

**Extract from the draft minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Sustainability Panel meeting of 21 March 2024**

**122. Colchester City Council Fleet Transition Strategy**

The Panel heard that the Chair had decided to deal with this item at this point in the meeting, instead of in the sequence published in the agenda document.

Robert Doran, Fleet and Depot Contract Manager, attended the meeting to present the report and assist the Panel with its enquiries. The report was presented in response to the suggestions and questions posed by the Panel at its last meeting in February 2024, and addressed the recycling and reuse of batteries, emissions associated with manufacturing, the need for investment in infrastructure and the comparative costs of fuel types.

A Panel member considered the point of origin of modern vehicles, noting that the manufacturer of a vehicle no longer indicated where it was physically made. It was suggested that an addition was made to the proposed recommendation to Cabinet which stated “When selecting suppliers of vehicles, due regard is given to the environmental, employment and human rights standards in place at the point of manufacture of substantial components, including battery technology, of the vehicle which is being procured.” In terms of the phrase ‘significant components’, it was suggested that this would relate to components which represented over 25% of value of the vehicle in question.

In discussion, the Panel wondered whether using the value of the vehicle as a guide was the right approach to take, given that the vast majority of a vehicle could be composed of material which was not of high value, but which could have originated from a country without high standards of care for workers. It was suggested by a Panel member that in the past when buying a vehicle which was of a European or American brand, it was possible to be reasonably assured that the parts for the vehicle originated in Europe or America, but this was no longer the case.

In discussion, the Panel considered the suggested amendment to the recommendation, and believed that the wording was broad enough to provide a useful guide to Officers, and was not restricted solely to batteries in vehicles. The Officer’s report demonstrated that the Council was already taking into account issues which had been raised earlier in the meeting.

The Fleet and Depot Contract Manager assured the Panel that when making decisions on vehicle procurement, the proposed Strategy had been written to give Officers different options, and at no point did it stress that electric vehicles were necessarily the default option. When procuring vehicles, Officers would speak with other local authorities and partners to ensure that the right vehicle was purchased, irrespective of its fuel source.

*RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:*

- The proposed Colchester City Council Fleet Transition Strategy be implemented;
- When selecting suppliers of vehicles, due regard is given to the environmental, employment and human rights standards in place at the point of manufacture of substantial components (those components representing greater than 25% of the market cost of the vehicle), including battery technology, of the vehicle which is being procured.