

## **Minutes of the Climate Change and Environment Scrutiny Committee**

**Monday 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 at 6.00 pm  
in Dudley Town Hall, St James's Road, Dudley**

### **Present:**

Councillor P Dobb (Chair)  
Councillor T Russon (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors C Barnett, C Bayton, K Casey, J Clinton, R Collins, J Elliott, J Foster, J Martin and M Rogers.

### **Dudley MBC Officers:**

A Vaughan (Interim Director of Environment), N McGurk (Head of Transport and Highway Services), J Deakin (Head of Waste and Transport Services), M Clinton (Waste Strategy and Disposal Manager) and K Taylor (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

### **Also in Attendance:**

Councillor D Corfield (Cabinet Member for Highways and Public Realm)  
Mr T Weller and Mr M Richards (Members of the Public by invitation)

Together with 1 member of the public.

### **36 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors C Eccles, S Henley and K Shakespeare.

### 36 **Appointment of Substitute Members**

It was noted that Councillors J Clinton and J Martin had been appointed as substitute Members for Councillors S Henley and C Eccles, respectively, for this meeting of the Committee only.

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### 37 **Declarations of Interests**

No Member made a declaration of interest, in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, in respect of any matter considered at the meeting.

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### 38 **Minutes**

In referring to Minute No. 28 – Minutes, Mr T Weller requested that the third paragraph be amended to read that the Council should not have tram extensions and to utilise what was already available.

In referring to Minute No. 29 (c) – Medium Term Financial Strategy, Councillor C Bayton reported that a response had not yet been received confirming the budget allocated to Climate Change and Environment and the elements that should be considered by the Scrutiny Committee.

Reference was made to the ongoing work in relation to the development of the Dudley Carbon Reduction Plan, and Councillor C Bayton sought assurances that the final plan would be submitted to the Cabinet in September, 2023, and that the proposed consultation during the Summer would be genuine, open and transparent.

In referring to Minute No. 32 – Progress Update on the trial of the use of pesticides and maintaining the Borough's Green Spaces, Mr M Richards referred to a number of press articles that had reported that the Committee rejected plans to scale back its use of glyphosate, which was incorrect and did not reflect the resolution of the Committee which was accurately recorded in the minutes.

#### **Resolved**

That, subject to the amendments above, the minutes of the meetings held on 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed.

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39 **Household Waste and Recycling Centre, Stourbridge and Pop-Up Site Performance**

A report of the Interim Director of Environment was submitted on the usage and performance of the Household Waste and Recycling Centre, Stourbridge and the Pop-Up Site, Dudley.

In presenting the report through presentation slides, the Head of Waste and Transport Services referred to the Council's Statutory duty under Section 51(1)(b) of the Environment Protection Act 1990 to provide at least one free of charge facility where residents could bring their household waste and for the disposal of waste.

It was confirmed that the current contractor for the operation of the Stourbridge Site was HW Martin, who provided the service with no additional costs paid on any increase in tonnages or fluctuations in the commodity market. It was noted that the existing contract was due to expire in April, 2024.

The site currently operated seven days a week between 8am to 4pm with an additional 2 hour opening until 6pm on a Monday from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September. It was noted that the total amount of waste recycled for the period April 2022 to February 2023 was 7770 tonnes which equated to 67.8% of all the waste disposed.

Robust contract management systems were in place including monthly liaison meetings regarding the running of the site and to implement any improvements that were required to keep the site compliant by using the best available practices. Regular site visits were also undertaken to ensure the site was operated to the standard expected and remained fit for purpose.

The Stourbridge site operated a van and trailer e-permit scheme for residents and charities with a commercial type vehicles and for vehicles over 2 metres in height access restricted to Wednesdays only. It was noted that permit holders were limited to a maximum of 12 visits in a rolling 12-month period, and there were currently 4,847 permits issued to residents.

An overview of the site booking capacity was provided which averaged approximately 4587 vehicles each week, with a further increase of 156 vehicles during the additional hours on a Monday during the summer period.

The Head of Waste and Transport Services referred to the Pentagull booking system which had been introduced in October, 2011, where 270,315 bookings had been made to date with 223,720 attending the site. It was reported, however, that there had been 28,260 no shows and 18,335 cancellations.

Reference was made to the Pop-Up Site based in Lister Road, Dudley, which had been introduced in October, 2022 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of every month with availability for 310 vehicles.

Members were then provided with a breakdown of the usage of the Pop-Up Site on a ward basis, together with the category of materials processed since October, 2022. The Head of Waste and Transport Services reported that there were concerns of the large number of no shows against bookings made and that further discussions would be undertaken with Communications and Public Affairs to encourage residents to cancel bookings that were no longer required in order for the slots to be released and made available to others.

Positive feedback had been received from residents following the introduction of the Pop-Up Site in particular the excellent service provided and easy to follow booking system. It was noted that due to the success, the frequency of the site would increase to twice monthly with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2023 on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of every month. The Local Authority had been contacted by Solihull for advice in introducing a similar scheme.

In concluding, the Head of Waste and Transport Services referred to legislation changes effective from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2023 that required that Waste Upholstered Domestic Seating (WUDS) containing Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) were destroyed to prevent lasting environmental harm and impacts on the food chain. Therefore, any waste containing POPs must be incinerated and must not be re-used, recycled, or landfilled as they contained bioaccumulating fire retardant chemicals.

Arising from the report, Members asked questions and made comments. Responses were provided where appropriate as follows:-

- a) The Chair welcomed the information presented and commented positively on the introduction of the Pop-Up Site at Lister Road, Dudley.

- b) In responding to a question raised by the Chair in relation to the possibility of extending the operating hours to 9pm at the Stourbridge Site similar to those introduced in Wolverhampton, the Waste Strategy and Disposal Manager confirmed that Wolverhampton previously operated between 10am to 9pm, however, this had now returned to 9am to 5pm following insufficient attendance to justify the additional costs incurred.
- c) Councillor C Barnett considered that it was apparent that the no shows adversely affected the Pop-Up Site at Lister Road and queried whether the same booking system was utilised.

In responding, the Waste Strategy and Disposal Manager confirmed that the same booking system was used for both sites and that a number of bookings had been made in advance of the scheduled date.

- e) Councillor C Bayton raised concerns in relation to the duplication of agenda items as information regarding the Waste Strategy had been considered by a different Scrutiny Committee previously, and requested that further consideration be given for future reporting.
- f) In responding to a question raised by Councillor C Bayton, the Waste Strategy and Disposal Manager confirmed that there were no figures recorded prior to the introduction of the Pentagull booking system.
- g) Councillor C Bayton referred to the continuing increase of the number of incidents of fly-tipping which had been evidenced within the Quarterly Performance Reports and comments received by her constituents, and therefore sought assurance as to whether the strategies implemented in relation to waste and recycling were effective.

In responding, the Head of Waste and Transport Services confirmed that there was no correlation between fly-tipping and access to waste and recycling facilities, however, acknowledged that there was a rise in fly-tipping across the Borough.

Councillor C Bayton emphasised the importance in considering how to manage and reduce fly-tipping as it was not considered environmentally sustainable, and suggested that better enforcement was needed and recommended the provision of community friendly waste disposal units by the Local Authority.

- h) The Cabinet Member for Highways and Public Realm referred to the number of no shows to the sites and acknowledged that further work was needed to promote and encourage users to cancel bookings if no longer needed in order for the slots to be released. Members were encouraged to visit the Pop-Up Site and promote the service to constituents.
- i) Mr M Richards suggested that the majority of fly-tipping related predominately to trade waste.
- j) Councillor J Foster referred to the increase of complaints of waste in gardens, estates and spaces in local communities and queried whether there was opportunity to provide a facility where communities could dispose waste locally.
- k) Arising from comments made, the Scrutiny Committee recommended that the Cabinet Member for Highways and Public Realm consider the provision of domestic waste disposal units within local communities throughout the Borough.
- l) In responding to a question raised by Councillor J Foster, the Waste Strategy and Disposal Manager confirmed that Dudley was working in partnership with Textek to offer residents a service for the collection and recycling of waste goods and materials, including mattresses. It was advised that when mattresses were collected by Textek, the steel of the mattress would be separated for recycling or recovery, whilst the remaining elements were blended and distributed to create greener energy, in order to reduce the number of items for landfill. It was noted that items such as mattresses that were disposed at the Stourbridge Site were deposited in landfill.

Councillor J Foster shared her concerns following the comments made, and sought clarification as to what advice was being given to residents on the disposal of oils and hazardous waste.

In responding, the Waste Strategy and Disposal Manager confirmed that oils and hazardous items would not be accepted at the Pop-Up Site, however, could be disposed of at the Stourbridge site. Staff at the Pop-Up site monitored items and would refer residents accordingly.

- m) Councillor T Russon commended the excellent service provided and suggested that the disposal of commercial or trade waste would be beneficial to business owners, and queried whether a drop-in day could be provided to assist those that were unable to secure a slot.

The Waste Strategy and Disposal Manager considered that the introduction of a drop-in day would dispute the need for implementing a booking system and would create challenges for the management of the site. He confirmed that further consideration could be given to viable options during the procurement process leading up to the expiration of the existing contract.

- n) In responding to the recommendation of the provision of domestic waste disposal units within local communities throughout the Borough, the Waste Strategy and Disposal Manager confirmed that previous consideration had been given, however explained the challenges in assessing the number of units required and security, however, it was indicated that a pilot could be undertaken if agreed.
- o) In responding to concerns raised by Members, the Interim Director of Environment referred to the limited resources available across the Directorate and suggested that the Committee may wish to recommend that further scrutiny be undertaken by the Housing and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee on the key performance indicators in relation to fly-tipping. He also suggested that the Committee may wish to review the Household Waste and Recycling Centre Strategy in line with the end of the existing contractual arrangement C058-The Management and Operation of the Household Waste and Recycling Centre in March 2024. This recommendation was supported by the Committee.

The Chair confirmed that the Future Council Scrutiny Committee at the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2023, recommended that the Housing and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee consider the key performance indicators in relation to fly-tipping as part of their annual scrutiny programme.

- p) In responding to a question raised by Councillor J Clinton, the Waste Strategy and Disposal Manager confirmed that vehicles under 2 metres in height could access the site on any day. Further discussions would need to be undertaken with HW Martin to discuss the possibility of additional late night weekday opening arrangements, however justification would be needed for the additional costs incurred.
- q) Councillor J Elliott queried whether there had been a decrease in demand at the Stourbridge Site following the introduction of the Pop-Up Site and whether appropriate enforcement had been considered in cases of no shows.

In responding, the Waste Strategy and Disposal Manager confirmed that the Stourbridge site continued to be well utilised and that discussions had taken place with regard to enforcement including warnings. Members were advised that every booking generated a reminder that was delivered 24 hours before the allotted time and acknowledged that further work was needed to encourage residents to cancel bookings if no longer required.

- r) Councillor J Martin expressed concerns in relation to the disposal of bulk items such as mattresses to the landfill and urged that further consideration be given in this area. He considered that the Dudley Waste Strategy should be updated and Dudley needed to be a forward thinking Local Authority by demonstrating best practice. Clarification was sought as to how the Household Waste and Recycling Centres in Stourbridge and Dudley integrated within the new emerging Waste Strategy to ensure best practice moving forward.

In responding, the Interim Director of Environment confirmed that the Waste Strategy would be encompassing on all waste and reiterated that further recycling options would be considered during the Autumn in preparation for the end of the existing contractual arrangement C058-The Management and Operation of the Household Waste and Recycling Centre in March 2024.

- s) In response to comments made by Mr T Weller encouraging Officers to take more action and maximise reusing goods, the Head of Waste and Transport Services acknowledged that the current reuse shop at the Household Waste and Recycling Centre, Stourbridge required further improvements to become a more permanent structure.
- t) Councillor C Barnett referred to the difficulties for residents recycling household waste and recyclables without appropriate transport and although the Council was meeting its statutory duty in providing a free of charge facility, queried whether consideration would be given to accommodate residents without vehicles and be incorporated within the Dudley Waste Strategy.

In responding, the Waste and Disposal Manager referred to the potential safety risks to pedestrians walking on site given the number of vehicles with access. Services provided by Textek regarding the collection and recycling of waste goods and materials from a destination requested by the user at a cost was mentioned.



- u) Councillor K Casey echoed comments made by Councillor C Bayton in relation to the duplication of agenda items by other Scrutiny Committees, and considered that the Climate Change and Environment Scrutiny Committee should look at the overarching policy on climate change across the board.
- v) Councillor K Casey sought clarification as to why the percentage of tonnage that had been deposited in landfill had significantly exceeded the maximum of 15% in particular between the period of November, 2022 and February, 2023. In responding, the Waste Strategy and Disposal Manager confirmed that the request for depositing to landfill had been directed by sub-contractors.
- w) In responding to a question raised by Councillor K Casey in relation to expanding the category of waste that could be deposited at the Pop-Up Site, the Waste Strategy and Disposal Manager referred to the restrictions at the site and confirmed that oils and hazardous waste could not be accepted. In order to expand the items deposited extra containers would be required and staff to manage the site, which was currently considered impracticable for a temporary location.
- x) In responding to a question raised by Councillor J Clinton, the Waste Strategy and Disposal Manager confirmed that any copper that was deposited at the Household Waste and Recycling Centre was retained by HW Martin.

## **Resolved**

- (1) That the report and presentation on the usage and performance of the Household Waste and Recycling Centre, Stourbridge and the Pop-Up Site, Dudley, be noted.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Highways and Public Realm be recommended to consider the provision of domestic waste disposal units within local communities throughout the Borough.
- (3) That a review of the Household Waste and Recycling Centre Strategy in line with the end of the existing contractual arrangement C058-The Management and Operation of the Household Waste & Recycling Centre in March 2024, be considered as part of the Annual Scrutiny Programme for the 2023/24 Municipal Year, by the relevant Scrutiny Committee.

A report of the Interim Director of Environment was submitted on the current progress on all matters associated with Cycling provision across Dudley Borough.

In presenting the report through presentation slides, the Head of Transport and Highway Services referred to the three key areas for consideration including strategy and funding on a national, regional and local level; scheme development and implementation and road safety education and cycle training.

It was noted that the main National Transport Funding Principles and Department for Transport focussed primarily on Walking, Cycling and Public Transport, with the Department for Transport creating an Executive Agency namely, Active Travel England to oversee and promote walking and cycling in the UK. The agency was responsible for active travel funding, design quality checks alongside a planning role to influence new development.

Emerging regional strategy work would promote cycling and walking to support national, regional and local policy regarding sustainable active travel including West Midlands Local Transport Plan and the Black Country Local Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan. The need to start conversations on Dudley Transport Plan and identify measures that the Local Authority could implement to support connectivity with active travel was mentioned.

A map was displayed outlining the schemes that were in development or in the pipeline up until 2025, together with a breakdown of funding for the delivery in Dudley with consideration being given as to how to connect to neighbouring boroughs to ensure provision was aligned.

The Department for Transport had developed the Local Transport Note 1/20 in July, 2020 incorporating new national design standards for all cycle infrastructure. All schemes required compliant business cases to progress to the new West Midlands Combined Authority Single Assurance Framework governance process before funding was released. Therefore, it was essential that cycling provision was fit for purpose with footways, cycling lanes and crossings being compliant to ensure safety.

The Head of Transport and Highway Services referred to the initial focus given to the cycle network development including maximising opportunities of green spaces, canal networks and disused railways and developing a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

Computer generated images were displayed demonstrating how a segregated 2-way cycle lane would fit into the existing highway layout, however it was acknowledged that key challenges would be faced in relation to the displacement of on-street parking.

Reference was made to the Safer Routes to School Programme which aimed to encourage walking and cycling to school by providing a safe school zone around each school. Each zone would have an advisory or mandatory 20mph speed limit with an aim to implement six new school zones each year. Schools were prioritised based on a number of factors including road type, collisions, existing provision and pupil numbers. Further consideration would be needed on less visible measures to reduce traffic volumes and vehicle speeds as part of encouraging sustainable travel.

Members were advised of the new School Streets initiative to reduce traffic outside school entrances with a temporary restriction of vehicles at school times to help reduce congestion and noise pollution, improve road safety and air quality and promote walking and cycling to school. Three Dudley Schools had been selected to pilot the first of this initiative scheme during 2023.

Since the start of the academic year in September, 2022, the road safety team had delivered a number of cycle training courses in Dudley schools including Bikeability Cycle and balance bike training, together with Saturday cycle training sessions for the wider community. It was acknowledged that in order to improve, encourage and promote cycling in the wider community required a change in behaviours and more education.

Arising from the presentation, Members asked questions and made comments. Responses were provided where appropriate as follows:-

- a) Mr T Weller emphasised the need for funding to improve local towpaths throughout Dudley and neighbouring boroughs and referred positively to the work undertaken in this area in Birmingham and suggested that officers contact Mr A Tranter, West Midlands Cycling and Walking Commissioner to discuss further. Reference was also made to the improvements required to the Black Country Cycle-Walk Midway which was considered a vital route but was not currently accessible without appropriate footwear.

- b) Councillor C Barnett welcomed the presentation given and proposed work, however queried whether there was sufficient funding available, and that appropriate consultation had been considered. He further agreed with comments made by Mr T Weller and also suggested that further improvements were needed to cycle paths and the Kingswinford Railway Walk route.

In responding, the Head of Transport and Highways Services acknowledged comments made, however confirmed that initial focus would be given to the development of the proposal and emerging plan which would support funding and community engagement. It was noted that priority would be given to maximising safer routes to school programmes primarily.

- d) Councillor C Barnett commented positively on the demand and success of the cycle training sessions.
- e) The Interim Director of Environment welcomed the debate and strategic thinking undertaken to cycling provision and referred to the recent restructure of the Environment Directorate which resulted in a number of positions created in order to progress the agenda moving forward.
- f) The Head of Transport and Highway Services referred to the work undertaken with a regional strategy which would help drive a Dudley Local Transport Plan in order to work on a local level.
- g) Councillor R Collins referred to comments made in relation to the School Streets initiative and queried how this would work in busy town areas such as St Mark's C of E Primary School, without impacting neighbouring streets following the diversion of vehicles.

In responding, the Head of Transport and Highway Services confirmed that the three schools identified to undertake the pilot had been selected to ensure that traffic did not disperse elsewhere, and that additional measures could be considered including reduction of speed dependent on the area.

- i) In responding to a request raised by Councillor R Collins, the Head of Transport and Highway Services undertook to provide a breakdown of cycling provision/training courses on a ward basis.
- j) Councillor C Bayton queried whether consideration had been given to the adoption of 15 minute neighbourhoods throughout the Borough.

The Head of Transport and Highway Services emphasised his ambition in ensuring any proposals were efficient and effective and stated that there were opportunities available in developing the Dudley Strategy including networks, connectivity and walking facilities to see what was fit for purpose within each community including 15 minute neighbourhoods.

- l) In responding to a question raised by Councillor C Bayton, the Head of Transport and Highway Services undertook to provide further details in relation to the three Dudley Schools selected to pilot the School Streets initiative.
- m) Councillor J Foster considered that there were a number of potential challenges in moving forward including encouraging people to cycle, improvements to road conditions, behaviour of motorists to cyclists and lack of guidance within the highway code and driving lessons. Particular concerns were raised with regard to safeguarding vulnerable female cyclists and Councillor J Foster requested that options including CCTV to ensure safety.

In responding, the Head of Transport and Highway Services agreed with comments made and assured Members that safety was a priority, and acknowledged that a cultural change was needed.

- o) Councillor J Clinton referred to the increasing pollution levels on roads in particular affecting cyclists and considered that it was more beneficial in developing an ambitious plan in implementing and improving off road lanes.

In responding, the Head of Transport and Highway Services reiterated the priority of the Local Authority in maximalising opportunities of green spaces, canal networks and disused railways.

- q) Councillor T Russon welcomed the approach and proposed measures, and considered it a great opportunity to utilise existing wide residential paths for physical measures including cycle lanes or toucan crossings.
- r) Councillor C Barnett agreed with comments made in relation to a culture change in cycling, and although acknowledged that people would continue to use vehicles, considered this to be a good opportunity to provide improved safety measures for cycling and walking.

## **Resolved**

- (1) That the report and presentation on the current progress on all matters associated with Cycling provision across Dudley Borough, be noted.
  - (2) That the presentation slides be circulated to the Committee for information.
  - (3) That the Head of Transport and Highway Services be requested to provide a breakdown of cycling provision/training courses on a ward basis to the Committee for information.
  - (4) That the Head of Transport and Highway Services be requested to provide further details in relation to the three Dudley Schools selected to pilot the School Streets initiative.
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#### 41 **Public Forum**

Mr T Weller referred to a recent United Nations report in relation to Climate Change and urged decision makers to step up and take immediate action by incorporating policy measures regarding climate change. He petitioned for a debate regarding how the Local Authority wanted to progress with Phase 2 of the West Midlands Metro Extension, given that there was insufficient funding despite the recent announcement of £60m following the Devolution Deal for the West Midlands.

Mr M Richards requested that an update on the Brockmoor Housing Retrofit Scheme be considered as part of the Climate Change and Environment Scrutiny Committee Annual Scrutiny Programme.

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#### 42 **Action Tracker**

In responding to a request by the Chair for potential items for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee during the 2023/24 Municipal Year, Councillor C Bayton suggested the following:

- Achieving Net Zero – inviting policy leads from the West Midlands Combined Authority regarding measures implemented for achieving net zero and measures required for Dudley;
- Area Based Transport Strategy;
- Presentation on Planning and Developers – reviewing what Dudley can assist on with regard to climate change for future developments.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the Action Tracker as outlined in the report, be noted.
  - (2) That the items listed above be considered as part of the Annual Scrutiny Programme for 2023/24 Municipal Year, together with an update on the Brockmoor Housing Retrofit Scheme.
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43 **Questions Under Council Procedure Rule 11.8**

There were no questions to the Chair pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 11.8.

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The meeting ended at 8.20pm

CHAIR