

# Public Agenda Pack



Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning and Transport Policy Sub-Committee held in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE, on Tuesday, 19 December 2023 at 10.00 am

## **Present:**

Cllr Ros Wyke (Chair)  
Cllr Bill Revans  
Cllr Dixie Darch

## **In attendance:**

Cllr Sarah Wakefield

## **Other Members present remotely:**

Cllr Mike Rigby

### **1 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 1**

No apologies were received.

### **2 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2**

Councillors present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor of a Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

<b>SOMERSET COUNCILLOR</b>	<b>CITY, TOWN AND/OR PARISH COUNCIL</b>
Mike Rigby	Bishop's Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish Council
Ros Wyke	Westbury-sub-Mendip Parish Council

### **3 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 3**

Public Questions were received from:-

- David Redgewell – Public Transport
- Roger Foxwell – Local Transport Plan

The questions and responses provided are attached to the minutes in Annexe A.

#### **4 Planning and Transport Policy Sub-Committee Forward Plan - Agenda Item 4**

The Head of Planning, Alison Blom-Cooper, introduced the Forward Plan.

The Sub-Committee discussed the forward plan and the following points were raised:-

- Mendip Local Plan Part II Site Allocations Review would be added to the February meeting.
- Clarification was given that the two CIL reports for the January meeting would be merged into one report.
- Nexus LDO would be added as a provisional item to the February meeting.
- Six-monthly update on the Somerset Local Plan would be added to the February meeting.
- Councillors queried the timescales for all the Neighbourhood Plans items listed on the forward plan.

*The Head of Planning advised that the Sub-Committee was responsible for approving the local plans and clarified that once the referendum had taken place, officers had 8 weeks to take the local plans to the Sub-Committee for decision.*

**Resolved** that the Planning and Transport Policy Sub-Committee noted the Forward Plan.

#### **5 Local Transport Plan - Programme Timescales and Governance - Agenda Item 5**

The Strategic Manager for Highways and Transport, Mike O'Dowd-Jones, introduced the report which sought the agreement from the Sub-Committee on the proposed timescales and internal governance processes for the Local Transport Plan.

The Sub-Committee discussed the report and the following points were raised:-

- Councillors were pleased to see an integrated approach to the report.
- Concern was raised that Government guidance had not been received, but councillors assumed that officers would continue with the work and amend any details, if required, once the guidance had been received.
- Councillors were pleased to see that carbon reduction had been included.
- Councillors queried what area was covered by 'a place-based approach'.

*The Strategic Manager for Highways and Transport advised that the place-based approach would operate in a functional way and that the county would be divided and grouped into different types of place.*

- Councillors queried funding and how much had been inherited from the District Councils with Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs).

*The Strategic Manager for Highways and Transport advised that some work had been carried out on larger towns and that the District Councils had worked on rural plans and that officers would work on integrating those plans. The Service Manager for Transport Policy added that a report had been taken to Active England which identified that 49% of Somerset's population was covered by a LCWIP and that they had commissioned a piece of work for the whole county, focusing on rural connectivity, which was based on the LCWIP. Principle of strategic network planning. Clarification was given that the funding needed to be committed by December 2024.*

**Resolved** that the Planning and Transport Policy Sub-Committee:-

- a) Approved the Local Transport Plan programme timescales outlined in Appendix A; and
- b) Approved the governance process, as set out in Appendix B.

## **6 Mendip Local Plan Part II Site Allocations Review - Update Report - Agenda Item 6**

The Principal Planning Policy Officer, Andre Sestini, gave the Sub-Committee a verbal update on the Mendip Local Plan.

The Sub-Committee discussed the item and the following points were raised:-

- The Principle Planning Policy Officer gave the following update:-
  - Officers had applied to vary the court order to request the timetable be extended.
  - Rather than bringing a written report to the Sub-Committee, officers had met with legal counsel and deemed it be more prudent to use the time to prepare the application ready to submit to court before the end of December 2023.
  - The sites listed were more than expected.
  - Officers had to re-digitise the maps which had led to delays.
  - 140 sites had been assessed following a thorough process.
  - 90% were deemed to have an impact on the Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
  - The consultation would start after the report had been taken to the February meeting.

- Councillors had attended two of the workshops on the site allocations and had found them to be a very helpful and an open exercise. Officers were praised for making the workshops transparent.
- Concern was raised on the cost of taking the application to court.  
*The Head of Planning advised that the cost was unknown yet.*
- Councillors queried what the plan was to engage with City, Town and Parish Councils and the Local Community Networks (LCNs).  
*The Head of Planning advised that there was a set guide on who was included in the consultation document, but they were happy to review and look to include LCNs.*
- Councillors highlighted that it would be a good opportunity to use this process as a guide on how other consultations would engage with consultees, especially for when the Local Plan goes out to consultation.
- Councillors requested that officers shared the consultation document with councillors for input and that they could include the LCNs.

**Resolved** that the Planning and Transport Sub-Committee noted the verbal update.

**(The meeting ended at 10.45 am)**

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**CHAIR**

## Planning and Transport Policy Sub-Committee 19 December 2023 – Public Questions

Name of person submitting	Question
<p><b>David Redgewell</b></p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 5</p>	<p><b>Question 1</b>            What progress is being made with City, Town and Parish Councils on bus shelters transfer of maintenance and cleaning across Somerset Unity Council bus and coach station cleaning could be subcontracted by not. Ownership of the county bus coach stations and interchanges. And the city Parish and Town Councils. Supporting bus and community transport services.</p> <p><b>Question 2</b>            What is the proposal to reduce the cost of running the county bus coach and railway network in the proposed this year 2024 ,2025 budget, Somerset Council budget.</p> <p><b>Question 3</b>            Why is English Heritage now delaying the Re opening and modernisation of Taunton bus and coach station, Now the Transport hub the cost of opening the station should be met by access charges from First Group plc bus services National Express coaches limited, Flixbus coaches Berry's coaches.            Income from Catering services has this issue been discussed with Taunton Town Council.            Can you Explain the delay and in the local Plan the site is allocated as bus and coach station and need limited planning permission.            Can we see a King QC planning advice on this and please publish.            What consultation has taken place with passenger’s groups Transport focus about the delay or First Group plc, National Express coaches Berry's coaches Flixbus go South west and other bus operators about the Delays,            And there a strong risk of the Department for Transport withdrawing the funding with a change of government.</p> <p>David Redgewell South West transport Network.            Railfuture Severnside.</p>

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<p>Response</p> <p>Page 6</p>	<p><b>Question 1:</b> The work to consider a future operating model for bus shelter maintenance and cleaning has not started yet, and we are continuing with the arrangements put in place by the former district councils in the meantime. This is also an area of activity that is being considered within conversations with localities about devolution of services. The Council has a wide range of competing duties and responsibilities that the transport team are discharging, and this transformational activity will take place during the coming year when there is appropriate capacity to do so.</p> <p><b>Question 2:</b> There is no specific proposal at the moment to reduce the cost of running the county bus network. The council is not responsible for running the rail or coach network.</p> <p>For <u>school</u> transport, we are undertaking a range of activity to seek to deliver cost efficiencies, including reviewing how services are tendered, through an initial pilot that we are developing.</p> <p>For <u>public</u> transport, we will continue our ongoing review of supported public transport services to take account of any commercial changes that may take place in the coming year; reviewing how successful our ‘Bus It’ campaign has been in driving demand for services; reviewing availability of transport options to our local communities; and considering available resources to meet the range of competing duties and responsibilities that we have.</p> <p><b>Question 3:</b> There is no particular issue delaying the re-opening of Taunton Bus station as a mobility hub. The project is progressing well through due processes and it is unfortunately taking longer than we originally anticipated when we bid for the funds, given the complexity of the project. English Heritage are supportive of the scheme and are working with us to progress it. We have ongoing dialogue with stakeholders and operators regarding income generation opportunities and whether access charges will apply. We do not consider there to be any risk to funding, and are regularly updating the DfT on progress and any changes to predicted delivery timescales.</p> <p><b>Response from: Lead Member: Cllr Mike Rigby</b></p>

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<b>Roger Foxwell</b>	<p>Roger Foxwell was on the Cutcombe Parish Council and on the Exmoor LCN which was a Highways Pilot Scheme. He queried the process to be followed for the Local Transport Plan consultation and whether the Local Community Networks would be involved.</p> <p>The Highways Pilot Scheme in Exmoor had learnt a lot and could be a good consultee to include in the process.</p> <p><b>Response from: Lead Member: Cllr Ros Wyke</b></p> <p>Cllr Wyke thanked Mr Foxwell for attending and would look to include LCNs in the consultation process.</p>
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