

**MINUTES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
WEDNESDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 2023**

Present:

Councillor Cartmell (in the Chair)

Councillors

Ellison
Fenlon

Hoyle
Humphreys

Jones
Marshall

D Mitchell
Webb

In Attendance:

Councillor Paul Galley, Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board

Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader of the Council

Councillor Paula Burdess, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Street Scene and Neighbourhoods

Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration

Philip Welsh, Head of Tourism and Communications

Scott Butterfield, Strategy and Climate Lead

David Simper, Group Leader (Transport Projects)

John Greenbank, Democratic Governance Senior Adviser (Scrutiny)

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 5 JULY 2023

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting on 5 July 2023 be signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no public speakers on this occasion.

4 EXECUTIVE AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS

The Committee noted the Executive and Cabinet Member Decisions taken within its remit since the last meeting.

5 ANNUAL PARKING PERFORMANCE REPORT

Mr Philip Welsh, Head of Tourism and Communications, presented the Annual Parking Performance report. The report outlined the performance of the parking service during 2022-2023 and details of performance between April and August 2023. Mr Welsh explained that the levels of patronage and income had been affected by the ongoing regeneration projects in Blackpool that had seen some car parks closed for part of the

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year. This had caused an improvement in levels of patronage in other car parks within Blackpool, which had meant there had not been a significant reduction in overall numbers during 2022-2023. Between April and August 2023 visitor numbers had risen up to the summer period but had then dropped as the result of the poor weather experienced. However the Air Show and Firework World Championship held in August had assisted in the recovery of patronage towards the end of the period.

Parking Services was also reported as continuing to invest in new infrastructure in car parks. This included ensuring that ticket machines were prepared for Vodafone's switch off of its 3G network. While Mr Welsh confirmed that patrons of car parks would be able to pay in cash, card or phone, he explained that Parking Services had sought to encourage the use of the parking app. The app made parking easier and would mean that less cash was being held in machines, making them less vulnerable to instances of crime. The app also contained a list of Council owned car parks and enabled payment for parking remotely if necessary.

The Committee discussed the possibility of using Council car parks to encourage the use of trains from Blackpool. The possibility of a discounted commuter parking permit for those parking to use trains for travelling to work was raised. This had been considered by officers previously and Mr Welsh noted that parking permits for residents and businesses were already available and could be utilised by commuters.

Mr Alan Cavill, Director of Communication and Regeneration also highlighted the challenge of identifying who was and was not a commuter. He added that the Council's wholly-owned company, Blackpool Transport Services Limited (BTS), had held discussions with the train operator, Northern, to discuss the introduction of single tickets for bus and train journeys. If this work went ahead he advised that the data gained would allow greater understanding of those commuting to and from Blackpool that could support the development of a commuter permit.

The Committee therefore asked that detail of this work and the possibility of creating a commuter parking permit be included in the next Parking Services Annual Report.

The limited Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Infrastructure within Blackpool's car parks was also discussed. Members highlighted recent Government announcements postponing the ending of petrol and diesel vehicles sales from 2030 to 2035. Mr Scott Butterfield, Strategy and Climate Lead responded to advise that although the national target had been changed, the zero emission vehicle mandate committing car manufacturers to increasing sales of Battery Electric Vehicles had also been confirmed, and Blackpool's target for net zero remained 2030. With respect of EV charging points, additional points had been planned in the short term as part of ongoing regeneration work and through the use of Local Transport Plan funding.

Mr Welsh also explained that the option of EV charging points made Blackpool more attractive to visitors. The Committee suggested that work could be undertaken therefore with large attractions within Blackpool that operated their own car parks regarding the installation of EV infrastructure. The potential for the development of an app to locate charging points, book and pre-pay for their use was raised. Although it was recognised that the EV market remained small and that significant challenges existed in developing

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such an app, such as development time and cost, the Committee asked that the possibility of introducing an app in partnership with large attractions in Blackpool be considered and further details be included in the 2023-2024 annual report.

The Committee agreed:

1. That the report be noted; and
2. That the Parking Services Annual report 2023-2024 include the following details;
 - Consideration of adopting a commuter pass for residents to park at Blackpool Train Stations.
 - To explore how existing Apps can be used to improve the EV user experience for visitors.
 - The role of major attractions' car parks in relation to the promotion of EV Charging.
3. That an update on the work to potentially introduce a single tickets for bus and train journeys be provided to the Committee in due course.

6 STAFF TRAVEL PLAN - PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

Mr David Simper, Group Leader (Transport Projects), presented an update on the work to develop a Staff Travel Plan. He presented the draft Plan to the Committee and explained that this had been developed in order to update an existing document and support the Council's target of achieving net zero carbon emissions.

While recognising that some staff remained dependent on cars in order to undertake their work, there remained a significant proportion of staff who could be encouraged to modally shift to use alternative methods of transport. Mr Simper noted that 64% of staff who lived between 1-3 miles from the Council's offices used a car to travel to work. He further added that the Annual Staff Travel Survey had shown that the top three reasons for using a car for travel to work were:

- Travel Time – The perception that car travel was quicker than other forms of transport such as bus or train.
- Need – The belief that they needed a car in order to do their job.
- Cost – The belief that travel by car was cheaper than alternatives.

These responses showed the challenge that existed in getting staff to change how they travelled to work. Mr Simper advised that the assumption of cars being quicker, cheaper and their being a lack of alternatives was not always the case. He highlighted the existing bus and tram network within Blackpool for which a discounted season ticket was available, in contrast to the rising cost of fuel and car ownership.

Efforts to encourage modal shift included information available on the Council Hub, highlighting public transport offers and cycling to work facilities. It had been recognised however that there was great reluctance among many staff to reduce car usage and therefore the aims and timescales within the Plan were long-term targets. Mr Simper also added that ongoing regeneration developments within Blackpool such as the Tramway Extension and the introduction of electric buses, presented an opportunity to promote

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the benefits of public transport.

The possibility of the introduction of incentives for staff to stop car use and adopt other methods of transport was discussed by the Committee. Mr Simper informed Members that consideration had been given to the promotion of an app that rewarded users for public transport usage in the form of vouchers. It was therefore agreed that details on possible incentives for modal shift be included in future reporting.

Other options that could be considered raised by Members included, discounted gym memberships, car sharing and public transport travel discounts. It was noted that there was a discount for staff car parking and the possibility of removing this to encourage other forms of travel was discussed. Mr Alan Cavill, Director of Communication and Regeneration, noted that due to the current perceptions surrounding car use, removing car permit discounts for staff would be unpopular. He advised that the Council did however charge more for staff parking closer to its offices and that homeworking had made the purchase of discounted permits less desirable. Mr Simper also stated that talks with Blackpool Transport Services Limited, would be undertaken to look at what other incentives could be provided.

The use of E-Scooters was also raised as a possible alternative, although Mr Simper advised that this was a complex issue and highlighted that many such devices were operated illegally and were of low quality. Although it was therefore not recommended that this idea was pursued the Committee recognised the challenges posed by encouraging modal shift in staff travel and expressed its support for the draft Plan and the actions contained within, while emphasising the need for innovative thinking to achieve its aims.

The Committee agreed:

1. That the report be noted;
2. That the Committee's support for the aims and actions outlined be noted; and
3. That details of considerations to incentivise staff use of public transport be included in future reporting.

Councillor Williams and Mr Simper left the meeting following this item.

7 ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING IN BLACKPOOL - UPDATE

Mr Scott Butterfield, Strategy and Climate Lead, presented an update on work to improve Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Provision within Blackpool. He informed the Committee that the model for improvement envisioned the private sector operating and maintaining EV chargers in Council operated car parks and elsewhere in the town. Up to £1.7m was available from the Government's LEVI programme to develop the existing infrastructure and attract private sector investment and the model being developed would support the Council's bid for this funding.

Work to support this had included discussions with Electricity North West to gain an understanding of the impact of increased EV charging and to allow the identification of the best sort of chargers to be installed. In line with the objectives of the LEVI

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programme, most chargers installed would be "fast" chargers, which required less capacity from the electricity network, although consideration was been given to the installation of a limited number of "rapid" chargers on key sites. Other work being undertaken involved the mapping of EV Charging in Blackpool to better understand EV usage and demand, which would then influence the identification of charging locations.

Mr Butterfield referred to the Council's proposed delivery model, which involved using off-street parking wherever possible, aiming for the maximum number of households possible to be within five minutes' walk of a charger. This model was suggested as on-street charging represented a challenge as an increase in people parking on street could impact traffic flow and residential amenity. As these outcomes would not be desirable, delivery of on-street chargers would only be undertaken in exceptional circumstances where it could be proven that there would be no displacement of space used by residents for parking in connection with their own residence. It was also noted by the Committee that residents charging EVs in the street from power outlets in their own homes presented a challenge. This was because of the risk to members of the public caused by trailing wires and issues associated with dated domestic electricity wiring.

Mr Butterfield noted that a number of apps existed where EV owners advertised use of their home chargers for use by visitors. He added that consideration would be needed on how these could be included in plans for EV charging in Blackpool, recognising that currently the market for such apps was small.

The Committee also discussed risk management considerations associated with increased EV charging. Mr Butterfield advised that although appropriate risk assessments would be undertaken for each of the EV charging sites identified, the risk posed by EVs was considered low compared with other forms of personal electric transportation such as scooters due to the safety requirements imposed on car manufacturers. He noted that there was a lower likelihood of vehicle fires in EVs than petrol or diesel vehicles, but acknowledged these could have more serious consequences in the event that they occurred. The main mitigation against such issues was ensuring correct installation and maintenance of vehicles and charging points.

The disposal of car batteries following their use in EVs was raised, with concern regarding the potential impact to the environment being considered. Following their use in EVs the Committee was informed that most batteries would be re-used in other green technology, with technology now emerging which allowed them to be recycled, while noting that battery technology was constantly improving. Mr Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration, added that modal shift to greener forms of transport and an increase in eco-programmes would mean changes in supporting infrastructure and greater use of renewable green technology reducing the impact of any waste generated.

Community engagement to increase awareness of EV charging and the benefits of EVs was discussed, with Mr Butterfield advising that this was an area that required greater consideration. He added that the granting of government funding would allow for more engagement to take place and that the Council had sought to appoint an Electric Vehicle Strategy Manager with LEVI funding, part of whose role would be to undertake community engagement.

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Equalities considerations were raised, with the Committee querying if consideration had been given to how charging bays would affect those with disabilities. Mr Butterfield responded that the PAS 1899 accessible standard for EV charging bays in car parks gave users similar space to regular disabled parking bays, but recognised that greater consideration could be needed in respect of ensuring paying for charging by those with visual disabilities.

It was noted that the proposed model for EV charging would be unlikely to develop additional revenue for the Council. Although the exact income from charging needed to be understood as part of the procurement of a charge point operator, it was envisioned that the private sector as operator of charging points would receive most of any revenue. However Mr Butterfield stated that in return any operator would assume any liabilities for their operation and maintenance, and that the arrangement envisaged returning some funding to the Council to provide staffing for the oversight of the contract

The Committee agreed: That the update be noted.

8 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The Committee considered its work programme and action tracker for the remainder of the Municipal Year. It was requested that the description of the Circular Economy Item identified in the document be updated to include details of employment opportunities related to climate emergency work and programmes taking place in Blackpool.

The Committee agreed:

1. That the Climate Change and Environment Scrutiny Work Programme be noted; and
2. That details of climate emergency employment opportunities be included as part of the Circular Economy item on the work programme.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted the date and time of the next meeting as Wednesday, 15 November 2023 commencing at 6.00pm.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.56 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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