

## **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

### **CABINET**

These minutes are draft until confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting.

Wednesday, 15th December, 2021

#### **Present:**

Councillor Kevin Guy	Leader of the Council, Liberal Democrat Group Leader
Councillor Dine Romero	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Communities and Culture
Councillor Tim Ball	Cabinet Member for Planning and Licensing
Councillor Richard Samuel	Deputy Council Leader (statutory) and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Resources
Councillor Sarah Warren	Deputy Council Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate and Sustainable Travel
Councillor David Wood	Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Alison Born	Cabinet Member for Adults and Council House Building
Councillor Manda Rigby	Cabinet Member for Transport

#### **95 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair, Councillor Kevin Guy, welcomed everyone watching and participating at the virtual Cabinet meeting and made the following statement:

*“Due to the ongoing Covid situation and a desire to retain a level of social distancing at Council meetings at this time, we are holding this ‘informal’ virtual Cabinet meeting to enable Cabinet, Councillors and members of the public to take part. This virtual meeting will be conducted in the normal manner but, as any decisions made will not be legally enforceable, they will be formally made at the physically reduced, quorate decision-making meeting tomorrow on 16th December 2021. We will review this approach for any future Cabinet meetings, in line with government and health guidance at that time.”*

#### **96 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Tom Davies, Cabinet Member for Adults and Council House Building, gave apologies for the meeting.

#### **97 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

#### **98 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR**

1. The Chair made the following statement: "I am giving notice that I intend to call a special meeting of Cabinet (rule 4D, 7) in late January to agree the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement before it is submitted by WECA to the Department for Transport. In so doing, I am also using rule 4D, 20 to suspend the necessary rules so that no public or councillor questions are permitted at this meeting, and only statements on the agenda item. This is to enable a focussed debate on the issue, and the usual public and councillor opportunities to engage with Cabinet will operate at the next scheduled meeting in February. Please can I have a seconder for this proposal and then ask Cabinet to indicate their support." Councillor Sarah Warren seconded the proposal

**RESOLVED** to recommend to Cabinet on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021 that rule 4D, 20 be used as outlined above regarding the January 2022 meeting of the Cabinet.

2. The Chair announced that Councillor Alison Born, Cabinet Member for Adults and Council House Building would make a statement on 'The Sale of Virgin Care to Twenty20 Capital'

Councillor Alison Born made the following statement.

"I would like to make a statement about the sale of Virgin Care to the Private Capital company Twenty20 Capital.

The recent decision to extend the Virgin Care contract by three years, until 2027, was taken because it appeared to offer continuity and certainty during a time of great challenge and upheaval in health and social care services. It was a joint decision with colleagues in the CCG and was based on a detailed options appraisal using the information available to us when the decision was made on 11th November.

The announcement, three weeks later on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021, that Virgin Care had been bought by the private capital company Twenty20 Capital, and is now known as HCRG Care Group, came as a total shock to all who had worked on the contract extension and all those working in local community health and care services, including valued colleagues in our voluntary and community sector.

We have been reassured that nothing will change but it appears to us that our community health and care services may have transferred from an organisation that had given a commitment not to make any profit from its health care contracts to one with a very different business model. If that is the case, it is clearly a significant change.

This raises a number of concerns, many of which have been raised with me by service users, elected members, third sector organisations, staff and residents. As the very basis for the extension decision appears to us to be in question, our confidence in continuity and consolidation has been undermined. As a consequence, we have decided to pause and reflect whilst we work jointly with colleagues in the CCG to seek specialist advice and undertake a comprehensive analysis and due diligence on the implications of these changes to our local services.

We aim to conclude this work as quickly as possible and to clarify our intentions well within the deadline for a decision on the contract extension of March 31<sup>st</sup> 2022. We wish to reassure all those working in our local community health and care services, including third sector organisations, that our primary motivation will always be to provide safe, high quality services that meet the needs of our local residents and that public money will be safeguarded for the provision of front-line services.

Above all, we must ensure continuity of service provision and protect the interests of staff working in community services who at this time are working incredibly hard to support the most vulnerable people in our communities whilst supporting the delivery of an expanded vaccination programme. We must also safeguard the collaborative, user-focused culture that we, the CCG, our third sector organisations and other partners have built over a number of years”.

## **99 STATEMENTS, DEPUTATIONS OR PETITIONS FROM PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS**

Malcolm Baldwin (Chair, Circus Area Residents) made a statement regarding the implementation of the "Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy" *[a copy of which is attached to the Minutes on the Council's website]*.

David Redgewell (South West Transport Board and Rail Future Severnside) made a statement regarding Transport Issues.

Rachael Hushon - made a statement regarding the work of the Community Speedwatch Team *[a copy of which is attached to the Minutes on the Council's website]*

Bob Goodman made a statement regarding issues facing the City of Bath *[a copy of which is attached to the Minutes on the Council's website]*

Martin Grixoni made a statement regarding the state of the City. Bath *[a copy of which is attached to the Minutes on the Council's website]*

Hannah Downey made a statement regarding City Centre Traffic Regulation Order.

Carole Cameron (Bath Independent Hospitality Association) made a statement regarding the TRO and the proposed changes to the Hotel and Guest House permits *[a copy of which is attached to the Minutes on the Council's website]*

Councillor Karen Walker made a statement regarding the budget relating to Peasedown St John *[a copy of which is attached to the Minutes as on the Council's website]*

Councillor Vic Pritchard made a statement regarding City Centre Security Issues

Councillor Karen Warrington made a statement regarding rural traffic issues.

## **100 QUESTIONS FROM PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS**

There were 48 questions from Councillors.

*[Copies of the questions and responses, including supplementary questions and responses, if any, are attached to these minutes]*

## **101 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS CABINET MEETINGS**

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend the approval of the minutes of the meetings held on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2021 and Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

## **102 CONSIDERATION OF SINGLE MEMBER ITEMS REQUISITIONED TO CABINET**

There were none.

## **103 MATTERS REFERRED BY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY BODIES**

There were none.

## **104 SINGLE MEMBER CABINET DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE PREVIOUS CABINET MEETING**

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend that the Cabinet on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021 note the report.

## **105 BATH CLEAN AIR PLAN- UPDATE DECEMBER 2021**

Councillor Sarah Warren introduced the report and made the following statement:

“Air pollution is estimated to cause around 80 deaths a day across the UK, with approximately 80 per year in Bath and North East Somerset. The World Health Organisation recently released new guidelines on safe levels of 6 pollutants where evidence has advanced on the health effects from exposure, and I have written this week to the Minister to urge their rapid adoption into UK law, combined with adequate advice, powers and financial support for councils in tackling them, so as to reduce these adverse health impacts.

Tonight we are considering the second quarterly report on air quality, vehicle compliance, and traffic displacement following the implementation in March 2021 of Bath’s Clean Air Zone, which is designed to tackle high atmospheric levels of the pollutant nitrogen dioxide. The report covers the period from July to September of this year.

Nitrogen dioxide levels are usually measured and compared over 12 month average periods because of the way its concentration in the atmosphere fluctuates depending on seasonal weather conditions. Therefore this report on just 3 months from July to September, covers a very short period by these standards, and presents provisional data, not yet subject to bias corrections or validation.

During the quarter we saw overall traffic levels return to pre-covid levels in the city, with light goods vehicles at 112% and heavy goods vehicles at 110% of their pre-covid numbers, owing to pandemic-related changes in shopping patterns. Throughout the period, there have been dramatic changes to traffic flows around the city centre arising from the complete closure of Cleveland Bridge, which normally carries some 17,000 vehicles per day.

The purpose of the zone is to encourage the upgrade of the most polluting vehicles, and £9.4m has been made available through grants and interest free finance to support this. Some 1495 individuals have been approved for finance, and 591 vehicles upgraded so far through this route, with others delayed due to issues with global supply of new vehicles. Overall, air quality continues to improve both within and outside the zone, with average reductions in nitrogen dioxide levels 14% inside, and 9% outside the zone, compared to the same period in 2019.

Currently:

- 91% of all taxis, 96% of HGVs, and almost 100% of scheduled bus services driving in the zone are compliant.
- We've seen an increase to 77% of compliant light goods vehicles travelling in the zone.
- Of the 40,000 vehicles entering the zone each day, non-compliant vehicles are down to just 1.7%.
- The income generated between March and the end of September totalled around £3.5m, all of which will go into reserve funds to pay for the future operation of the scheme in the interests of public health.

I particularly want to thank those people who have gone to the trouble and expense of upgrading their vehicles, whether independently or through the council scheme, as well as those who are still on waiting lists for new vehicles, because we are seeing the benefits of the high level of vehicle compliance. I received an email from the wife of an asthmatic only this week expressing heartfelt thanks for the efforts we have all made as a community to reduce air pollution.

Bearing in mind that we have to take a 12 month view of pollution, we are still seeing nine sites with average nitrogen dioxide levels above 40 microgrammes per cubic metre over the quarter. Four of these locations have seen a decrease in emissions compared to the same period in 2019, which is pleasing. However, four have seen an increase, and they are probably all impacted to a greater or lesser extent by diversions arising from the Cleveland Bridge closure. Further detailed investigations are continuing at these locations, however, to ensure we fully understand what is going on.

In particular, I note that a recent newspaper article cites Chapel Row as the most polluted street in Bath, without expanding on the reasons behind the temporary rise in pollution seen here. From the closure of Cleveland Bridge in late June, we saw an increase in traffic flow northwards into Queen Square from 5,300 vehicles to 6,500 per week.

Graphs in our report show an exact correlation between this rise in traffic on Chapel Row and the rise in nitrogen dioxide concentrations at the corresponding diffusion tubes. I'd therefore like to reassure residents and businesses in the area that we fully expect nitrogen dioxide levels at Chapel Row to fall back below 40 micrograms per cubic metre now that the bridge has reopened. This was a temporary increase, due to the closure of the bridge.

Whilst the overall reduction in pollution we have seen across the city is positive, it is somewhat disappointing to note that despite largescale displacement of HGVs away from Cleveland Place during the bridge closure, pollution levels at Walcot Parade

remain above 40 microgrammes per cubic metre, and there are a couple of other pollution hotspots where I would prefer to be seeing a faster reduction in pollutant levels.

There are also a number of areas around the city where we are seeing some displacement of traffic, and with Cleveland Bridge closed, it is often hard to determine whether this is due to the Clean Air Zone, to the bridge closure, or to the overall national increase in heavy and light goods vehicles on our roads since the pandemic. Only longer term and more detailed monitoring, particularly following the reopening of the bridge, will enable us to tease out these different elements.

The data collected during the bridge closure to date does show us clearly that removing many vehicles from this part of the network has seen a dramatic reduction in air pollution, and the next quarterly monitoring report will show us exactly what air quality at Cleveland Place is like **with** cars and **without** trucks, as the bridge is currently closed to vehicles wider than 2m. This information is relevant to the next item on this evening's agenda, which recommends use of an amended Clean Air Zone charging order to charge all diesel HGVs above 12 tonnes to enter the zone unless exempt. I would like to register my concern that if large vehicles are allowed to return to the bridge, we can expect a return of pollution to Cleveland Place.

I would like to finish by thanking officers for their hard work monitoring the impacts of the zone so closely, and compiling the data into this quarterly report, which permits regular close public examination of our progress on this important public health measure. We clearly need to keep both air quality and potential traffic displacement under close review. We await government's assessment of the extent to which we are achieving success in the New Year.

In the meantime, given that our legal compliance with air quality standards now looks as though it may be marginal at a small number of locations in the city, I would like to amend the final recommendation (in the report), to additionally request an options appraisal for making further improvements to air quality in the city, as part of our next published report about the Clean Air Zone".

Councillor Sarah Warren moved the recommendations, as amended.

Councillor Dine Romero seconded the motion and stated that a key factor behind the Clean Air Zone is the public health implications of bad air quality. She stated that climate change and public health are good reasons to support The Clean Air Zone but acknowledged variables such as the work on Cleveland Bridge.

Councillor Richard Samuel made the following statement: "Once again, I welcome the publication of this report which places the facts concerning the CAZ in the public domain and represents the official state of play rather than some of the ill-informed comments I have seen on social media from certain members of the main opposition party.

Overall, I am pleased to see a trend towards reduction of pollutants, but I am concerned to see that pollution levels remain above legal levels in my ward and also in a number of city centre sites.

I want to speak briefly on one of these – Chapel Row.

When the last administration's then cabinet member, Cllr Goodman, proposed the traffic light scheme at Queen Square, he set in train the sequence of events that have led to the higher pollution levels we see today. In 2019 the Conservative administration were so desperate to avoid charging cars to come into the CAZ, a Class D CAZ, that came up with this bonkers scheme.

One of the areas where pollution was above legal limits was the corner of Gay St and George St which is a notorious pinch point. The other was at Cleveland Place in my ward.

Failure to achieve compliance at these pinch points would have meant that air quality would always have failed the standard and therefore the council would have to impose a Class D CAZ. So, Cllr Goodman came up with the Heath Robinson solution we see today. Two sets of traffic lights installed at Queen Square which are designed to hold traffic back when pollution tips over the limit at Gay St. However, he offered no solution to the Cleveland Place pollution levels.

The inevitable consequence of this plan, which I criticised at the time, was queuing traffic in Chapel Row and around Queen Sq.

Once in power Cllr Warren and I looked extremely closely at the scheme because we did not like it and felt it would displace traffic into lower Lansdown. We asked officers to produce modelling to demonstrate what would happen if the scheme was scrapped. The data they provided showed huge increases in Marlborough Lane, Julian Road, and Royal Avenue to unacceptable levels. This was a deliberate attempt by the Conservatives to disperse pollution into residential areas to reduce it at the pinch-point.

In short it was a deliberate attempt to massage the figures down to achieve a Class C CAZ when all the data showed that a Class D CAZ was probably the correct course of action for the Conservatives to have taken following the science. It also meant that the projections for Gay St and Cleveland Place were within a 3% margin of error and so statistically unreliable as a certain outcome.

Despite our best endeavours it proved impossible to unpick this decision, despite the now Mr Goodman's claims to the contrary, as this would have meant missing the deadlines set by JAQU and additional cost to remodel the CAZ.

The result is clear to see.

I also note the downgrading of aspiration by the Tory government from compliance to achieving success. Weasel words if ever I heard them.

But I also want to reflect on the diversionary impacts that are clearly occurring and are referred to in para 3.7 of the report. Whilst these are perhaps explainable they are not desirable. I therefore call on my colleague Cllr Warren to agree to examine these negative impacts and if justified bring forward amendments to the charging order that discourage commercial vehicles from impacting on residential areas. I raise this now as there is a clear connection to the recommendations contained in the next report.

Finally, I want to end by commenting on the NOx figures for the monitoring sites in my ward.

- Anglo Terrace – dramatically down because of the HGV ban
- Paragon – up because of diverting vehicles
- Walcot Parade – down because of the HGV ban
- Canton Place – down because of the HGV ban
- Walcot St – marginally down
- Cleveland Place- down because of the HGV ban.

Chairman if ever an evidence base was required for a permanent restriction on all HGVs over Cleveland Bridge this was it”.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously) to recommend that the Cabinet on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021:

- 1.1 Note the performance report and the ongoing progress which has been made towards improving air quality and associated public health outcomes, together with the ongoing increasing proportion of compliant vehicles entering the CAZ and achieving success with the Ministerial Direction.
- 1.2 Note the continued performance of the scheme against the scheme's financial model, ensuring it covers its costs of operation and avoids placing an additional burden on the Council and local taxpayers.
- 1.3 Note that after assessing over 2,500 applicants who applied to the financial assistance scheme and finding 1,495 vehicles eligible for replacement or retrofit treatment, the current round of funding for the financial assistance scheme will be concluding. However, a waiting list is being held, should further funding become available.
- 1.4 Note the success achieved at key hotspot monitoring locations in reducing nitrogen dioxide levels e.g. Gay Street, acknowledge the risk that more intervention may be required at some locations, e.g. Wells Road and note the work that Officers have already been doing in anticipation of this outcome.
- 1.5 Request an options appraisal for making further improvements to air quality in the city, as part of our next published report about the Clean Air Zone.

## **106 CLEVELAND BRIDGE REVIEW**

Councillor Mandy Rigby introduced the report and made the following statement:

"I am splitting this speech into 2 bits. I will introduce the paper I am asking you to support shortly, but first, I'd like to take this opportunity to give my Cabinet colleagues and those who are watching a verbal update on the condition of the bridge and the status of the works.

Engineering work on Bath's historic Cleveland Bridge will continue in the run up to Christmas, pause from 23rd December and resume on January 4.

The bridge will remain closed to HGVs but will continue to be open for vehicles under two metres in width under traffic signals.

A fuller update on the programme of renovation works is anticipated in mid-January. Since temporary supports were installed at the end of October, crucial sections of the bridge trusses have been repaired, however repairs on a fourth truss are more extensive and work is ongoing.

Another temporary platform has been erected under the bridge deck on upstream side of the river allowing for more detailed inspection of the bridge. It has resulted in the identification of a further 28 repairs in addition to 21 already accounted for.

Investigation work is also under way on downstream side of the structure.

Engineers are looking at all options to progress the repairs as safely and quickly as possible but at this stage we are unable to confirm when the bridge will be fully opened.

Pedestrians, cyclists and cars can use the bridge and an exception has been made for emergency vehicles, which will be able to access the bridge via a gate specifically for their use.

Diversion routes for all other vehicles and through traffic on the A36 via South Gloucestershire are available on the council's Cleveland Bridge webpage.

Work on the £3.8 million project to repair and safeguard the Grade II\* listed structure began in May under temporary traffic signals before the bridge was closed to all vehicle traffic on 28 June.

The extent of the works includes repairs to the bridge deck and concrete supporting structure, along with repainting of the cast iron arches and parapets and waterproofing to prevent future weather damage.

However, due to the uncertainty this may have an impact on other planned maintenance and events that require road closures that are scheduled in for next year. We are working to understand this risk fully, but we will be discussing with event planners and other stakeholders shortly.

The project is currently funded through the Government's Highways Challenge Fund.

Moving on to the paper in front of you about future options for the bridge.

I am asking Cabinet to agree with points 1-5 in the recommendations.

This paper is a direct result of the cabinet meeting held on September 9th when officers were instructed to examine all options for charging and/or restricting HGV movements across Cleveland bridge. This is a 200-year-old bridge, never intended for this volume and weight of traffic, and the mitigations put in place in 1927 are also struggling to handle the wear and tear. The £3.5m we are spending from the public purse now will need to be spent again in 10-15 years' time if HGVs go back to pummelling the bridge as before. It would be so much better to find a permanent solution.

In essence having examined all the routes open to us, there are 2 main options left, a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), or a road user charge potentially through CAZ, as imposition of a toll, using either existing local legislation, or other tolling powers has been deemed currently unfeasible.

Cleveland Bridge forms part of the PRN, primary route network, therefore all TROs whether based on air quality, safety, or heritage grounds if it diverts traffic to adversely affect other parts of the PRN are subject to appeal to the department of transport.

We have worked extremely hard, and will continue to work hard with Wiltshire, Somerset, South Gloucestershire Councils, National Highways, and the Secretary of State, both directly and via the Western Gateway board, to try to reach agreement but in the absence of doing so, the risk of a successful PRN appeal is very high.

We are not in the business of exporting our problems elsewhere, but we are in the business of standing up for our community, and to us, it is only right that all parts of the network, including Wiltshire, take their fair share of traffic.

That being the case, it is recommended the recommendation before us this evening is that we progress examining extending the charging mechanism in the Clean Air Zone to include initially HGVs over 12 Tonnes.

Given the very positive reaction from HGV operators to the CAZ so far, there is an opportunity to go further, faster. Indeed, the HGV roadmap published by the automotive council says in the period 2020-2025 we should expect hybrid and electric vehicles to start to complement the lower emission vehicles, and we are as Cllr Warren has highlighted in the previous item under a direction to ensure compliance with air quality limit values in the shortest possible time.

Remember, this is not Bath's traffic. This is through traffic bringing congestion and pollution, not economic benefit.

I want to commend the officers for their work on this, leaving no stone unturned, no avenue unexplored, to allow us to protect our residents and our heritage from the blight of excessive overweight HGVs".

Councillor Manda Rigby moved the recommendations.

Councillor Richard Samuel seconded the motion and made the following statement:

"Chairman, in seconding this report I wish to speak to the relief that residents in my ward along London Road have felt since the 18-ton HGV weight ban was introduced. I have already referred to the obvious reduction in pollution levels caused by the effective removal of heavy goods vehicles to levels not experienced for decades. Residents will have seen a noticeable improvement in air quality making it better for children and those with poor health.

In no circumstances can HGVs be allowed to ever return uncontrolled to the London Road because the evidence is now clearly before us that they are a major cause of elevated NOx levels.

So, with this clear evidence we must now look to the future.

It is clear that using conventional solutions to tackle excessive HGV volumes is unrealistic. They are fraught with legal difficulties and risk challenge from other local authorities. However, the potential way forward set out in para 2.4 that extends the CAZ charge to all vehicles over a weight of 12 tonnes offers a solution. I feel this needs to be given the green light and officers asked to progress this at pace. It also potentially fits neatly with the need to review the operation of certain aspects of the CAZ I mentioned in relation to the previous report.

Chairman, residents in the London Road and Paragon want to see a big improvement in their quality of life. Work is underway on the Snow Hill LN, planning is in the pipeline for improved cycle provision on London Road, plans are coming forward for better bus priority, the last piece of the jigsaw is to prevent a return of uncontrolled HGVs to London Road and Cleveland Bridge – changes to the CAZ charging order offer the best prospect for that hope. This Lib Dem administration is delivering for residents in my ward so I second these recommendations particularly emphasising the role that 2.4 can play".

**RESOLVED** (unanimously) to recommend that the Cabinet on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021:

1. Note that in the absence of a solution to restrict HGV movements over the bridge which has been agreed with the haulage trade associations, neighbouring authorities, National Highways and the Secretary of State, all unilateral options carry high degrees of risk of a PRN appeal and/or a legal challenge.
2. In light of the resolution made at the 9 September Cabinet Meeting (E3303) to adopt recommendation 2.1 in the corresponding Officer report, recognise the need to maintain good working relationships with the Council's neighbouring authorities and National Highways so as not to undermine the investment being made into a wider, strategic study into north-south connectivity between the M4 and the Dorset Coast with an aim of making the A350 the strategic route and thereby limiting HGV use of Cleveland Bridge as part of the Government's Road Investment Strategy 2 (2020-25).

3. Consider strengthening the Council's transport policies to: protect the amenity of the Bath World Heritage Site setting, continue to improve air quality standards, reduce vehicular demand on road space, and respond to the climate and ecological emergencies already declared by the Council. This could include, if necessary, the introduction of further restrictions and/or increased charges on vehicles entering Bath. In line with the legislation, note that any net revenues generated from any proposed charging scheme would be applied to facilitate the achievement of these policies.
4. Consider early engagement with the haulage trade associations, neighbouring authorities, National Highways and the Secretary of State with a view to exploring a variation to the Bath Clean Air Zone Charging Order 2021 so that all Euro VI diesel powered vehicles with weight exceeding 12 tonnes<sup>1</sup> become chargeable under the scheme, for the benefit of air quality and the amenity of the CAZ area (including the Grade II\* Cleveland Bridge) and the wider Bath World Heritage Site setting. As part of this and with a view to protecting local SMEs and their supply chains that may have recently invested in Euro VI diesel vehicles, explore the option of also introducing a time-limited exemption to complement the existing exemptions for hybrid, electric and alternatively fuelled vehicles. Subject to undertaking further feasibility work and being able to develop and implement a workable scheme, this would have the net effect of disincentivising all diesel-powered HGVs weighing over 12 tonnes from using the CAZ area as a through route.
5. Noting the high risk of appeal and/or legal challenge, and the resource implications highlighted in the report below, do not proceed with the TRO option at this time.

## **107 BRISTOL TO BATH STRATEGIC CORRIDOR, STRATEGIC OUTLINE CASE**

Councillor Sarah Warren introduced the report and made the following statement:

"The A4 Bristol Bath corridor serves a population of 117,000 with around 13,000 trips made along the corridor each day. At the moment, the mode share of these made by car is 54%, increasing to a whopping 77% of commuters to Bristol or Bath along the route, with just 7% of all trips by bike, and 9% by bus. Population along the corridor is forecast to increase, and if nothing is done, mode share by car is forecast to rise still further, with the greatest increase arising from trips of less than 5km. Corresponding congestion costs are forecast to increase to £800m per year by 2036. At present, there is very limited bus priority, and very little safe, segregated cycle provision on the route, which results in a vicious cycle. Buses stuck in traffic travel slowly with unpredictable journey times, cycling amongst the traffic feels too dangerous for many, there are few methods to get to the A4 that don't involve a car. Whilst there is a fast rail connection, it can only be accessed at Keynsham. So, people are understandably very much in the habit of picking up their car keys. The impacts of this car-dominated environment are many. The route currently suffers from severe congestion, with associated financial cost of wasted time and fuel, increased car mileage as people divert around it, air pollution, noise, and car-dominated communities that don't always feel like the pleasantest of environments to

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the Road User Charging and Workplace Parking Levy (Classes of Motor Vehicles) (England) Regulations 2001.

walk around. As part of our climate emergency declaration, we know we need to achieve a reduction in mileage of 25% per person per year, and this is a vital transition to make for public health reasons as well. So, we need to make the shift from a vicious to a virtuous cycle.

The overarching objective of this project, funded through the West of England Combined Authority's City Region Sustainable Transport Fund, is to create a high quality segregated and prioritised mass transport, cycling and walking corridor that will provide for reliable services, to encourage people to use sustainable transport modes for short and mid-distance journeys, and contribute to tackling the climate emergency through modal shift. We also plan to improve sustainable modes of getting to the A4, with interchanges between transport modes along the route. Our underlying purpose is to improve people's lives through addressing the climate emergency, improving public health, and tackling transport poverty.

Our aspiration is for a fast, segregated zero-emission, turn-up-and-go, 5-minute bus service between Bristol and Bath, as well as a continuous, safe, segregated cycle route. This will create a vital step-change in the standard of sustainable transport connections between the two major cities of the West of England. A first round of public engagement was carried out this autumn, so we already have information about residents' views. Further engagement will take place in early 2022.

We welcome government's commitment to sustainable transport through the provision of the City Region Sustainable Transport Fund, and other funds, over the last two years. However, government's stated ambition in this area sits at odds with the cliff edge in regular bus service funding that companies are facing in April, as the covid support grant provided to companies by government is based on the assumption that passenger numbers, currently stuck at 70% of pre-covid totals, would have risen to 90% by now. It's a shame that government will not acknowledge this gap, and that communities, encouraged by government publicity to hope for improvements in mass transport provision, may instead be faced with dramatic cuts to services in the short term. I very much hope that government will quickly rethink this illogicality.

Cabinet is asked to note that the West of England Joint Committee will be asked on 28th January to delegate authority to Chief Executives to progress to Outline Business Case for this important project, the Bristol Bath Strategic Corridor. I wholeheartedly support the proposal".

Councillor Sarah Warren moved the recommendations.

Councillor Manda Rigby seconded the motion by acknowledging the outstanding work done by Councillor Warren and the officers. She stated that the scheme aims to achieve many outcomes and there is a long way to go but this is a positive start.

Councillor Richard Samuel made the following statement:

"I welcome this initiative by the WECA to improve the flow of public service vehicles between the main urban centres of Bath and Bristol together with other ancillary improvements for walking and cycling. The devil of course will be in the detail and how the competing demands for road space will be managed. It will be essential to work closely with residents and businesses along the route and in this regard, I welcome the work undertaken by the Mayor to involve residents at an early stage. It is clear from the responses set out at para 10.5 that there is plenty to do".

**RESOLVED** (unanimously) to recommend that the Cabinet on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021:

1.6 Note that WECA Joint Committee on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2022 will be asked to delegate authority to approve the Strategic Outline Case to Chief Executives on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2022 for progression to Outline Business Case.

1.7 Note early public engagement will be carried out Spring/Summer 2022 if the Strategic Outline Case is approved.

## 108 2020/21 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Councillor Richard Samuel introduced the report and made the following statement:

“This is the second report covering Q2 and is slightly late due to data gathering problems.

The detailed dashboard appears in the appendix, but highlights are:

- Very high levels of resident satisfaction at 87%
- Strong performance on recycling
- High levels of reablement – so important to help our hospitals
- Top performance on safeguarding for adults

I welcome the trend information but query whether faster traffic is a positive indicator in a city where 20mph is the norm. Perhaps officers could look at this.

We welcome suggestions from opposition members and the public as to how we can improve this data for the future. In this regard I will investigate whether the Corporate PDS panel would be prepared to look at the reports in the near future and let us have their recommendations”.

Councillor Richard Samuel moved the recommendations.

Councillor Kevin Guy seconded the motion.

Councillor Tim Ball thanked Councillor Samuel and the officers.

Councillor Dave Wood stated that this showed the best recycling on record in BANES and that satisfaction had gone up since 2018.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously) to recommend that the Cabinet on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021:

1.8 Note progress on the delivery of key aspects of the Council's service delivery, details of which are highlighted in section 3.7 and Annex 1.

1.9 Indicate any other key service areas to be highlighted and included in the strategic indicator report.

1.10 Agree to receive update reports on a quarterly basis

The meeting ended at 8.05 pm

Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Date Confirmed and Signed \_\_\_\_\_

**Prepared by Democratic Services**