

EAP Sustainable Communities

At 9.30 am on Wednesday 9th August, 2023

Held as a Virtual meeting, via Zoom

Present:-

Shadow Members

Councillor Harriet Pentland (Chair)

Councillor Tim Allebone

Councillor Alison Dalziel

Councillor Dez Dell

Officers

Also in attendance – Councillor

The Chair welcomed members and the viewing public to the meeting.

25 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bone and O'Hara. Councillor Lyn Buckingham had issues with joining the meeting.

26 Members' Declarations of Interest

The chair invited those present, who wished to do so, to make their declaration of interest.

Resolved to note that no declarations were made.

27 Minutes from Meeting held on 14th June 2023

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2023 be approved as an accurate record.

28 Hackney Carriage De-Zoning, Byelaws and Number Limits

The chair had agreed that members of the EAP Prosperous Communities joined the meeting and reordered the agenda, handing over the chairmanship to Cllr Binley for this item.

The report of the Assistant Director Regulatory Services was received, with Mr R Howell, presenting it to the EAP. Members were asked to consider recommending to the Executive that a consultation be undertaken about whether to retain the current Hackney Carriage zones, or to remove the zones and implement the associated actions arising from the decision.

The report detailed the four hackney carriage zones in North Northamptonshire of Corby, East Northants, Kettering and Wellingborough, who each operated different arrangements and systems for licences, vehicle plates, byelaws, fare tariffs and fees and charges.

This would result in a driver and vehicle wanting to operate across the whole of North Northamptonshire needing to obtain four licences, one for each zone, with separate fees and fares for each of the zones being set.

The council's option would be to choose to retain the existing four hackney carriage zones or remove and revert to one zone for the whole of the North Northamptonshire area. The report detailed the Best Practice Guidance from the Department for Transport, which recommended the abolition of zones.

The council, should it decide to remove the current zones, will need to consider what action would be required regarding existing driver and vehicle licences as further detailed within the report.

The report also reported on the affect that removal of zones would have on hackney carriage byelaws and the limitation on the number of hackney carriages.

The decision on whether this should be considered would be made by the Executive, and there would be a 12-week consultation with the trade, partners and travelling public, with the outcome being reported to the Licensing and Appeals Committee prior to final consideration by the Executive.

The panel considered the report before them and made the following points:

Members considered there would need to be extensive consultation and that there would be some controversy. A request was also made for consultation with formal groups such as the Hackney Carriage Association in each zone if they existed. There was some concern that pressure would-be put-on drivers to learn 'the knowledge' for the whole area, rather than the current zones, which was onerous, and a suggestion was made that drivers could opt out of wanting to trade throughout the area.

Officer's clarified that there would be direct engagement with the trade, but it was noted that there weren't associations in each zone.

Regarding the knowledge test, it would not be possible for a driver to choose not to go to an area. If they were plying for hire on a rank any passenger could request to be taken anywhere and the driver should be able to do so. Whilst there would not be an expectation for a driver to know every area in detail. It was also commented that most would have the ability to use Satnav Route planners to find the quickest and cheapest route. Add relevant points in here

Resolved that the proposal to undertake a consultation process on the potential removal of the Hackney Carriage Zones and Hackney Carriage Byelaws, be recommended to the Executive for a decision.

Cllr Pentland returned to the chair and thanked the members of the EAP Prosperous Communities for joining the meeting for the above item.

The panel considered a presentation by the Head of Strategic Transport, Chris Wragg, which detailed the Kettering local cycling and walking infrastructure plans (LCWIPs), which provided a long-term evidence-based approach to developing local cycling and walking networks over a 10-year period.

The presentation reported on the community engagement and the results of the public consultation undertaken in April/May 2023.

Cycling routes and walking routes were identified as priorities in the short, medium and long term, with consideration needing to be given to cycling and walking within both local planning and transport policies and strategies and future funding to be in place for the walking and cycling infrastructure.

Members considered that good progress had been made with assurances over the need for the Weekly Cycling Route, and the Station Route deemed essential. Some disappointment was expressed over the Windmill Avenue being low priority as this was also a link to Kettering Academy. These comments were noted.

Resolved that the presentation be noted.

30 Energy Contract Procurement (to follow)

The Assistant Director, Assets and Environment gave a presentation on energy procurement and renewable energy options.

He explained the current contractual position, which would conclude in September 2024, with Laser and ESPO, both public buying organisations (PBO's), which are often owned by one or several local authorities and specialise in supporting public sector procurement and management services including the purchase of energy on behalf of the sector.

Energy prices had increased in the last two years, with the peak being in August 2022. Currently the cost for gas was 5/6p with electricity 24/25p per unit. Whilst wholesale prices had dropped, traders were predicting prices to continue to rise over the next two years.

He also detailed the pricing mechanisms and the procurement process, including consideration of renewable energy options to support Carbon neutrality by 2030.

Members considered there was very little detail within the presentation and stressed the importance of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. Suggestions, such as ensuring that solar panels were on all the council estate and updating boilers in buildings when they needed renewing with heat pumps should be priority. Many of the buildings which formed part of the council's estate were large warehouses and there was some surprise that all buildings did not have solar panels. It was also considered important to create energy and influence others to do the same, such as businesses and schools.

Resolved to note the presentation.

31 Close of Meeting

The meeting concluded at 10.45am. The next meeting would be held at 9.30am on 11 October 2023.