

Stow on the Wold Parish Council Meeting Thursday 30th July 2020

Report by County Councillor Nigel Moor

Climate Change

Gloucestershire County Council has joined the new Countryside Climate Network, set up by UK100, designed to amplify rural voices and signed the UK100 pledge on achieving 100 per cent clean energy by 2050. Although there has been some disruption during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Climate Change Team at the county council has been working on the Action Plan. The team has considered ways to decarbonise highway activities, developed processes to allow organisations to access the £1m “Action Fund”, applied for Government funding to improve infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians and progress has been made on a county – wide Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy. The council has switched to buying 100 percent renewable electricity for its buildings and other assets, such as lighting, signs and bollards across Gloucestershire`s roads. As a result, county council corporate emissions for 2019/2020 show a 70 percent reduction from 2006/7 levels.

Emergency Active Travel

The Department of Transport (DfT) has given Gloucestershire £321,757 for emergency “pop-up” walking and cycling improvements, against the initial allocation of £288,000. In the award letter the DfT praised the proposals which are four trial schemes: Bath Road in Cheltenham, Bourton on the Water village centre, Tewkesbury High Street and London Road in Gloucester. GCC are working with CDC on a range of 10 schemes across the district to introduce social distancing in town and village centres so that residents and visitors can visit safely. GCC have now been invited to bid for tranche 2 which will comprise more permanent schemes.

Cabinet

Gloucestershire County Council Cabinet continues to meet on a regular basis using Webex video conferencing. Members of the public are able to table questions and ask supplementary

questions of cabinet members. At the last cabinet on the 22nd July I presented a number of papers in my capacity as Cabinet Member for Environment & Planning.

Council to combine its energy contracts to drive efficiency

Gloucestershire County Council wants to line up its gas and electricity buying with its energy sales from Javelin Park to find the most efficient way of dealing with its future energy needs.

Last year the council moved all its electricity purchases to carbon neutral sources – and is using professional brokerage services to ensure it can do so affordably into the future. In December 2019 cabinet adopted Gloucestershire’s climate change strategy which includes a commitment to buy only 100% renewable electricity for the council’s estate and its maintained schools.

The council has already met this commitment, making the switch in September 2019 to buy 100% sustainable green electricity which is generated from sources such as solar, wind, hydro-electric and wave power. Prices for electricity and gas can change daily, and sometimes hourly, so the council needs to buy as far in advance as possible to fix prices. For this reason, cabinet was asked at its meeting next week to agree to extend the current gas and electricity purchase contracts. The council’s agents can then begin to forward purchase its spring energy requirements from April 2021.

Cabinet was also asked to approve a 6 month extensions for these gas and electricity purchase contracts so the end dates will be aligned with an extended Javelin Park electricity sale contract. This means the council will then have the option from October 2023 to retender sales and purchasing as one contract if preferred.

Councillor Nigel Moor, cabinet member for environment and planning said: “We have already switched to 100% green electricity which meets the climate change commitment we made last year.

“We also need to stick with our current suppliers, who are performing well, so they can buy and sell our energy in advance and we can get the best possible prices to minimise our financial risk.

“I also recommended to cabinet that we line up our contracts to give us more options in the future to make our energy trading as efficient and cost effective as it can be.”

New contract boost for Household Recycling Centres

Cabinet was also asked to approve plans to renew the contract for running the county council’s five Household Recycling Centres. The Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) are currently run by Ubico on behalf of the county council with sites at Hempsted, Wingmoor Farm, Pyke Quarry, Oak Quarry and Fosse Cross. The site at Swindon Road in Cheltenham, although also run by Ubico, is separate and the responsibility of Cheltenham Borough Council.

The option which was recommended to cabinet is to award a new five year contract to Ubico from August 2021 with an option to extend to seven. This offers a number of advantages as contracting with Ubico supports joined up working with the district councils, and the direct award would also save the council money as it would avoid the need for a lengthy and costly public tender process.

The sites are performing well with over 60% of all waste taken to the sites being reused or recycled. The aim is to work with Ubico to increase recycling and reuse at the HRCs still further, exploring the markets for additional recycling opportunities as new outlets become available, with site staff working with the public to increase the sorting of the materials brought to site so the amount of waste recycled can be maximised.

Real progress is being made to increase food recycling in Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire people are recycling more home food waste than ever before – and as agreed last week , the search will start for a company to take on the recycling of this waste into the

future. Since 2008, food waste recycling has increased from zero to a predicted 23,000 tonnes this year. Although more food waste is being recycled the county's black bin' residual waste still contains around 25% food waste which could be collected and recycled.

All six district councils in the county provide weekly door-to-door food waste collection service for their residents and it is the county council's job to make arrangements to recycle this food waste. The technologies available for recycling food waste are anaerobic digestion (AD) and In Vessel Composting (IVC). AD is the most environmentally sustainable method producing biogas which can be fed in to the gas distribution network. AD also produces rich organic slurry which can be used as a fertiliser while IVC produces compost which is used as a soil conditioner.

The generation of biogas is sustainable and can replace natural gas – cutting CO₂ production, and the use of organic slurry and compost reduces the need for manufactured fertilisers.

The county council will continue to support and incentivise district councils to collect food waste through a payment scheme agreed last year.

Councillor Nigel Moor, cabinet member responsible for waste said: "Separate collection and recycling of household food waste makes an important contribution to lowering the county's carbon footprint and will help us to achieve our ambition of a carbon neutral county by 2050.

Public Transport - ITU

- Social distancing pressures on public transport are challenging all bus operators, especially in rural shire authorities. To protect the sector from collapse the council has been supporting operators by paying 90% of contract rates and concessionary scheme reimbursement whilst services have been reduced. At the same time operators have received support from the Government through the Job Retention Scheme and a Commercial Bus Services Support Grant.
- The medium term impact of COVID19 on an industry which is key to tackling climate change and improving access to essential services remains uncertain as 90% of public

transport trips are made on formerly commercial services and many school bus operators traditionally rely on income from coach excursions.

- As the COVID19 Recovery grows concerns were raised regarding peak time bus service capacity. As pupils return to school, shops reopen and furloughed staff return to work bus service frequencies have been increased back to or close to former levels. However with only 20-25% of normal capacity buses become full very quickly so people living further along routes may face being unable to board, not just at peak times. This risk should be considerably mitigated by a reduction in the 2m social distancing rules and the requirement to wear face coverings on public transport.

A417 Missing Link

- Highways England's Road Investment Strategy 2 programme confirmed funding for the A417 Missing Link.
- Highways England have confirmed that the A417 Missing Link scheme will not be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) to commence the Development Consent Order planning application process in May/June 2020. This will now affect the scheme's delivery programme. Further information is awaited.

Waste Management

- As of 27th May, all five of the county's Household Recycling Centres have reopened. All visits need to be pre-booked online and social distancing measures are in place on site.
- All waste treatment facilities including the Gloucestershire EfW, food waste and composting sites continue to accept waste.
- As of 8th June, all District Council collection services including refuse, recycling, food waste, garden waste and bulky waste collections are fully operational.

Update: The introduction of an experimental 7.5 tonne Maximum Gross Weight Restriction on the A361 at Burford Oxfordshire and on the bridge over the River Evenlode and the railway near Adlestrop on the A436 Gloucestershire. (The alternative route for the HGV's being the A40/A429 into Gloucestershire.)

I have been advised that Oxfordshire County Council intend to advertise their order on the 23rd July and it will come into force on the 5th August 2020. Gloucestershire County Council are working to a similar timetable. Both Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire County Councils have agreed locations for the necessary signage to advise road users of the changes and I would like to thank officers of both county councils for their collaboration. Gloucestershire County Council have agreed to monitor the HGV traffic flows resulting from these changes at Sheep Street, Stow-on-the-Wold and Stow Road Bledington.

The advance warning signs on both approaches to the Adlestrop Bridge bridge were erected by GCC Highways over the period 20 -23rd July.