & Transport) and Matthew Smith (Divisional Director, Environmental Services)

Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods: Councillor David Dixon

Cabinet Member for Transport: Councillor Caroline Roberts

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Les Kew had sent his apologies to the Panel. Councillor Brian Webber was present as his substitute for the duration of the meeting.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

6 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

Mr John Eke made a statement to the Panel regarding a 7.5T HGV Weight Restriction for The Street, Stowey. A copy of the statement can be found on the Panel's Minute Book, a summary is set out below.

He explained that The Street is a busy, steep, narrow and twisting road with several pinch points made worse by poor oncoming visibility. This makes HGV traffic

exceptionally dangerous to other road users including vehicles, school transport and the many cyclists, horse riders and walkers. He added that HGV traffic causes substantial road and property damage, obstructs traffic and undermines the environment and local amenities.

He informed the Panel that the narrowest part of the road at the lower end of the village was only five metres wide and insufficient room for a lorry and car to pass at crawling speed let alone two lorries at greater speed. He said that the screeching of brakes and near misses was a common occurrence.

He spoke of how he had lived at the lower end of Stowey for 44 years, during which time the impact of HGV traffic had steadily worsened. He added that the situation had become exacerbated by HGV Sat-Nav routes through Stowey, growing airport traffic and use of the Street as a 'rat run'.

He explained that in January, yet again a 6 axle lorry hit and damaged the wall outside of his house whilst trying to avoid a smaller lorry coming up the road, the third such HGV accident outside our house in the last 6 months. The incident was reported to the B&NES Traffic Department but repairs are still awaited.

He said that representations had been made on numerous occasions in the past for HGV traffic to be banned from using the Street in Stowey, except for local access and that his colleague Alana Weeks would deal with that in her presentation.

Mrs Alana Weeks made a statement to the Panel regarding a 7.5T HGV Weight Restriction for The Street, Stowey. A copy of the statement can be found on the Panel's Minute Book, a summary is set out below.

She informed the Panel that on October 3rd 2000 the B&NES Transportation Sub-Committee resolved to introduce a 7.5T HGV Weight Restriction on 3 roads near Stowey Quarry including The Street. She added that the proposal was included in the 2000 / 2001 Capital Programme.

She said that the grounds for the decision were the unsuitability of The Street for HGV traffic, namely damage and costs caused by HGVs, road safety and pollution. She added that the resolution was not implemented, apparently because an employee left B&NES and that whilst this was a governance issue it was also an opportunity and asked for the resolution to be implemented forthwith.

She then spoke of Stowey Quarry and how B&NES had never intended for the 100 quarry lorries per day to use The Street. She said that the 1997, 2007/8 and proposed 2010 planning conditions consistently provide that Stowey Road/A37 was the designated route.

She explained that in 2012, B&NES and local residents (backed by the Parish Council, PACT and Police) agreed:

- A 30mph speed limit on The Street (introduced in August 2012)
- And a 7.5T HGV Weight Restriction (subject to funding and a TRO); and the route plan was approved in January 2012.

She said that the 2010 Quarry planning application, which included funding for a 7.5T HGV Weight Restriction, was rejected in November 2013. However B&NES confirmed its continued support for the 7.5T HGV Weight Restriction (subject to funding and a TRO) in January 2014.

She added that residents were therefore shocked to learn at a Parish Council meeting on 5 February 2014 that B&NES no longer accepts the need for a 7.5T HGV Weight Restriction.

She informed the Panel that the view of the Divisional Director for Environmental Services on March 18th 2014 was that B&NES' prior support for the 7.5T HGV Weight Restriction was no longer relevant and that a vehicle count would be undertaken to determine current need.

Councillor Vic Pritchard addressed the Panel. He thanked the members of the public for their statements and said that they represent the views of Stowey as all residents support this proposed action.

He said that the resolution that was approved by the Transportation Sub-Committee in 2000 was proposed by the now Cabinet Member for Transport, Councillor Caroline Roberts and that all actions necessary would be used to introduce the TRO.

He commented that having a vehicle count would be nonsense and asked the Panel to use their powers to persuade the Cabinet Member to implement and release the necessary funds, believed to be in the nature of £5,000.

Councillor Caroline Roberts commented that with regard to Stowey she was in favour of a weight limit to protect our roads.

The Divisional Director for Environmental Services commented that due to the passage of time between now and the original decision some form of survey would be expected and evidence required should any forthcoming decision be challenged. He offered to report back on the matter to the Panel in July.

The Chair asked for the report to be added to the Panel's workplan.

Councillor Pritchard wished to address the Panel on another matter. He questioned the number of signs in Stowey that related to flooding as he had been contacted by residents that felt there were too many. He said that there were only 3 fords in the area and he was concerned that the numerous signs in advance of the fords were because officers were not sure exactly where the floods would occur.

He also said the signs were put in place without having a discussion with residents. He added that residents were promised a retrospective consultation and asked when that would take place.

Councillor Caroline Roberts replied that she felt the warning signs were adequate as a preventative measure to protect the public. She added that talks with the residents of Stowey and other affected areas would take place prior to July meeting of the Panel.

Councillor Tim Warren addressed the Panel. He spoke of his disappointment at the lack of content in the Bath Transport Strategy document that was launched at the Bath City Conference.

He said he would have preferred to have seen an actual strategy coming forward rather than a series of questions and no real detail but did not wish for the process to be delayed any further.

He called for a real cross party strategy that all groups could genuinely get behind and give direction for the next 20 or 30 years. He stated that the Council alongside the public must agree on the vision, the objectives, the transport initiatives, the criteria for selecting these initiatives and the relevant importance of each. He added that in the short to medium term the Council needs to know the approximate cost, timescale and feasibility of each scheme.

He commented that he understood that the main initiatives coming out of this consultation to go forward into a strategy were a walking network, a cycle network, a traffic management review, a bus review, a review of Park & Ride facilities, with an East of Bath Park & Ride the most crucial. He said this could be served by buses, trains or even boats. He said he was also pleased to see that an A36 / A46 link road was mentioned.

He stated that he believed that to make the Bath Transport Strategy work new public transport initiatives in North East Somerset will be required and discussions with Wiltshire as well.

He said that he would like to meet with Councillor Caroline Roberts and her officers to discuss the next stages and to then form a transport group including members of all political parties, the Transport Commission and a few informed community members who have shown an interest in the past.

He added that the group would need to be visionary and ambitious with clear transport initiatives and not frightened to make decisions. He said that a strategy could then be presented to the public with a clear set of initiatives, a provisional timetable, approximate costs and how it will be funded.

He concluded by saying that the Council could not move forward if every four years a strategy is ripped up and started anew and that the Conservative Group would do everything in its power to produce a resilient long term strategy.

The Chair thanked him for his statement.

Councillor Roger Symonds commented that he agreed with the views of Councillor Warren and welcomed his offer for parties to work together.

7 MINUTES - 4TH MARCH 2014

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chair.

8 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor David Dixon, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods addressed the Panel. He wished the Nurseries team of Royal Victoria Park good luck at the Chelsea Flower Show where they would be exhibiting their 'The Herbs' display.

He said that as part of the BID City Centre cleansing contract more gull proof sacks would be used across the City. He added that the solar compact bins were working very well still and would soon have signs on them regarding gulls.

He commented that he was aware of at least one interested party that may want to take up the offer of a Trade Food Waste collection service.

He said that the new toilet facilities in Monmouth Street were due to open later in the week.

He stated that following a decision at Cabinet £1m of funding had been agreed to enhance open spaces, including facilities to improve and add further skate parks.

The Chair asked for the Panel to be updated with work regarding Urban Gulls at its July meeting.

Councillor Liz Richardson commented that following a recent Cabinet meeting she had noticed two bin bags in the street and was concerned that they might be left out for too long. She asked who she should have reported this to.

Councillor Dixon advised her to contact Council Connect if she noticed something similar in the future and to take a photo if possible. He added that it would depend on the nature of the waste as to who would then need to be contacted. If it was deemed to be trade waste then the business would be contacted to see who their collector was. If it was residential then this may need to be monitored to ensure it is not put out too early. He added that he was keen to talk to residents further about waste / gulls and possibly have local champions.

Councillor Caroline Roberts, Cabinet Member for Transport addressed the Panel. She said following the agreed Cabinet report on Supported Bus Services members of the public were reminded to use services if they were to have them retained in the future.

She stated that the Bath Transport Strategy document had been formally launched and was expecting the LDF Steering Group to discuss it in due course.

She announced that the Kelston Road now had a temporary footpath / cycleway in place and that further news was expected to be announced in June.

She said that the planned works for Rossiter Road and Widcombe Parade were due commence in June.

She commented that a new bike hire contract would commence within the next two weeks.

She announced that the Dorchester Street bus gate trial had now concluded.

The Chair asked if she had any suggestions as to how best to communicate to the public the importance of using rural bus routes.

Councillor Roberts replied that the routes could be highlighted in the forthcoming Transport Strategy work.

The Chair asked when a decision on the next steps with regard to Dorchester Street would be taken.

Councillor Roberts replied that she anticipated a decision would be made in September.

The Divisional Director for Environmental Services added that preliminary data on matters such as air quality and other routes affected would be available from July.

The Chair thanked both Cabinet Members for their updates.

9 FIRST BUS PRESENTATION RE: FARES CONSULTATION

Paul Matthews, Managing Director of First, West of England gave a presentation to the Panel regarding the recent consultation on fares and other matters. A copy of it can be found on the Panel's Minute Book, a summary is set out below.

First West of England

- Carrying 50 million passengers per annum
- Operating 100 local bus routes
- Partners with West of England (WEP) Partnership in the Greater Bristol Bus Network (GBBN) project
- Successful bid with WEP for Better Bus Area 2 (BBA2) – devolution of Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG)
- Excellent relations with all WEP authorities and Wiltshire and Somerset councils

The Bristol Experience

- We received 7,000 responses to the consultation in Bristol which led to substantial changes to fares in the city and the creation of a new Inner and Outer zone for day, weekly and monthly tickets
- The results were introduced in November 2013: they have been well received by all, including politicians
- Now have simple fare structure
- 92% of customers saw a reduction in cost of travel
- 50% off for children
- 30% off for 16-21 year olds (with ID card)

Outcomes in Bristol

- Value for money score (PF survey) shown big improvement
- Media neutral to positive
- 60% of customers now believe our fares are fairer
- Up to 10% passenger growth, revenue the same

The West of England consultation on fares

- Commitment given to conduct further consultation in rest of West of England at time of Bristol launch
- Need to look at how people travel, and what they want from their buses, so we can design the best solution
- Have to balance any changes to fares with the costs we face, and ensure we make a profit

The B&NES context

- More commercial operation of early evening and Sunday services
- Route simplifications
- Some higher frequencies on core corridors (173/178/184/379 MSN/Radstock to Bath)
- Further network review underway to remove loss making services
- Working with B&NES on alternative day coach parking arrangements

The West of England consultation on fares

- Questionnaire - online and hard copy. Available from a number of locations, and on-buses
- 16 roadshows being held to ensure people know, special events for councillors and MPs
- Dedicated website: www.fairerfaresforall.co.uk
- Consultation period 1 February – 16 March, 1900 responses

Summary of results of consultation

- 90% of those buying singles or returns considered the prices to be quite -32% (25%) or very -58% (71%) expensive
- 74% thought children and students should receive discounts
- 21% wanted a 'smart card'
- Desire to retain multi journey ticket

Current Status

- Internal validation of proposed strategy underway
- Expected conclusions to be announced within the next three weeks
- Implementation expected 22 June

Smart cards

- Full online, on bus and Travel centre top ups from July

- Bath and other West of England period products on to smart cards in August/September
- Multi operator cards (Avon Rider family) from August/September
- Mobile ticketing for students expected from new academic year

Councillor Lisa Brett commented on the work of the Bath Expert Improvement Panel that had been setup and how they were working with First. She added that she agreed strongly that 16 – 21 year olds should receive a 30% discount on fares and posed whether the same rate should be offered to people who are unemployed.

She also wished to highlight the real time information app that was now available to use and asked how he thought the Council could help in the promotion of bus services.

Paul Matthews replied that delivery through partnership was key and said that the Council had been very supportive through the consultation process. He added that their support in any proposed changes would be welcomed alongside making progress on the Bath Transport Strategy.

He said that he would report back to colleagues the comment relating to discounts for the unemployed and thanked Councillor Brett for highlighting the app that is available to use.

Councillor Roger Symonds commented that the Bath Expert Improvement Panel had compiled a list of infrastructure requirements and that First had now managed to incorporate the majority of them. He added that the punctuality of services still needed to be addressed and that a review of routes may need to be considered due to the new housing developments across the city.

He stated that that he felt a flat fare structure would be welcomed and that a discount for under 21's would be of real benefit. He also posed whether a re-allocation of road space was needed – Public Transport / Bikes – v – Cars.

Councillor Douglas Nicol stated that he would like to see free bus travel for young people under the age of 16. He also questioned the conduct of some bus drivers who do not stop when potential passengers signal to them that they wish to board.

Paul Matthews replied that he welcomed the work of the Bath Expert Improvement Panel and acknowledged the need to tackle the problem of punctuality. He added that the option of applying a flat fare was under consideration.

On the matter of driver conduct he said that any such problems needed to be reported so that the incident can be investigated. He added that funding for free travel for young people under the age of 16 was not currently available but acknowledged that they are future customers and work needed to be done to encourage their use of the services.

Councillor David Martin asked if any improvements to the network were planned such as investment on vehicles, lower emission buses, making buses more comfortable and on bus information to let passengers know which stop is next.

Paul Matthews replied that First tries hard to make sure it is in tune with new and future developments and would consider any enhancement to the network as long as it was viable. He added that lower emission vehicles were currently being used on the X39 service and that these vehicles were also more comfortable for passengers. He said that zero emission vehicles were under consideration.

Mr David Redgewell, South West Transport Network addressed the Panel. He said that First and B&NES should look at the success of services in Cheltenham, Canterbury and York if they are to grow the market. He stated that a refurbishment programme for vehicles was required. He commented that not enough commuters were currently using the bus and of the public that do use the services very few are middle class. He called for the Council to be leading on this work and for them to consider pump priming the vehicle refurbishment programme. He suggested that a large majority of services should have free wi-fi available and access to the BBC News Channel.

He said that services should be promoted to local, national and international tourists and suggested that a discount be offered to disabled passengers.

Councillor Douglas Nicol commented that the cost of a family of 4 to purchase a return ticket from Saltford to Bath was over £20 and that that was simply too much to expect people to pay. He suggested that the number of services provided was increased to generate further funding from the Government.

Councillor Liz Richardson commented that she would like to see fares as cheap as possible for children and young people. She recalled that historically on some routes it was cheaper to walk part of the route and get a taxi rather than use the bus. She added that communities must be engaged with on the services they require.

Paul Matthews replied that they were looking to maintain the discount applied to young people under the age of 21.

The Chair commented that work on the punctuality of services and a reduction in fare prices would be welcomed. She also said that public engagement and joint working between First and the Council must be maintained. She thanked Paul Matthews for his attendance and presentation on behalf of the Panel.

10 GETTING AROUND BATH TRANSPORT STRATEGY

The Group Manager for Planning Policy & Transport introduced this report to the Panel. He informed them that the draft strategy was launched at the Bath Conference on 30th April and had been endorsed by the Cabinet to go out to consultation at its meeting on 14th May.

He wished to highlight the vision within the draft strategy to the Panel.

Bath will enhance its unique status by adopting measures that promote sustainable transport and reduce the intrusion of vehicles, particularly in the historic core. This will enable more economic activity and growth, while enhancing its special character and environment and improving the quality of life for local people.

He explained that the high proportion of walking shown by mode share surveys (around 30%) indicates that this is a primary means of travel in the city, indicating that there is potential to expand and improve walking opportunities and hence substituting for some car journeys. In 2011, walking accounted for 35.1% of all journeys to work made by people living and working in Bath.

He said that the strategy proposed to continue the progress made in Bath to relocate long stay parking at Park and Ride sites, thus reducing vehicle movements into the constrained city centre. He added that better management of HGVs within the city was required and that further work is needed to identify suitable facilities for coach drop off and pick up and replacement coach parking facilities.

He stated that the Council was interested to hear the views of the public on this matter and hoped a whole range of initiatives would come forward. He said that the consultation would commence in June.

Mr David Redgewell, South West Transport Network addressed the Panel. He stated the need for consultation documents to be available at the bus station for the public to access and asked that the views of passengers be actively sought.

He commented that a West of England Rail Panel would be welcomed, an East of Bath Park & Ride was essential and that coach parking must be addressed.

On the matter of Dorchester Street he said that further work and views needed to be considered if the bus gate were to be reintroduced.

He stated that he felt that public transport was key to the forthcoming Enterprise Zone and that for this strategy work be successful there must be joined up working and cross party agreement.

The Chair commented that it was a shame that the strategy had received some negativity since the launch. She added that she herself had been expecting a more thorough strategy to be presented to the Cabinet.

Councillor Douglas Nicol commented that he would like to see more of a priority within the strategy to be given to walking, cycling and public transport. He added that he would like to see the Park & Ride services running later into the evening, using them as a place to transfer visitors to the city that arrive by coach and for Park & Ride services to be expanded into countryside hubs.

Councillor David Martin asked if a timetable for the consultation was known yet.

The Group Manager for Planning Policy & Transport replied that workshops and exhibitions were planned to take place in June and that a questionnaire would be available on the website around the same time.

Councillor David Martin asked if any consideration had been given to collecting data on Particulate Matter as part of the strategy.

The Group Manager for Planning Policy & Transport replied that he believed at this stage that it was quite difficult to monitor and so had not been factored in.

Councillor Liz Richardson commented that she would also like to see Park & Ride services available a bit further out of the city as it can still be quite congested to areas such as Newbridge. She added that she did not think that Terrace Walk was the best place for coaches to be dropped off and that she would like to see long term parking in the city reduced. She said a restriction on HGV movements would also be welcome.

Councillor Roger Symonds commented that he thought document was quite a visionary one which would then lead to subsidiary strategies being delivered. He said that he agreed with earlier comments that walking and cycling should be encouraged where possible and that other ideas must be progressed whilst waiting for an East of Bath Park & Ride as that was probably still at least 5 years away. He added that work on this strategy should be linked to the Public Realm & Movement Strategy and the management of open spaces.

Councillor Brian Webber commented that problems remained in the city due to the large number of residents that directly need to use a car. He added that he felt the city would become unattractive due to the number of planned new housing developments.

The Chair thanked the Panel for their comments and said that she looked forward to seeing the results of the consultation work.

11 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Chair introduced this item to the Panel. After a brief discussion reports were requested for the July Panel meeting on the following subjects:

- Urban Gulls Update
- 7.5T HGV Weight Restriction, The Street, Stowey
- Air Quality in B&NES

The meeting ended at 3.55 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services