

Policy and Public Initiatives Panel

Wednesday, 06 March 2019

Attendees: Councillor Roger Buston, Councillor Dave Harris, Councillor Chris Hayter, Councillor Sue Lissimore, Councillor Lee Scordis, Councillor Lesley Scott-Boutell

Substitutes: Councillor Theresa Higgins (for Councillor Andrea Luxford Vaughan)

Also Present:

24 Minutes of 9 January 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2019 were confirmed as a correct record.

25 Have Your Say!

Mark Goacher addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He wished to propose that the Council declared a climate emergency and set a target year to become Carbon Neutral. He was aware that a motion was being prepared for submission to the next meeting of the Council. He considered it to be important as it was predicted that there would be a 3 to 4 degree increase in temperature by the end of the century which would mean large parts of coastal areas would be flooded, with associated mass migrations and loss of livelihoods. He was aware that many Councils were declaring a climate emergency and setting carbon neutral targets, including Manchester, Brighton, Cambridge, Scarborough, Nottingham, Leicester, Lancaster and Wiltshire, most of which had set target dates of 2030. He also listed examples of practical initiatives which could be done to contribute to carbon neutrality.

The Chairman thanked Mr Goacher and confirmed that the Panel would discuss the proposal when considering the contents of the Panel's work programme.

26 'The Walls' Project

As part of a public engagement session for the Panel's meeting in September 2018, Nick Chilvers had submitted a proposal to support the small traders operating in Sir Isaac's Walk, Eld Lane, Trinity Street and Short Wyre Street, Colchester, details of which were included in the agenda for the meeting. An invitation had been extended to Mr Chilvers and Sam Good, Manager of the Colchester Business Improvement District (BID) to discuss the proposal with the Panel members.

Nick Chilvers explained that he had worked in retail for 40 years, managing eight non-food stores in the town centre. He did not consider himself to be an expert, but he had kept in touch with the current situation. He considered that attention should be given to the Walls area of the town rather than solely on the High Street. The area to include Trinity Church and Scheregate Steps as well as Trinity Street, Sir Isaac's Walk, Eld Lane and Short Wyre Street. He was of the view that the area needed a distinctive appearance, investment and an overall plan. He welcomed that umbrella lighting proposal, but it was important to improve the area from end to end. He advocated a collaborative approach between the BID, the Council and traders. He was of the view that the project could provide a tourist destination along the lines of similar areas in Folkestone, Hastings and Brighton with the emphasis on business not events. He suggested that interest needed to be secured from traders and a working party set up. He wished luck to the BID with the project.

Sam Good explained that the BID represented 490 levy payers, the large majority of whom were independent traders and, as such, the Walls Project was very relevant for them. The BID had set up an Independent Focus Group. He considered the Walls Project to be a succession of partnerships with Colchester Borough Council, Colchester Business Enterprise Agency (COLBEA) and other companies. The first stage would be for the Focus Group to look at feasibility, breaking the recommendations into smaller priorities. Several other Focus Groups set up by the BID would also be impacted by the project. He was of the view that the project needed to go back to the drawing board and he welcomed Nick Chilvers expertise and invited him to participate in the Focus Group. He was of the view that the BID would not be able to run the Project on its own and asked for the Council to determine its involvement in the Project. He indicated his willingness to attend future meetings following the undertaking of further research.

Councillor Harris welcomed the proposed Project and the ideas articulated by the two speakers, particularly given the need to compete with the recent impact of online shopping. He suggested that a number of small initiatives could be undertaken in the medium to short term to reinvigorate the town centre whilst further research was ongoing. He considered the Cabinet needed to consider the Project with a view to offering the Council's support.

Councillor Higgins confirmed her interest in the Project and was of the view that practical measures needed to be put in place whilst discussions were ongoing. As an example, she suggested that, if every shop displayed a living plant, this would not be expensive and would not require a significant input from the Council or the BID but would make tangible and visible contribution. She hoped that the BID would encourage all of the shops to participate, not just the independents.

Sam Good responded explaining that the BID was working in partnership with Colchester in Bloom on a BID in Bloom initiative, concentrating in particular areas of the town centre. He considered the BID had already achieved a lot since its launch four

months previously and they had received buy in from the businesses.

Councillor Lissimore welcomed Nick Chilvers' proposals and the work he had already put into the Project. She agreed that it was important to set out priorities for the Project and the need for the initiative to be easy for people to participate.

Councillor Buston welcomed the enthusiasm expressed by Nick Chilvers and was of the view that, generally, initiatives were successful through the drive and leadership of particular individuals. He considered the many small shops within the Walls Project area were different and the traders displayed enthusiasm and entrepreneurship which could be the key to making the Project work. He was also of the view that the Council needed to support the Project.

The Chairman welcomed the invitation extended to Nick Chilvers to participate in the BID's Focus Group meetings and he asked about the BID's Council's relationship with the Council and what could the Council do to make the Project become a reality in the short term.

Sam Good confirmed that the relationship with Council officers had been remarkable in all respects and observers from the Council also attended BID Board meetings in order to prevent any duplication of effort. He confirmed that the BID's relationship with Essex County Council wasn't as close as he would like but acknowledged that this relationship needed to be built upon. Assistance from the Council would be particularly welcome in relation to the area covered by Sir Isaac's Walk and Short Wyre Street to Queen Street and the need to build relationships with the relevant landlords to address the problem of empty units. He advocated the potential need for greater enforcement in order to create greater contribution to the vibrancy of the area.

Councillor Higgins referred to the problem of damage to historic Listed Buildings by large vehicles inadvertently entering the narrow streets within the Walls area due to the current poor visibility and location of signage. She was of the view that an improved relationship with the County Council was likely to improve this issue.

Nick Chilvers agreed with the views expressed by Councillor Higgins in relation to the benefit of small initiatives such as planting. He urged the Council to be willing to contribute funding for this. He referred to the opportunity for groups of traders to be creative and take the initiative to draw people into the shopping areas. He was of the view the BID needed to make sure it didn't spread itself too thinly but to undertake initiatives in manageable chunks.

Councillor Scott-Boutell asked what the BID's top priority would be.

Sam Good confirmed the need to understand the support wanted and needed by the traders themselves. He referred to the need to support improvements to the perception

and appearance of the town centre. He also explained the need to build the independent brand and the marketing of the area as a shopping destination by means of various ideas, including bringing online businesses into the town to occupy empty units.

RESOLVED that the appreciation of the Panel be extended to Nick Chilvers and Sam Good and the excellent relationship that the BID had with the Council be noted.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that as much support as possible be provided to the BID in order to secure the success of the Walls Project as quickly as possible.

27 Future High Streets

Nick Chilvers addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He referred to evidence of improvements in the town centre and he welcomed the work being done by the Community safety team. He welcomed the bid for funding for the High Street. He asked the Panel to consider the question of the market and, more specifically, whether the market brought vibrancy to the High Street or whether it lowered the tone of the High Street. He speculated what the High Street businesses thought about the products being sold at the front of their premises and whether they were losing customers on market days. He suggested negotiations be re-opened with the owners of the former Co-op building with a view to finding a solution to the market location problem. He was aware the building benefitted from underground servicing, was convinced the proposal would have public support and considered it could become an incubator for aspiring shop-keepers. He was aware this idea had been proposed before but considered the owners may be more receptive to the proposal now.

Councillor Buston acknowledged the market had occupied many locations over the years but was aware that the appropriateness of the location strongly divided opinion. He was of the view that the proposal from Mr Chilvers should be welcomed and taken forward.

Ken Walker addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He welcomed the proposal made by Mr Chilvers. He hoped that the pedestrianisation proposals would be subordinate to the ambitions and objectives of the Future High Streets funding bid. He sought clarification as to how the focus areas corresponded with the Government's priority themes for investment. He considered that the themes were well placed but, should the bid prove to be successful, it was unlikely that anything would be implemented before 2020-2021. As such, he advocated a strong need for interim actions to be identified that could be undertaken in the intervening period with the current funding available.

The Panel considered a report by the Assistant Director Policy and Corporate providing further information on a proposed 'ambition statement' to inform the submission of an Expression of Interest to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

(MHCLG) 'Future High Streets' programme, followed by a public consultation on the options.

Matthew Brown, Principal Development Manager, Design – Colchester Amphora Trading Ltd., presented the report and responded to members questions. The Principal Development Manager explained that the key objective of the fund was to renew and reshape town centres to improve experience, drive growth and ensure future sustainability, with £675m being available nationally is available to help town centres and high streets evolve and adapt. The priority themes for investment were also detailed. A working group had been formed and a draft ambition statement had been agreed as follows:

- Ambition – to create a sustainable economic heart for a growing community
- Objective – to utilise the town's key economic heart for a growing community
- Strategy
- Bringing key buildings and spaces back into use
- Enhancing accessibility and capacity, improving experience
- Showcasing our rich cultural and heritage offer.

Areas on which to focus might include:

- Air quality, traffic congestion and journey time reliability
- Crime and perception of crime in the Town Centre
- Number of empty retail units in the Town Centre
- Patterns and trends in the residential population in Castle Ward, and the Wards to the immediate South of the Town Centre
- The demographic of visitors, employees and residents to help inform future requirements
- Future retail trends and the implication for traditional town centres
- Condition of certain heritage and historic assets, including buildings in the Town Centre which together could play a significant role in driving footfall, broadening the appeal and increasing the capacity of the Town Centre.

An Expression of Interest would be completed with letters of support from key stakeholders for submission by 22 March 2019.

Councillor Buston acknowledged that the purpose of the report was to set up the major objectives in order to then formulate a direction of travel.

Councillor Higgins welcomed the submission of the funding bid and commented on the particular issues for walkers and cyclists in Colchester being the town centre's location at the top of a hill. She commented on the plans for St Botolph's roundabout and the need for people's inclination to acknowledge desire lines rather than defined routes which were further or took longer to travel. She also referred to the need for future transport planning to encompass a greater number of mobility scooters and the need to provide charging points for electric cycles and covered cycle storage areas. She also

referred to different traffic practices which took place at night time.

Councillor Harris supported the views expressed by Councillor Higgins. He supported the submission of a funding bid but considered the level funding sought needed to be much greater if the investments in physical infrastructure were to be adequately resourced. He therefore advocated the need for the bid to be ambitious and he supported all the focus areas identified.

The Principal Development Manager acknowledged the need to maximise the bid and confirmed that it was not necessary to identify within the bid an actual sum of money being sought. He also acknowledged the points raised about walking and cycling access.

RESOLVED that the report and background information on the Government's 'Future High Streets' programme and the development of a draft ambition statement in collaboration with key stakeholders be noted.

RECOMMENDED to the Portfolio Holder for Business and Culture for consideration the following comments in relation to the draft ambition statement and the extent to which it met the key priorities for revisioning and repositioning Colchester's Town centre:

- A future strategy for the market, including the location and offer and the Farmer's Market;
- Limitations to access into the town centre, particularly in relation to walking and cycling and the need for desire lines to be taken into consideration in this context;
- Access issues for people with disabilities, including charging points for mobility scooters and electric cycles;
- Improvements to cycle storage in the town centre, including sheltered and secure facilities;
- Stronger partnerships with the local bus companies with a view to improving access to the town centre by means of public transport.

28 Sustainable Transport in Colchester

Councillor Harris (in respect of his membership of the Bus Users Group) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

Steve Wickers, on behalf of First Essex Buses, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He highlighted the need for a transport system which was fit for purpose. He confirmed that the bus network offered 90,000 seats into the town centre every day and, as such, was a valuable part of the economy. He advocated the need for a new transport plan which he would be willing to help formulate. He recognised the need for people to be able to get in and out of town much more quickly, to increase frequency of buses and schemes to boost the economy.

He emphasised how difficult it was currently to get in and out of town.

The Chairman asked Steve Wickers his view on bus lanes and whether they improved the flow of traffic for buses.

Steve Wickers responded by acknowledging the high cost of bus lanes and the difficulty of accommodating the lanes in areas where the streets were very narrow. He emphasised the importance of small-scale initiatives such as protected junctions and yellow lining which would reduce traffic in the town centre. He considered there was too much congestion and plans and policies were needed to make it quicker for buses to access the town centre, taking priority and shifting cars out of the town such as with park and ride. He acknowledged the need for policies to protect walkers and riders which could run in parallel. He also acknowledged the need for cleaner vehicles and explained that the bus companies had invested in this.

Councillor Buston did not support bus lanes on the grounds that for the majority of time these lanes were empty whilst the remainder of the road network was congested. He considered they should only be introduced where absolutely necessary.

Councillor Harris asked how the Council and the bus operators could work effectively together to ensure greater numbers of people regularly using the bus network.

Steve Wickers responded to Councillor Harris by explaining the need for policy that prioritised modes of transport such as rapid transport schemes and others with less of an impact on the road space. He emphasised that the bus operators wanted to participate in the decision making behind this formulation of policy.

Chris Blomeley, on behalf of Repair, Reuse, Recycle CIC, a proactive environmental social enterprise with a particular interest in using waste as a resource. He proposed a bicycle project which would support the new Colchester Orbital cycle route, promoting health and fitness for all and provide accessible solutions to sustainable transport. The project would target young volunteers to train as cycle mechanics to give them pathways to employment. The project would use repair and sell donated bikes to ensure they would not become funding dependent. Later phases of the project would be to launch a cycle hire scheme located to boost tourism and at key points along the Colchester Orbital and to promote individual and family use of Colchester Orbital. Initial partners had included Firstsite and Essex Youth Service and the Council's Zone Wardens. He asked for assistance to locate premises from which to operate to enable the project to grow. The project could then commence, sustain growth and increase the diversion of waste.

Councillor Harris asked about the most appropriate way to assist with the project and Councillor Higgins, whilst welcoming the proposal sought clarification on whether the project was linked with the existing bike hire scheme at the railway station.

Chris Blomeley explained that the core principle of the scheme was to use waste as a resource and this was achieved by using bikes which were found or donated and to get young people involved in acquiring new skills, repairing the bikes and subsequently gaining employment. Essentially, the project was based on a waste reduction core principle. He considered this to be a unique identity with a track record of success.

Councillor Lissimore welcomed the ideas whilst referring to the particular problem of bikes being stolen and the need for people to feel confident that they are able to bring their bikes into town but also travel home as well. She had been Chair of the Colchester Youth Strategy Group and referred to the Lads need Dads scheme and the need for skills to be passed on to young people.

Chris Blomeley explained that the proposal provided added value in terms of greater participation at family days for orienteering and treasure hunts and also work with the Youth Justice Team for young people to learn how to repair things using their hands and heads. He explained that he had previously worked in the military and in the NHS.

Councillor Buston acknowledged the problems associated with bikes being stolen and the impact this had on people's willingness to cycle.

The Chairman was of the view that the proposal was an exciting one which closely matched a number of the Council's Strategic Aims, including health and wellbeing, tourism and also helping to build skills and entrepreneurship or young people. He confirmed that the Panel would discuss the proposal when considering the contents of the Panel's work programme.

Nick Chilvers addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He referred to Colchester's bus station and that it was not very welcoming. He explained the difficulties for bus drivers as they approached the station, having to jockey for position with other road users and pedestrians waiting for buses. He also referred to the efforts of the Council to redevelop the adjacent Vineyard Gate area and he had asked whether these redevelopment plans would include a review of the facilities for buses. He had been told that there had been no discussions about the bus station layout, rather that this was a matter between the developer and the Highway Authority. He was of the view that the Council must have some stake in the future of the bus station, particularly if there was to be an emphasis on residents leaving their cars at home and adopting public transport options. He acknowledged there had been a lack of interest in the matter despite the need for Councils to work with the bus operators he was of the view that most people would expect the Council to lobby for an improvement and factor it in the development proposals for Vineyard Gate. He also referred to the plans for the development of the Queen Street Hotel.

Peter Kay, on behalf of the Bus Users Group, addressed the Committee pursuant to the

provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He referred to the new Transport Policy for Colchester which had been published in 2001 and his hopes for the emerging Transport Policy. He explained the need for Colchester travel in peak periods to be less car based than in off peak periods, and he considered this to be because 9 to 5 workers were provided with over 3,000 employer based free parking spaces in the central area. He referred to the thousands of people who travelled each day to work in their cars to Colchester from Tendring, half of whom lived near rail stations, but the poor rail service and expensive fares meant that the rail line was a wasted one. He asked whether there were any facts over the previous 25 years to demonstrate that sustainable travel alternatives had succeeded in reducing journeys by car. He asked for the consideration of work place parking levy powers as a means to address traffic problems, explaining that six local authorities had recently opted to investigate the measures. He considered that this would have a big impact on peak time traffic problems whilst enabling the Council to raise revenue to spend on transport improvements.

Councillor Lissimore asked what was considered the main priority to increase public transport and bus usage for short journeys. She was of the view that bus usage was cost prohibitive and it was cheaper to travel by car and park, especially as a couple or a group of people.

Peter Kay explained that bus companies charged much higher fares per mile for short, walkable journeys whilst the fares for journeys of three to four miles, which were too long to walk, were considered more reasonable. He explained that more recently there were more family tickets on offer, but he was of the view that the complexity of the offers made them difficult to market. He referred again to the free all-day parking offered by employers at work places in the town centre.

Councillor Buston referred to his preference for incentives to drive behaviour change. He cited the example of Edinburgh which operated a very cheap and comprehensive bus service and, as a consequence, the buses were always well used.

Peter Kay was of the view that it was easier to provide a cheap and attractive bus service in a city the size of Edinburgh whilst Colchester was too big to accommodate residents predominantly travelling by car but too small to operate a comprehensive transport system like the Edinburgh model. He advocated the investigation of the workplace transport levy by the Council and considered this to be the main priority which would make a difference in Colchester.

Ken Walker addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He explained that he used the park and ride facilities in Cambridge because he wanted to visit the shops and the cost of parking in the town centre was too prohibitive. He was therefore of the view that Colchester needed to be a place where people wanted to go and the parking charges needed to be pitched at the right level. He commuted to work, using public transport and on foot and he cycled at weekends, as

such he was in favour of sustainable transport. He asked what had prompted the report to be presented to the Panel and asked for reasons to be stated for the Council to invest in sustainable transport, whether this be to reduce air pollution, improve safety, reduce congestion or an ethical project for instance. He considered residents should know why the Council would consider spending money on this issue, what would be achieved and what it would cost.

The Committee considered a report by the Assistant Director Policy and Corporate providing a background to current sustainable transport initiatives, programmes and projects in Colchester.

Rachel Forkin, Transport and Sustainability Manager, presented the report and responded to members questions. She explained that the issue of Sustainable Transport had been included in the Panel's work programme following the public engagement session in September 2018 when key themes included provision of cycling, public transport and electric vehicle charging.

Increasing the use of sustainable travel could help tackle climate change by reducing reliance on the car and thus cutting carbon emissions and reducing congestion. It also influenced health, by improving air quality whilst also promoting physical activity. It was therefore important to better understand the factors and reasons behind why people chose to use sustainable transport, and how we provide for and promote sustainable transport as a suitable and viable option for journeys within, to and from Colchester.

Sustainable transport was used to describe all forms of transport which minimised emissions of carbon dioxide and pollutants and was used as a catch all term to include approaches and topics such as:

- reducing the need to travel;
- reducing car dependence and use;
- greater reliance on cycling, walking and other 'active travel modes';
- promotion and uptake of alternatives such as car sharing, public transport; and
- cleaner transport and new technologies such as electric vehicles.

The report set out some of the opportunities and challenges to providing and encouraging use of different forms of sustainable transport in Colchester and summarised some current projects which encouraged use of sustainable modes of travel, including:

- Air Quality
- Traffic flows and Congestion
- Transport Patterns
- Active Travel
- Travel Plans, Car Clubs and Ride Sharing
- Public Transport
- Low Emission Vehicles

Councillor Buston welcomed the report and the ideas contained in it which could be developed for future consideration. He referred to the need for a Southern Relief Road to address the congestion problem across the town.

Councillor Harris was supportive of the issues identified in the report. He was particularly interested in the walking initiatives highlighted and the benefits to healthy lifestyles. He expressed concerns about the piecemeal development of the town and the impact this had made on the areas around Brook Street and Mersea Road. He advocated the development of policies within the local schools and the academies to create a walking and cycling ethos, include principles of road safety, for young school age children. He considered this would create a step change impact.

Councillor Higgins considered the main objective for the adoption of sustainable transport measures had to be the reduction in air pollution. She agreed with the problems being concentrated in the areas around Brook Street, Magdalen Street and Mersea Road. She considered that residents needed to be educated in the benefits of reduced car ownership, especially in areas where residents parking systems were in operation. She was also concerned about the proliferation of work vans in residential areas and the space these were taking up. She referred to Essex County Council's recent review of bus stopping points, including relocations and a lack of seating and shelter and the impact this had on elderly people, particularly those with mobility problems. She mentioned issues for cyclists, including sheltered cycle storage, adequate signage for cycle parking and cycle routes. She also explained that there was no service on a Sunday from Colchester Town railway station which impacted on the number of car journeys were being made to Colchester North station as a consequence and she also commented that it was not possible to purchase combined train and bus tickets on the local buses. She was of the view that a significant number of Cambridge residents benefitted from free private car parking facilities in the town centre which impacted on local people's willingness to use the park and ride facilities. She supported the proposal to consider the introduction of a workplace parking levy although, on safety grounds, she considered this should not be applicable for those needing to park at their place of work at night.

Councillor Scott-Boutell supported the proposal to embed a walking and cycling ethos for young school children, particularly in the light of the allocation of senior school places at establishments which were not the closest for some residents.

Councillor Lissimore was of the view that the walking and cycling ethos needed to be targeted at children before they reach school age by reaching out to nurseries, pre-schools and childminders. She considered this would make a strong contribution towards default modes of travel to school being by foot and cycle in preference to cars. She referred to Section 106 Agreement funding and was aware that the average financial contribution in Essex per property was around £6,000 whilst Essex County

Council required funding of £30,000 in order to remain cost neutral. She was concerned that the Section 106 regime was being required to encompass more and more in terms of mitigation of a new development, whilst developers were inclined to seek reviews of Section 106 requirements on the grounds of reduced viability. She was of the view that the priorities for Section 106 funding contributions needed to be reviewed and that sustainable transport measures needed to be one of the top five priorities.

Councillor Buston referred to the issue of traffic congestion at school opening times whilst this was not a particular problem at school closing times. He also referred to the existence of cycling proficiency tests for school children and the high proportion of children who used to cycle to school in years gone by.

Councillor Hayter referred to the proposal for a walking and cycling ethos for school children and his own experience of the Bikeability Scheme which he supported as a means of encouraging children and parents to cycle together.

The Chairman asked how often Council officers met with the bus operators and whether the meetings could work better.

The Transport and Sustainability Manager confirmed that officers and representatives from the bus companies attended meetings organised by Essex County Council on a quarterly basis. She explained that the meetings were useful in terms of the discussions which took place on activities and new developments and she acknowledged that the Local Authorities could demonstrate their support for the objectives which the bus companies were endeavouring to work towards.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the following issues be considered as potential contributions to the promotion of sustainable transport in Colchester Borough:

- A review of Parking Charges;
- Investigation of the workplace parking levy initiative, for peak times only, not for late night shift workers;
- The Repair, Reuse Recycle bicycle project, pitched to the Panel by Chris Blomeley, in terms of his request for suitable premises from which to operate the project, potential partnership working and tourism opportunities;
- An initiative to encourage nurseries, pre-schools and childminders, as well as local schools and academies, to adopt a walking and cycling ethos for journeys to school and pre-school;
- Work with Repair, Reuse and Recycle and other local charities to ensure walking and cycling for children is inclusive for all families, including those unable to afford bicycles and their maintenance costs;
- Closer working with Essex County Council to improve road signage of cycle routes;

- Working towards bringing cycling and public transport to the heart of Local Plan policies, such as discussions with the bus companies about viable routes within the Garden Community proposals;
- Work with the bus companies and Greater Anglia with a view to securing the introduction of a combined ticketing system across bus and train services and improvements to train timetabling and train frequencies at Colchester Town station;
- Liaison with Essex County Council and the local bus companies to highlight the importance of accessibility of bus stopping points, in terms of location, seating and shelter;
- A feasibility exercise to investigate the viability of introducing a Hopper bus service, potentially operating from North Station into the town centre, either working with the bus companies or investigating alternative sources of funding, such as the use of Section 106 contributions or sponsorship, to cover driver, vehicle and running costs;
- A review of the Section 106 financial contribution regime with a view to allocating sustainable transport measures within the top five priorities for funding.

29 Policy and Public Initiatives Panel Work Programme 2018-19

The Committee considered a report by the Assistant Director Policy and Corporate giving details of the Panel's Work Programme, updated since the last meeting.

The Panel had rescheduled the report on Responsible Dog Ownerships to a date early in June and approval had been sought from Cabinet for the inclusion in the work programme of requests relating to the impact of Universal Credit / Austerity and the use of the River Colne to encourage more effective use from environmental and activity aspects.

The Chairman referred to the matter raised by Mark Goacher as a potential new idea/ initiative for the Panel, for the Council to declare a climate emergency and set a target year to become Carbon Neutral. He was aware that a motion on this subject was likely to be considered at the next full Council meeting and he suggested that the consideration of the matter be left for the Council to determine.

In relation to matters for consideration by the Panel in the next Municipal Year, he suggested that consideration be given to another public engagement meeting to invite ideas from the public or to revisit previous suggestions.

RESOLVED that, the contents of the work programme for 2019-20 be noted and it be updated for the next meeting of the Panel to accommodate another public engagement meeting and, as appropriate, decisions due from the Cabinet in relation to recent work programme requests.