

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Strategy and Resources Committee held at Barum Room - Brynsworthy on Monday, 3rd March, 2025 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT: Members:

Councillor Clayton (Chair).

Councillors Bell, Hunt, D Knight, R Knight, Lane, C Leaver, P Leaver, Maskell, Milton, Prowse and Wilkinson.

Officers:

Chief Executive, Head of Environmental Enhancement, Head of Customer Focus, Head of Programme Management and Performance, Sustainability and Climate Officer, Environmental Health Manager and Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer.

111. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

112. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 FEBRUARY 2025

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2025 (circulated previously) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

113. ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE MEETING AS A MATTER OF URGENCY.

There were no items brought forward, which in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered by the meeting as a matter of urgency.

114. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS.

There were no declarations of interest announced.

115. NIGHT BUS SERVICE FUNDING

The Committee considered a report by the Lead Environmental Health Officer Environmental Protection (circulated previously), regarding the Night Bus Service Funding.

The Environmental Health Manager highlighted the following:

- The night bus service ran between North Devon and Torrridge.
- It was supported by the Community Safety Partnership and this service supported two key priorities.
- Those priorities were reducing serious violence and specifically violence against women and girls as well as supporting the safer streets project reducing anti-social behaviour.
- The scheme was reported to be well utilised and details could be found at appendix one of the report.
- To continue this service for 2025-26 contributions were being sought, Torrridge District Council were contributing £2,500 and North Devon Council were looking to contribute £3,000.
- For the summer of 2024, crimes in Barnstaple and surrounding area reduced by 35% during the period that the bus was running, this was compared to the same period in 2023 and reduced by 10% over the Christmas period.
- Drink driving as a whole also reduced in 2024 compared to 2023.
- Discussions were underway with Stagecoach to find solutions to make the service sustainable. They had confirmed that the Council was able to run the scheme for a further 32 weeks from May to December and would expect the scheme in North Devon to be commercially viable.
- Since it began running in October 2023 the fare had been £2, this was to increase to £3 for 2026.
- Officers would work with the Communications team to ensure that the public were aware of the scheme together with the Councils contribution to the night bus.
- Referred the Committee to the three recommendations, which were detailed in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.3 of the report.

Councillor Maskell, felt that the service was not advertised widely enough and could posters advertising the night bus be placed in pubs and clubs? The Environmental Health Manager agreed this was a good idea and would pass this onto the team.

Councillor Bell raised a concern over women/young females having to wait at a bus stop for an hour if a bus was missed. Could anything be done to keep them safe?

The Environmental Health Manager advised that certainly in Bideford the street pastors scheme worked well to keep vulnerable people safe at bus stops while they waited.

Councillor Hunt added that there was a scheme in Barnstaple and they did liaise with the Police and if made aware would wait with people until they were safely on the bus.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the funding of the North Devon Council element of the night bus service between Bideford, Barnstaple and Ilfracombe be approved.

- (b) That £3,000 from Strategic Contingency Reserve be used to fund the scheme; and
- (c) Delegated power be given to the Head of Environmental Health and Housing to consider any continuation of the agreement and the service beyond 2025 subject to funding being found from existing budgets.

116. DECARBONISING NORTH DEVON COUNCIL'S VEHICLES

The Committee considered a report by the Sustainability and Climate Officer (circulated previously), regarding Decarbonising North Devon Council's Vehicles.

The Sustainability and Climate Officer highlighted the following:

- The Council's carbon footprint for 2023/2024 showed that its fleet contributed about a third of its total CO2 emissions with the majority of emissions from the Council's fleet of Waste and Recycling vehicles.
- The Council had trialled a number of electric vehicles within the Parks team; with the current electric vehicles being identified as a suitable replacement for small and medium vehicles (up to 3500kg) and that over the lifetime of the vehicle there was a saving to the Council due to reduced fuel costs.
- The Council had trialled an HGV lorry within the waste and recycling team. However, the current electric vehicles were not a suitable as a replacement for its HGVs over 3500kg. This was due to the vehicles not being able to complete a round before requiring a recharge and the electric HGV was therefore not able to complete the waste collection rounds.
- The geographical area of North Devon together with its rurality required vehicles that could navigate and cope with the terrain on a single charge.
- The costs involved of leasing an additional electric vehicle would be an additional cost of £162,000 over the seven year lease period. With the additional unknown cost of installing an electric HGV charging point as they could not be plugged into the standard car charging points.
- There was currently no money allocated within the budget and therefore recommendation to the Committee was that it note the additional cost requirements and that the Council not invest in electric vehicles for its waste and recycling fleet at the present time.

The Head of Environmental Enhancement added that when officers tabled a report at the Committee a few months prior it demonstrated that the Council could achieve net zero for the fleet by 2030 if it went all electric with its vehicles. However, officers at the time hadn't yet calculated the costs involved in delivering such a big change to the vehicle fleet, which would require a significant amount of investment to deliver.

Councillor R. Knight addressed the Committee as the Lead Member for Climate Change and Biodiversity he expressed his disappointment that the Council would not be able to achieve net zero by 2030 due to the requirement for significant investment within its infrastructure to decarbonise the vehicle fleet together with additional requirements such as the installation of HGV charging points, the costs for which were currently unknown.

In response to a question from the Chair of the Committee, the Chief Executive advised that if the Committee were to refer the report for consideration by the Policy Development there would be a delay to the order with regards to the HGV vehicle, which had a lead in time of 20 weeks.

Councillor C. Leaver acknowledged that delaying the decision would have an impact upon the timescale for ordering the required HGV and therefore proposed that the recommendations be approved as outlined in the report.

Councillor Hunt addressed the Committee and moved that the recommendations be approved as detail in the report.

In response to further questions from the Committee, the Head of Environmental Enhanced advised:

- That both officers and the Lead Member for Climate Change and Biodiversity and the officers were in agreement of the requirement to achieve net zero by 2030. However, there wasn't a budget to facilitate a fully electric fleet at the current time.
- With regards to the current availability of the technology required to deliver a fully electric fleet. He acknowledged that the existing technology was not quite far advanced enough at the current time. The electric HGV that was tested by the Council was tested on one of the most graphically challenging and rural routes and had performed well but could only complete 95% of the round.
- The previous Council had taken the decision to enter into the transport lease agreement with SFS, which was an eight year agreement that the Council was currently three years into. As part of the lease agreement, all maintenance of vehicles was included as part of the total cost of lease per vehicle. Whereas previously when the Council purchased vehicles the maintenance was an additional cost to the Council on top of the purchase of the vehicle. He explained that this could be reviewed by the Council once the agreement came to an end.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the contents of the report be noted;
- b) That the Council continue to pursue replacement of small and medium vehicles (up to 3500kg) with electric where cost savings could be demonstrated over the lifetime of the vehicle;
- c) That the Council not pursue the replacement of large vehicles (over 3500kg) with electric at present due to costs; and
- d) That the Policy Development Committee be requested to consider and produce a Value For Money review together with a report to the Strategy and Resources Committee which investigated the following:

- i. The allocation of funding for the delivery of an electric vehicle fleet;
- ii. The comparative costs to the Council through the lease of vehicles under current lease agreement compared to the purchase costs of vehicles and the associated ongoing maintenance costs; and
- iii. How the Council currently offsets its carbon emissions together with future options to be considered by the Council with regards to greater investment in solar and wind energy to facilitate reaching the target of being net zero by 2030.

Councillor Milton abstained from the vote as he was not present for the whole duration of the meeting.

Chair

The meeting ended at 10.41 am

NOTE: These minutes will be confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting of the Committee.