



**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**16:35 to 19:00**

**19 September 2019**

Present: Councillors Wright (chair), Ryan (vice chair), Brociek-Coulton (substitute for Councillor McCartney-Gray), Carlo, Fulton-McAlister (M), Giles, Grahame, Manning, Oliver, Osborn, Sands (S), Sarmezey and Thomas (Vi)

Apologies: Councillor McCartney-Gray

**1. Public questions/petitions**

There were no public questions or petitions.

**2. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2019.

**4. Scrutiny committee work programme 2019 – 20**

Members discussed the substantive item for the meeting on 17 October 2019. It was agreed that the item on climate mitigation, including a copy of the report being considered at the October meeting of the Transforming Cities committee would be added to the work programme for the meeting on 17 October 2019.

Members noted that the Environmental Strategy would not form part of that report as it would be considered by the Climate emergency and environmental executive panel.

Officers would be asked to write a report which focussed on:

- What the council was currently doing around climate mitigation
- What powers the council had to mitigate climate change
- What powers could the council ask central government for to make a difference locally.

At the meeting on 19 January 2020, the Police and Crime Commissioner would attend the meeting and answer member's questions.

**RESOLVED** to:

- 1) Add climate mitigation to the work programme for the meeting on 17 October 2019; and
- 2) Note that the Police and Crime Commissioner would be attending the meeting on 19 January 2020.

## **5. Air quality**

(Andy Watt, head of city development services, Norwich City Council and Jeremy Wiggin, transport for Norwich manager, Norfolk County Council, Alex Grimmer, public protection officer, Norwich City Council and Ed Parnaby, transportation planner, Norwich City Council attended the meeting for this item).

The head of city development services presented the report. The main source of air pollution in Norwich was transport as the medieval streets did not allow pollution to escape and disperse. Particulate levels were low and fluctuated between being just under and just over the levels advised by the World Health Organisation (WHO). The highest concentrations of particulate levels were from trans-continental sources and agriculture.

There were localised spots at which nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) levels exceeded limits due to traffic congestion. Where traffic was free-flowing, the levels of NO<sub>2</sub> were lower.

The head of city development services said that understanding of NO<sub>2</sub> was becoming more sophisticated as more data was collected. There were a range of measures being implemented to tackle this and highlighted these at paragraph 12 of the report. The NO<sub>2</sub> limits on St Stephens Street had decreased but not to the WHO limits. Work was being undertaken with bus companies to clean exhaust emissions but there was also a need for a behaviour change. The transport system needed to be managed to encourage walking and cycling where possible.

The transport for Norwich manager said that when funding opportunities to make public transport cleaner arose, a bid was always submitted, although not all bids had been successful. Some buses had retrofitted devices to clean their exhausts as much as possible which meant that twenty four buses had been converted from a Euro 3 standard to a Euro 6 standard. The technology around electric buses was developing quickly to increase range and choice of vehicles with a double decker electric bus coming onto the market. He added that these were expensive vehicles and there was a need for the infrastructure to support the charging of them. Some operators would have the funding available to move forward with these vehicles but some smaller companies would take longer to move to the electric vehicles without financial support.

There was a need to encourage sustainable means of transport. Single occupancy cars did not help to maintain free-flowing traffic on the network and a more efficient use of cars was necessary.

A member commented that buses were idling outside of the stationary vehicle idling enforcement area when loading and unloading passengers and asked if there were any opportunities to extend the enforcement area. The transportation planner said that this had been investigated and the stationary vehicle idling was enforced where there were known air quality issues. The enforcement action could only be taken on idling vehicles and not vehicles which were loading and unloading passengers, however, conversations could be had with drivers with particularly long loading and unloading times. The transport for Norwich manager said that the 'stop-start' technology found in newer cars was not the same technology used in buses as engines in older buses would turn off after a certain period of time. This would be improved with newer buses which would have similar technology to new cars but in the meantime, loading times were reducing with the implementation of e-tickets and contactless payments.

In response to a member's question, the transportation planner said that electric buses would be seen in Norwich in the short to medium term. Operators already had some of these in other cities but the infrastructure needed to be in place. Opportunities for this would need to be considered within the work of the transforming cities committee and the future mobility zone which would be crucial to moving this work forward. Regarding older buses used by smaller operators, there was a Euro emissions limit in force at Castle Meadow and work would need to be undertaken with Norfolk operators and then visiting coaches. Resources were focussed on regular bus services as these had more impact on air quality.

A member asked how schools could request travel plans as there was no longer a travel plan officer. The transport for Norwich manager acknowledged that the travel plan officer post was no longer there but said that schools would be supported with travel planning through online travel planning software. School children were being engaged to develop their own travel plans using this software. The interim director of regeneration and development said that the planning legislation which did not allow resources to be pooled to fund travel plans had since been reversed, meaning that section 106 agreements could be written to allow funding of travel planning measures.

(Councillor Vivien Thomas left at this point.)

In response to a member's question on powers to extend the emissions cap zone, the head of city development services said that a particular problem had been identified in Castle Meadow around ten years ago and it was required that the majority of buses had to meet a minimum standard of emissions. In terms of extending the area with an emissions cap, lower emission levels had been achieved in the area around Castle Meadow but an extension could be considered.

A member asked whether the city council had the powers to change the use of bus lanes to allow multiple occupancy vehicles or electric vehicles to use them. The head of city development services said that the regulation of bus lanes was in the gift of the local transport authority which would be Norfolk County Council from 1 April

2020. This idea could be considered but enforcement of such arrangements would be complicated. The bus lanes had been created to allow buses to move freely and in order that passengers could easily use public transport to move around the network.

A member suggested that the council could investigate extending the buying power the council had regarding electric vehicles to members of staff who wanted to purchase such vehicles, potentially taking advantage of preferential rates. This would provide an incentive to people encouraging them to move toward electric vehicles.

A member asked whether the second tranche of transforming cities funding would include any financial subsidies for more rural bus operators to move to Euro 5 standard vehicles. The transport for Norwich manager said that the application for funding would be submitted at the end of November 2019 and there were ongoing discussions with the Department for Transport about clean technology. There would be different levels of investment capability within the bus network. A member commented that they would like to see the transforming cities funding acting as a springboard for the electric buses by improving the bus corridors; this would help reduce emissions and improve air quality.

(Councillor Sue Sands left the meeting at this point.)

Members discussed the need to reduce volumes of traffic within the entire network area and not just the city centre in order to reduce air pollution. The head of city development services said that there was guidance available for district councils which had a responsibility for air quality. Particulate pollution potentially had a health impact although this was not wholly due to transport. Particles from the sea and wood burning stoves could all contribute to this but local authorities did not have the powers to address this. It did not always follow that more vehicles meant more carbon dioxide emissions as newer vehicles had less emissions. The transport for Norwich manager said that the Transport for Norwich Strategy, which would be going out to consultation in 2020, would focus on moving people and not vehicles. There was a need to focus on the best mode of transport for each area.

A member asked whether there were plans for exclusion zones outside schools. The head of city development services said that the majority of schools were in quieter streets and were only busy for short periods of time. There was a need to better understand what the air quality issues were as there would need to be an evidence base for this. Some air quality monitoring had been carried out outside schools and the levels had not exceeded the set limits.

Discussion ensued around new roads smoothing the flow of traffic and whether monitoring around air quality on newer roads had been carried out. The transport for Norwich manager said that the Broadland Northway had been monitored for air quality and a report would be published in due course. Work was always being undertaken to move traffic through junctions in a more efficient way. Although the option of not building a road was always looked at when new routes were proposed, providing additional priorities for pedestrians and cyclists was often the best option in urban areas to reduce capacity on new roads.

A member questioned why there was a general reduction in air pollution within the Norwich City area, except for St Augustines and St Stephens Streets. The public protection officer said that consideration was being given to using some funding to monitor air quality in these areas to collect data to identify changes that could be made to increase traffic flow.

Members discussed the consequences of moving vehicle traffic out of the city centre and whether there would be detrimental effects on pedestrians walking into the city centre. The head of city development services said that sites were monitored but there was a need for consistency to identify long term trends. Specific sites would be monitored when changes were made, such as the closure of Westlegate, to ensure that there were no adverse effects on air quality.

**RESOLVED** to agree the following draft resolutions to be confirmed at the next meeting of the scrutiny committee:

- (1) Ask cabinet to consider recommending the extension of the monitoring zone from Castle Meadow to include St Stephens Street and initially make this a minimum Euro 5 standard compliant.
- (2) Ask cabinet to consider extending the preferential rate enjoyed by the council to members of staff who may wish to purchase an electric vehicle.
- (3) Work with county to consider whether it could incorporate standard clauses into section 106 agreements to fund school travel plan work.
- (4) Ask the county council as the highways agency to consider developing bespoke responses to traffic issues in each area depending on local need.
- (5) Ask cabinet to consider ways of reducing background levels of air pollution across the network area; including ensuring that pollution is not displaced to areas outside of the city centre and increasing monitoring in areas not identified as 'hotspots' once appropriate resources have been secured; and
- (6) Ask cabinet to explore options on how to reduce single occupancy vehicles travelling into the city.

CHAIR