

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL 4 - EMISSIONS STRATEGY (ACTION PLAN)

Thursday, 9 March 2017

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillor Samuel Kilby-Shaw (Chair), Councillor Gareth Eales (Deputy Chair); Councillors Rufia Ashraf, Julie Davenport, Terrie Eales and Brian Sargeant

CO-OPTED MEMBER: Patrick Cross, WASPRA
Graham Croucher, St James' Residents Association

Witnesses Richard Todd and Jason Ball, UNO
Steve Burd, StageCoach
Steve Miller, Northants Green Party
Chris Wragg, Team Leader, Transport Planning, NCC,

Officers Ruth Austen, Environmental Health and Licensing Manager
Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

Members of the Public Brian Hoare

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Aziz.

At this point, the Chair announced that £8 million had been approved for the Northants bye pass. This news was welcomed by the Scrutiny Panel.

2. DEPUTATIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES

Brian Hoare, individual, addressed the Scrutiny Panel on agenda item 5 – Witness evidence.

Mr Hoare addressed the Scrutiny Panel commenting that he had both a professional and personal interest in the work of this Panel. Mr Hoare felt that the Strategy should be around:

Where we are now
What would happen if we did nothing
Recommendations

Mr Hoare suggested that data is needed and that Kingsthorpe is a major concern. Stationary traffic = emissions = pollution. The public often relate pollution to the town

centre. Mr Hoare went on to refer to data information in relation to the Drapery; he queried why no measurements had been taken in 2016 but had been taken in 2013/2014.

Mr Hoare was thanked for his address.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2017 were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

5. WITNESS EVIDENCE

(A) STAGE COACH AND UNO

UNO

Mr Todd and Mr Ball, UNO. presented the written response to the core questions, highlighting the salient points.

The Scrutiny Panel asked questions, heard and made comment:

- The fleet of vehicles in Northampton is 25, the average age being 8 years.
- The composition of the fleet:
 - 10 vehicles Euro 3
 - 9 vehicles Euro 5
 - 4 vehicles Euro 4
- UNO works closely with the University of Northampton
- UNO has been operating in Northampton for 3-4 years. The market conditions are very challenging.
- No data is available regarding late buses due to congestion but could be provided to the Scrutiny Panel at a later date
- In response to a query regarding bus routes when the University halls relocate, it was confirmed that a service will still be provided to Kingsthorpe but the route could be modified slightly
- The Scrutiny Panel heard that to make bids for funding more viable, backing of the Local Authority would be helpful
- It was confirmed that UNO purchase brand new vehicles but also buy them second hand from London. London buses are of a very high specification and have emissions control etc.
- The investment needed to put on five electric mini buses would be £5-6 million, including initial set up and charging points (at depots and on campus)
- A typical battery for a bus lasts 85 miles
- In response to a query regarding a potential park and ride, the Scrutiny Panel was advised that a feasibility study had not as yet been done.

Mr Todd and Mr Ball were thanked for their informative address.

AGREED: That the information is noted and informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

StageCoach

Steve Burd, Managing Director, StageCoach, presented his written response to the core questions of the Scrutiny Panel highlighting the salient points:

- The central road system in Northampton cannot cope with the volume of traffic using it in peak times, there is a need to ensure central roads are used only by traffic entering/exiting the town; rather than being used as a through route.
- Pollution problems are created when vehicles are idling in heavy traffic.
- The organisation has invested £10.2 million on 66 low emissions buses in the last five years and intends to invest a further 33.8 million on 22 Euro 6 standard low emission vehicles for routes 1 and x4 between now and the beginning of 2020.
- Many low emissions buses cost in the region of 80-100% more to maintain.
- In response to a query regarding park and ride, Mr Burd suggested that it would help the congestion in the town and pointed out that successful schemes elsewhere normally were located exiting main bus corridors in to towns. This enabled cost to be reduced by reaching agreements with bus operators to use the exiting routes to divert via the new park and ride, making use of the spare seats that are available.
- A park and ride could be viable in Northampton but would require NCC, NBC and the operators to all work together. The ideal location would be on the edge of the town, and on or close to a high frequency bus service, which could be diverted/extended to the site.
- There would need to be incentives for the motorist to use park and ride.
- A discount Mega Rider Ticket Scheme officer had been put forward to Northamptonshire County Council to help reduce the traffic congestion impact of the relocation of its staff to the Angel One site in the town centre.
- There is a need to obtain a better balance free car parking and minimising pollution and congestion. Problems in Northampton often occur during the late afternoon period, particularly in the months leading up to Christmas, when shoppers leave the town at the same time as people leaving work, severely worsening the congestion in the town centre.
- Options that help to increase road capacity in the town centre area should be looked at.
- In response to a query regarding whether or not changing the entry and exit of the Mayorhold car park would help congestion, it was stated this would be worth investigating.
- Adequate off street parking in new residential developments is of key importance in enabling bus services to negotiate these estates without impairment. It is also vital to ensure that core spine routes are built through adjoining residential developments to enable the maximum level of bus service to be provided and to help ensure that such services become commercial.

- The St James Smart Corridor will help to speed up buses.
- The Scrutiny Panel commented that bus shelters are limited, acknowledging that they cost £8000 each. Some bus shelters are the responsibility of NCC, some NBC and others commercial organisations. Some Parish Councils put in bus shelters.

Mr Burd was thanked for their informative address.

AGREED: That the information is noted and informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

(B) ELECTRIC CORBY

The written response from Electric Corby was welcomed and noted. The scheme contained within the written response is offered to Taxis in Corby. The information will be shared with Licensing Officers at NBC to disseminate to the Trade in Northampton.

(C) NORTHAMPTONSHIRE GREEN PARTY

Mr Miller, Northamptonshire Green Party, presented his written response to the core questions of the Scrutiny Panel, highlighting the salient points contained within:

- The Northamptonshire Green Party had look at air quality in Northampton about a year ago.
- Mr Miller advised that he had not been able to locate much information about air quality on NBC's website.
- The Northamptonshire Green Party has contributed to public awareness of the issue and has a [google map](#) showing when measurements were taken, he invited the Panel to view this.
- Mr Miller suggested officers could go into schools to get children involved in air quality and measure air quality outside schools.
- Councillor awareness of air quality is improving.
- Mr Miller felt that there is disconnects between Council Policies.
- It was suggested that the town centre should be an air management quality centre.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- There is a need to reduce congestion in the town centre and also the amount of traffic through the town centre.
- Mr Miller had attended a public exhibition regarding the Smart Corridor and felt that the main point of the Smart Corridor was the interactive display board (showing transport options). Mr Miller supported the concept of the Smart Corridor and understood that the Kingsthorpe Smart Corridor would be of a bigger scale.
- Mr Miller suggested that there needs to be free charging points in car parks and free buses to entice people to use park and ride and other incentives for people to use buses.
- Mr Miller referred to a scheme in Nottingham where the bus company is publicly owned and has won a number of awards.

- There is a problem getting people from the outskirts of the town centre to within it, the disused railway line probably wouldn't help as it is a "road to nowhere". It might be useful for it to be opened up with park and ride at each end; together with a cycle route.

Mr Miller was thanked for his informative address.

AGREED: That the information is noted and informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

(D) DIRECTOR, HIGHWAYS, NCC AND DIRECTOR, CARBON MANAGEMENT TEAM, NCC

Chris Wragg, Team Leader, Transport Planning, NCC, addressed the Scrutiny Panel. He advised that he was present in response to a request from the Chair for attendance regarding the response of NCC that had been presented to the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Panel. Mr Wragg advised that NCC has a Highways Air Quality Strategy and various other Transport Strategies. There are Town Transport Strategies for each main town within the county. In drawing up and implementing the Northampton Town Transport and the Highways Air Quality Strategies there is a lot of joint working between NBC and NCC, for example NBC and NCC have worked together on Sustainable Transport and the Cycle Scheme, Smart Corridor and Smart Community Schemes.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

5. In response to a query regarding bus shelters, Mr Wragg advised that no one is responsible for putting these up, although various bodies can. The challenge for funding is the maintenance of them.
6. In answer to a question about Highways consultation for planning applications, Mr Wragg advised that officers abide by Government Planning Rules. The developer has responsibility to mitigate any impact that the development would create and gave examples.
7. Mr Wragg advised that, his Team is involved in commenting on the Strategy and the Team wants to increase activity in the town centre. Having activities in the town centre makes travel by bus easier. One challenge is, when the Team did a survey of car parks there was excess capacity, however, this is no longer the situation.
8. The Scrutiny Panel conveyed concerns regarding where staff will park when NCC relocates to Angel Street. Mr Wragg advised that staff are being offered various alternatives, including park and ride. One site has been chosen and a second is being considered.
9. It was noted that the Government has a green bus fund.
10. The Scrutiny Panel highlighted the need for joined up working and thinking. Mr Wragg commented that in any large organisation there will be a lack of joint thinking but also a lot of joint working. Mr Wragg's Team has very strong relations with NBC's Planning Team.
11. The timescale of the North West Relief Road is 2019-2021.

Mr Wragg was thanked for providing a comprehensive update to the meeting.

AGREED: That the information is noted and informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

(E) FREIGHT TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION

It was noted that the Freight Transport Association would provide a written response to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Panel.

(F) RESIDENTS' GROUPS

The Chair advised that it was hoped that responses from Residents' Groups would be submitted to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Panel.

The meeting concluded at 7:56 pm