

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL

4 NOVEMBER 2013

Present :- Councillor Julie Young (Chairman)
Councillors Mark Cable, Nigel Chapman, Barrie Cook,
Mark Cory, Colin Mudie and Lesley Scott-Boutell

Also in Attendance :- Councillor Nick Barlow
Councillor Annie Feltham
Councillor Gerard Oxford

17. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 16 September 2013 were confirmed as a correct record.

18. Invited Guests

The Chairman welcomed three guests who had been invited to the meeting in order to broaden the Panel's discussion on Transportation

- Noel James from Historic Towns Forum
- Kris Radley from Sustrans
- Nick Shuttleworth from Essex Rural Community Council

19. Transportation Review

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Commercial Services inviting the Panel to consider various transportation related issues and to make relevant recommendations to Cabinet.

Paul Wilkinson, Transportation Policy Manager, explained that there were a number of statements on transport, including, the Local Plan Core Strategy 2008, the Local Investment Plan, the Integrated County Strategy, and the Essex Local Transport Plan 2011. Also various Panels and Committees had considered specific transport issues over the last few years e.g. public transport, park and ride, cycling strategy and town centre traffic reduction and this review presented an opportunity to consider the subject as a whole and in more detail.

There were strategic transport related issues that needed to be addressed, such as the impact on health, economy, the built and rural environment and social inclusion. Funding came through the Integrated County Strategy and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership for larger scale projects and through the Local Highway Panel for smaller scale initiatives. Funding had been sought for infrastructure and initiatives, including the new A12 junction, construction of the Northern Approaches Road phase

3, relocation of the bus station, support for new bus services, Cycle Town, investment in the railway stations, a commitment to the Colchester Travel Plan Club, traffic reduction in the town centre, promotion of car sharing, support for the Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership and the forthcoming Park and Ride scheme which was the subject of a submission to the Department of Transport (DfT).

Paul provided a presentation which gave details of research based around data published in the National Travel Survey, the Census, Essex County Council and its Travel Diary and DfT traffic counts. The data indicated a number of issues including the following:

- Nationally, over the last decade, the growth of car traffic had slowed, due largely to the reduction in company car use
- Rail movements had increased significantly since 1995
- European research suggested car traffic would continue to dominate movement patterns even if it fell by 20%, back to the 1990 level
- Total time spent travelling had remained constant but the length of journey had increased, with a reduction in walking trips
- Driving licence holding was increasing only slowly, despite the purchase cost of cars decreasing, due to increasing running costs, including higher insurance and the static level of disposable income in the younger age groups
- Over 45% of journeys by car were for distances of one mile or less
- Around 60% of journeys by car were for distances of less than two miles
- Traffic in urban areas had not grown despite development and population growth
- Traffic in the inter-urban network was growing but with wide fluctuations suggesting networks were at capacity at certain times
- Working at home seemed to have increased, but was not reflected in changes to travel patterns
- Ways of shopping were changing with increased use of the internet
- Peak spreading had not occurred reflecting limited flexibility to change working patterns and school times
- Obesity was increasing due to more sedentary life styles and reduction in active travel patterns

The Chairman invited each of the guests in turn to address the Panel on the issues from their perspective.

Noel James explained that the Historic Towns Forum had been working for 26 years in the historic built environment field, having started life as a Local Authority umbrella body. The Forum was now made up of a Corporation of practitioners, ranging from Unitary to Parish levels. The Forum puts on events and lobbied Government on the basis that everything needed to be integrated in terms of transport, tourism, public transport, street clutter and he was of the view that conservation should not be frozen in time. Transport was an integral part of infrastructure and planning. Noel believed that Colchester had both advantages and disadvantages. The old, narrow streets, making up the historic core of the town, were not built for the optimum flow of traffic and the town had to be able to adapt over time, especially given the need to manage parking, tourism, regeneration etc. The town needed to be able to accommodate growth which meant incentives for people not to use cars needed to be explored such as more

effective cycle schemes, together with disincentives not to use facilities such as park and ride. Effective cycle schemes tended to include things such as cycle doctors to encourage better health, secure and easy to follow cycle routes without pot holes which would encourage more people to take up cycling. Park and ride schemes needed to be easily accessible, cheaper with easy to find parking provision.

Kris Radley explained that Sustrans worked to influence policy and practices to make local environments safer and more attractive for walking and cycling, whilst supporting and encouraging people to make sustainable travel choices. The reasoning behind the organisation was to improve health and quality of life, to reduce environmental impacts and energy use associated with transport. Also to improve access to jobs and services locally so that public places were enjoyable for local people.

Kris highlighted a number of statistics for the Panel to consider, including:

- Up to £279 a year per driver could be saved in fuel costs, car maintenance and parking, if four out of five short journeys were made by foot, bike or public transport. This totalled £8.5 bn for all British drivers;
- Each car user made 464 short journeys covering a distance of over 1,200 miles a year;
- 11% of short car journeys are under 1 mile, 29% were from 1-2 miles, and 60% were from 2-5 miles;
- The cost of short journeys to society including factors such as road accidents, infrastructure, traffic jams and air quality was £750 per car user or £23 bn for Britain;
- 15,000 lives could be saved through increased physical activity if more short journeys were made on foot or by bike, equivalent to £20 bn;
- Over 33% of the commuting trips made by car were short journeys costing British drivers £2bn a year, with the cost to society being nearly £3.5bn a year;
- 35 million people in the UK were at some risk of 'transport poverty', of which 1.5 million people were at high risk.

Kris also referred to the 'Locked Out' Report and its key recommendations, which were:

- Encourage People to Change their travel behaviour
- Create safe, attractive walking and cycling conditions
- Increase public transport usage by improving and integrating services and reducing fares
- Ensure that planning policy and practice reduce the need to travel
- Increase spending on Sustainable Transport

Nick Shuttleworth explained that the Rural Community Council for Essex was an independent charity working County-wide championing living and working in rural Essex since 1923. The organisation helped people and communities to build a sustainable future and acted as an advocate for individuals and communities in rural areas. Nick reported that the population in villages was aging but social facilities in rural areas were lacking. 20% of households in rural areas did not own a car and there was a greater proportion of people living more than 40 minutes from a town centre than elsewhere in

the East of England. A number of Parish Plans, including those in Dedham, Winstred Hundred and Eight Ash Green had identified public transport as a priority to prevent people becoming less isolated. It was also important to bring services, such as doctors' surgeries and local shops back to communities. Whilst the encouragement of walking and cycling was welcomed, this was not helpful for the older population for whom more flexible transport solutions were required. A Demand Responsive Scheme had been successfully set up in the Maldon District in 2011 with the help of public funding. It provided a fixed service from Maldon to Chelmsford and the Broomfield Hospital and was operated by a local taxi company. Nick was also aware of a 'Wheels to Work' moped hire scheme, run by a charitable organisation in Uttlesford, which had been set up to help young people access education and employment.

Particular discussion from the Panel members was in relation to:

- The reasons why more had not been achieved with the £4m funding from the Cycling Town Status award for Colchester and what could be done to deliver something along the lines of continental cycling towns;
- Whether other historic towns with similar characteristics to Colchester had achieved more in terms of sustainable transport alternatives;
- The problem of cycle thefts and the need for cyclists to feel safe and secure when they travel;
- The need for people to be encouraged to not use their cars for the short, less than one mile journeys;
- Previous transport studies over many years had identified the need for improvements to the East – West Corridor in Colchester;
- The problems of misleading signage for motorists which could contribute to congestion problems rather than assisting it;
- The potential positive impact of home working on traffic congestion problems and the measures available to encourage local employers of these benefits;
- The possibility of negotiating with local taxi companies to take a lead in providing a demand led service from the outlying areas of the borough for shopping or for medical services and particularly by utilizing vehicles outside of the school start and finish times;
- The need for the creation of cycle paths to be addressed through the provision of sustainable development by means of the Planning System;
- Whether it would be possible to utilise the funding for local buses which were often being run with very few or no passengers towards the provision of a demand management system which may prove to be far better value for money.

In response to questions raised, the following information was provided:

- Cycle Town funding had contributed to infrastructure projects in Highwoods and Greenstead as well as signage, improved cycle parking facilities at the railway station and in the town centre and a promotional campaign;
- Sixteen schools had signed up to the 'Bike It' programme;
- The priority given to cycling in Holland had begun in 1973 and had now achieved high levels of cycling within the population, although it was also true to say that now there were higher levels of car ownership in Holland than in the UK;
- Towns such as York, Bristol and Bath were well known for making very good use

of their disused railway networks which were being used as dedicated, attractive and secure cycle and walking routes. In addition Leicester and Nottingham had segregated cycle routes which ran alongside the road systems. The successful schemes tended to be well thought out, better connected, safe and attractive to use;

- Southend had recently transformed the seafront area by creating a shared use space on City Beach;
- It ought to be possible to replicate the Maldon transport scheme on the basis that it was one which was intended to concentrate on one need which had been identified after extensive consultation a year before it had been introduced. The need was for good access to the hospital whilst the operator was a local taxi company who were determined to demonstrate how a demand led scheme could succeed;
- A number of options had been identified to improve the 'Central' Corridor, meanwhile Essex County Council had chosen to concentrate resources on traffic reduction in the town centre and on a park and ride facility which was now due to be delivered in 2014. £4.4m had been identified for improvements to the Colne Bank roundabout and regular meetings were held with Essex County Council to develop a strategy to address the problems associated with the A133;
- The rules around the allocation of Section 106 funding were now much tighter and it was now necessary to precisely identify what the funds were to be used for.

Councillor Nick Barlow, the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, attended the meeting and, with the consent of the Chairman addressed the Panel. He was encouraged by ideas and suggestions that had been raised by the guests and the discussions that had taken place by the Panel members. He hoped to be able to develop these in relation to a transport policy for the benefit of the town.

RESOLVED that Noel James, Kris Radley and Nick Shuttleworth be thanked for the ideas and suggestions they provided and their valuable contributions to the meeting.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the following issues be borne in mind when considering the council's future transportation policy:

- (i) The need for the Local Development Framework to consider how to attract funding for developers to create sustainable developments;
- (ii) To investigate further the high percentage of car usage for journeys of one mile or less and the possible measures to reduce these short journeys;
- (iii) To consider ways in which Essex County Council and the local rail operators could work more closely to provide a more integrated transport solution;
- (iv) To look into the ways in which freight is moved around with a view to reducing the number of van movements around the Borough for a more sustainable solution;
- (v) To investigate the possibility of utilising the Council's Licensing role in order to encourage the development of a demand led transport solution, similar to that being

delivered in Maldon District;

(vi) The need for the signage system in the Borough to be reviewed to ensure that it appropriately directs motorists through the town centre without exacerbating congestion problems;

(vii) To initiate a public transport summit with a view to identifying a more sustainable, collaborative future provision;

(viii) The need for local employers to be encouraged to provide home working solutions for their employees as a means to assist in the peak rush hour congestion problems;

(ix) Bearing in mind transport poverty issues, the investigation of a moped hire type scheme for young people to access education and employment opportunities.

20. Introduction of 20 mph speed limits in Colchester // Update

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Commercial Services recommending that a local request based approach, via the Local Highway Panel, is pursued to introduce 20 mph limits in Colchester.

Paul Wilkinson, Transportation Policy Manager, explained that the Council was keen to work with Essex County Council (ECC) and Essex Police on the implementation of area wide 20mph speed limits in Colchester, with the aim of creating a consistent approach to 20mph speed limits across the Colchester borough, especially in residential areas and areas where there are high levels of people movement.

The ECC Colchester Local Highway Panel (LHP) had discussed the implementation and funding of 20mph schemes and the Borough Council 20mph Task and Finish Group had been reconvened 'To implement 20mph speed limits in local communities which desire such limits, with benefits for road safety, social cohesion, promoting walking and cycling and community health.' In June 2013 the Network Management Manager from ECC had attended the Task and Finish Group to outline guidance on the introduction of 20mph speed limits. It was explained that areas wishing to introduce a 20mph speed limit should evidence a current average speed of no more than 24mph. The group was also advised that ECC would consider cases with a higher average speed of between 24mph and 29mph if there was strong support of local residents and the County Councillor and financial backing from the LHP. Speed surveys would be required before detailed plans could be developed. These would either be funded through the LHP or local sources if available. Advice would be taken from ECC on the location of surveys.

Three options had been considered for the delivery of 20mph speed limits in Colchester, namely a strategic approach covering all residential areas over Colchester and the larger villages, an area-wide approach based on established sub areas when funding was available and a local approach driven by local requests for 20mph with proposals securing funds from the LHP and other sources for speed surveys, and from

the LHP for delivery.

Based on the ECC Policies and LHP Guide, and that Members' were keen to move forward with delivery of 20mph speed limits, it was recommended that the local approach be pursued in order to deliver 20mph speed limits in Colchester at the earliest opportunity. Schemes would require a strong level of local support. Consultation would therefore take place with local bodies (e.g. Parish Councils, Residents Associations, Neighbourhood Action Panels and Borough and County Councillors) to put forward schemes and gain support for the proposed speed limit.

Councillor Gerard Oxford, Chairman of the 20 mph speed limit Task and Finish Group attended the meeting and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Panel.

RESOLVED that a local request based approach to introduce 20 mph limits in Colchester be pursued, via the Local Highways Panel and, as its work is now complete, the 20 mph speed limit Task and Finish Group be concluded.

21. Equality and Diversity // Annual Update

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Community Services inviting the Panel to review progress in meeting the Council's statutory duties and achieving its Equality and Diversity objectives.

Andrew Harley, Equality and Safeguarding Co-ordinator, attended the meeting explaining that the introduction of the Equality Act 2010 had brought in a new Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which included a legal requirement for the Council to publish a range of equality information by January 2012, and annually thereafter, and to publish its equality objectives by April 2012, and then at least every four years.

The Act placed a general duty on the Council to integrate consideration of the advancement of equality into its day-to-day business, and across all its functions. All councils, including their councillors and staff, must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not.

The 'protected characteristics' were age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The duty also covered marriage and civil partnership, but not for all aspects of the duty.

Key work undertaken to show compliance with the general duty went on within the Services and included a range of activities to help and support people, evidence of which was set out in Appendices to the report. Since last year's annual report, the Council had:

- Met the specific duties for the second year; 2013 had required the publishing of equality information but had not required the setting of new equality objectives;
- Continued to address the general duty of “integrating consideration of the advancement of equality into the day-to-day business of public bodies, and across all its functions”;
- Made further progress towards meeting its equality objectives through its Strategic Plan Action Plan.

The Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act, which became law on 25 April 2013, had reformed the role of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). Its role had been refocused upon its ‘core equality and human rights duties’, so that, for example, it no longer ran the ‘Equality Helpline’, nor did it deliver grants programmes activities.

The Council believed that its approach provided an appropriate balance. It remained focused on continuing to integrate and embed equality considerations into the day-to-day running of Council business. It ensured that equality considerations were always considered, but that additional and proportionate resources would be allocated to the impact assessment process where a decision had particular relevance to equality considerations. This may involve the analysis of data and information from the Council’s extensive surveys and consultations, in concert with the Research and Engagement team.

Going forward it was proposed to:

- Encourage and support Council services in continuing to deliver practical improvements in terms of increased accessibility to services. The Universal Customer Contact Fundamental Service Review was continuing and would further embed a customer-centric approach;
- Continue to use Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs). Although they were not legal requirements, the Council believed that the process they were part of was both flexible and robust; and that EqIAs remained the best available framework to ensure that equality considerations were consciously and systematically considered and evidenced;
- Help to facilitate service run EqIA workshops in order to further develop officer skills, especially in the use of relevant data and information to make informed judgements;
- Continue to develop internal learning and development tools, including equality monitoring guidance for surveys and consultations, as part of the EqIA process;
- Use the Council’s Forward Plan to help allocate due priority to the key decisions listed there in order to better ‘integrate consideration of the advancement of equality into the day-to-day business of public bodies, and across all its functions’;
- Continue to further embed equality considerations into the Council’s day-to-day decision making processes;
- Maintain the Council’s commitment to Equality and Diversity despite the Council’s budgetary position.

Councillor Annie Feltham, Portfolio Holder for Communities and Leisure Services, attended the meeting and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Panel.

Particular discussion from the Panel members was in relation to:

- The need for the Council to continue its commitment to Equality and Diversity, especially in the context of Local Authority cuts in services which directly effected residents;
- The good example provided by the Keep Safe Scheme whereby people with learning disabilities could call at designated Keep Safe premises for assistance and support;
- The potential disproportionate impact of public sector cuts on young people and the need to continue to provide support where it was most needed.

RESOLVED that the progress made in meeting the Council's statutory duties and achieving its Equality and Diversity objectives be noted and the proposed approach going forward, as set out in the report, be endorsed.

22. Work Programme 2013-14

The Panel considered a report by the Assistant Chief Executive setting out the current Work Programme for the Panel for 2013-14.

The Work Programme had been updated since the meeting of the Panel held on 16 September 2013 to reflect the decisions that were made in relation to a further report on the Waste and Recycling Task and Finish Group which would be submitted to the meeting in March 2014.

RESOLVED that the current situation regarding the Panel's work programme for the year be noted.