

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)
held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 31 March 2022

Present:

Members: Councillor L Bigham (Chair)
Councillor M Heaven
Councillor P Hetherton
Councillor A Hopkins
Councillor S Keough
Councillor J Mutton
Councillor S Nazir
Councillor R Thay

Other Member
(by invitation): Councillor P Hetherton – Cabinet Member for City Services

Employees (by Service):

Law and Governance G Holmes, M Salmon

Transportation and
Highways C Knight (Director of Transportation and Highways), S Evans

Apologies: Councillor R Auluck, R Bailey and S Walsh

Public Business

30. Declaration of Interest

The Board noted that Councillor Bigham was a City Council Representative on the West Midlands Combined Authority Transport Delivery Committee.

The Board noted that Councillor Thay was employed by a company that offered financial services to businesses that purchased electric vehicles.

31. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd March 2022 were agreed and signed as a true record.

Further to minute 27/21 headed 'Recommendations from the Fly-tipping Task and Finish Group', Members noted that a report on the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group would be submitted to Cabinet in the new Municipal Year. They also noted that officers were now looking at how to implement those recommendations that didn't require a decision, with the support of the Cabinet Member and where appropriate delegations were in place.

32. **Electric Vehicle Charging**

The Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) received a briefing note and presentation of the Director of Transportation and Highways that provided details of: the Council's on-street electric vehicle charging point programme, including progress to date, future plans and usage; the All-Electric Bus City Project being delivered in partnership with Transport for West Midlands and bus companies; progress with the electrification of the taxi fleet operating within the city; and progress with the delivery of the Council's e-fleet programme.

The presentation and briefing note highlighted the following:

Strategic Context

International, National, Regional and Local organisations, environmental targets and key strategies

Coventry's Emerging Transport Strategy

Informed by existing international, national and regional strategies built around four overarching objectives: Supporting the city's economic recovery and enabling long-term growth; delivering a sustainable, low carbon transport system; Ensuring equality of opportunity; and maximising health and wellbeing.

- Achieving these requires a significant change to the way we travel: Away from car dependency – draft strategy is explicit that in future most people will not need to own a car to access the services they need; towards walking, cycling and public transport first.
- Main areas of activity: 'Step change' in the city's public transport system (including Very Light Rail); much better infrastructure for walking and cycling; targeted investment in the road network (i.e., not aimed at simply creating capacity for more cars); widespread electrification (of public and private transport); changes to the way we transport freight; encouraging 'behaviour change

The Electric Bus City - Why Electrify Coventry:

- Climate Change Strategy
- Coventry Local Air Quality Action Plan
- Boost jobs and growth in local economy
- Zero carbon transport system: Very Light Rail, electric buses, electric taxis, electric vans, Public EV charging network - Plug in Charging, Static Charging, Pantograph Charging, and Dynamic Charging of Vehicle
- Currently over 50% of NO2 emissions in the City were from diesel vehicles
- Reduce emissions through electric vehicles, provision of electric vehicle charging for businesses, try before you buy electric fleet, 468 charge points operational & 155 currently being installed, urban airport, and electric buses

Coventry City Council

- Coventry had one of the most comprehensive EV charging networks outside London.
- Work-Place Charging –44 fast chargers at Council's properties and Plug-in Coventry project to support charge point provision at business premises

- Ultra-Low Emission Buses – Office for Zero Emission Vehicle (OZEV) grant funding of £2.255m for 10 electric buses in partnership with National Express – Launched end of August 2020
- All Electric Bus Town [AEBT] – Coventry secured funding of £50 million to fully electrify the bus fleet in the city and key corridors into Warwickshire – joint project with Warwickshire County Council and major bus companies. 130 double decker electric buses were ordered in January 2022 as first phase of the delivery programme.
- Electric Fleet First project – Coventry has been awarded funding by Highways England for a fleet of electric vans, pool cars and taxis for local businesses to try before they buy electric vehicles for their fleets.
- DynaCoV project – Dynamic Charging of Vehicles, a feasibility study project is underway, completed December 2021

Developing an Electric Vehicle Culture

- Central Government Funding
- Private sector investment
- Holistic approach of extending EV charging infrastructure to the wider city
- Access to Charge points in the City of Coventry for Electric Taxi's [Hackney carriages]
- Promote increase use of EV cars through workplace charging, home charging and onstreet charging
- Improve Air Quality
- Future Proofing for Emerging Technology
- Combination of VLR, all electric buses and electric taxi's making a fully electric public transport system in Coventry from 2025

Electric Vehicle Charging Eco System and Vehicle Strategy

Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy - Short Term [1to 2years], Medium Term [3 to 4years], Long Term [5 to 10years]

Variable rated plug-in charge-point network

On-street residential charge-points

Plug-in-cars Coventry

Rapid Charger Usage

Ultra-fast Charging Hubs / Green Innovation Park

- The Council was working with partners to unleash the potential for ultra-fast charging hubs across Coventry
- These state-of-the-art facilities would provide volume charging facilities for all types of electric vehicles
- Developing options for multi-fuel hubs including hydrogen and gas
- Opportunities for associated facilities and SME research hubs
- Energy generation and supply opportunities
- Coventry and Warwickshire City Linking Energy and Networking Hub (CLEAN Hub)

Electric Vehicle Future Works

- CCC exploring 'car clubs' and 'lift-share'
- Linked to future mobility pilot scheme which would allow people to trade in their older, polluting cars for mobility credits. Credits could be used on trains, buses, car clubs and bike hire.

- Dynamic Wireless Power Transfer technology, where Inductive loops were laid under the road surface which were capable of charging a moving vehicle as it passes over them. Receivers were fitted underneath a vehicle which allowed it to accept a charge as it drove over the inductive loops. DynaCoV project feasibility study was completed in December 2021, a project funded by Western Power Distribution [WPD], with the next phase to undertake a demonstrator project once the funding was secured.

Battery Production Facilities to Help EV Transition

UK Battery Industrialisation Centre (UKBIC) – The £130 million UK Battery Industrialisation Centre (UKBIC) was a pioneering concept in the race to develop battery technology for the transition to a greener future. The unique facility provided the missing link between battery technology and successful mass production. Based in Coventry, the publicly funded battery product development facility welcomed manufacturers, entrepreneurs, researchers and educators.

Gigafactory Coventry Airport Coventry Airport - had been chosen as the preferred site across the West Midlands for a new Gigafactory facility. The recently submitted plans would deliver 5.7m sq ft of space for both battery production and recycling, would add £434m in GVA to the regional economy each year.

Coventry Very Light Rail

The Coventry Very Light Rail project was redesigning urban light rail to make it cheaper to install for smaller and medium-sized cities. The track was much shallower than traditional rail, utilizing the latest materials science allowing it to be laid just 30cm in the road surface minimizing the need for utility diversion. The vehicle was battery powered and could be charged by a standard single decker bus charger, further minimizing installation of costly infrastructure.

Coventry: UK's First all-Electric Bus City

Coventry City Council was working with the West Midlands Combined Authority, the UK Government and National Express West Midlands on a pilot project to make Coventry the UK's first all-electric bus city. Funding had been provided by the UK government, and Coventry City Council was working closely with National Express to ensure the necessary infrastructure was installed by 2025.

The West Midlands Combined Authority was also working closely with National Express on contractual and operational requirements.

Electric Fleet Update - Progress to date

Key Statistics:

- 70 Vehicles purchased
- Over 300+ businesses and taxi drivers have registered interest on the scheme
- 131 trials have taken place to date
- 15 taxi drivers have already placed orders with LEVC for the Hybrid TX5
- 10 businesses actively looking at leasing electric vans with two businesses already converting to an e-van/e-car
- 2 businesses have purchased charging infrastructure for their workplace and used the grant funding towards this
- 320,000+ miles driven to date by businesses around Coventry

Progress within the council:

- Whitley Depot charging bay improvements
- Whitley Depot Rapid Charging
- Road Map to a self-sustained green fleet - Workshop staff EV training, In house electric MOTs and services, More depot charge points, Council commitment policy

In addition:

- 6 taxi drivers taken advantage of the DEFRA funding when trading in their EURO 4 taxi for a hybrid equivalent. Due to long lead-times of vehicles this number is likely to increase month by month as other drivers who have committed to purchasing hybrid vehicles are waiting on delivery.
- 2 businesses had placed orders for electric vehicles to replace their business vehicle that were currently petrol/diesel run
- A further 10 businesses were actively looking at purchasing electric vehicles when their existing lease was due for renewal later this year
- 320,000 miles driven. According to some carbon emission sites, this equalled to 190 tonnes of CO2 savings, but these were US sites and not 100% of these calculators were accurate

The Board questioned officers, received responses, and discussed the following issues:

- Cycling was welcomed as an environmentally friendly mode of transport but wasn't suitable for all. Need to offer as many transport options as possible to ensure inclusivity. Modes of transport needed to be accessible, and the cost of use considered. User experience needs to be good to encourage continued use.
- Important that the quality of public transport was improved - cleaner, cheaper and more user friendly. More needed from the Government to encourage the use of public transport.
- Need to investigate the re-introduction of the Policy requiring licensed taxis to be no older than 10 years old, following the exception pandemic.
- The inclusion by Developers', of electric vehicle charging points/units in all future developments.
- The need for cars to be cleaner in future.
- Trip demand had changed and was more spread across the City, not just journeys into and out of the City Centre. Outbound trips could be greater in number than the number of those coming into the City Centre during rush hour.
- 2025 was the key date for buses in the city to be an all-electric fleet.
- Demand responsive buses were looking at uber taxi/bus crossover as another option for public transport.
- Taxi regulations were changing – proposed that only zero emissions vehicles will be able to be licensed by 2025.
- Electric vehicle purchase was costly, but operating costs were cheaper in the long run.
- Propose a Park and Ride rail-based offer in the North of the City - a state of the art facility, with a retail offer, etc. Radically different experience and improvement on the previous offer in the area.
- Very Light Rail - No fixed plans for routes on a map at this stage. Need to look carefully to ensure key locations are joined up, not just radial routes.

- Coventry Rail Station to Pool Meadow Bus Station was first route being looked at for implementation by 2025/2026. Would monitor and receive feedback prior to any further route implementations.
- Would consider a Very Light Rail route out to the North East of the city and also to Warwick University – technology very flexible
- Very Light Rail would have a minimal environmental impact and was a small 11-metre-long vehicle compared to a bus
- Mode shift to rail was more successful than mode shift to buses. Bus services were successful but needed to be right. Do need to offer both rail and buses to ensure capture as much use as possible.
- The £50m grant for electric buses was not inclusive of funding for road maintenance costs. Difficult to envisage extent of effect on roads in the future, a great number of which were more than adequate in the city. Could be dependant of spread of weight on vehicle axles. Some better roads would be able to cope, and others not. Would monitor.
- Electric charging points – Rapid charging points currently being installed. On street installations were currently implemented in areas where there were no off-street options. Won't become obsolete if new, more advanced options became available. Could continue to be used to top up, mainly overnight. 2025-2027 was predicted to be the saturation point.
- Need to encourage people to take up the option to convert gardens and install dropped kerbs and install charging points for car charging on own premises and eliminate trailing charging wires across pavements.
- Residents' consultations for the installation of on-street charging points - drop-in sessions, leaflets, notices
- Many areas will lose on-street parking to allow charging points to be installed. Foleshill Area particularly of concern as already very congested with parking.
- Income from charging company – 15-year contract. Anticipated 6/7 years to recoup investment.
- Climate Change Strategy – progressed through the Climate Change Board and reported to Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) in March 2022. Expected to be complete and available in a couple of months-time.
- Monitoring traffic levels and use on a weekly/daily basis. Lockdown had definitely had an impact on traffic producing different patterns but back at 100% of pre-pandemic traffic flow in the city. Morning peak quieter, evening peak quieter, busier at other times including greater leisure traffic at weekends.

The Board requested that a briefing note be sent to the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities and the Chair and Deputy Chair of Licensing and Regulatory Committee requesting that officers investigate the re-introduction of the Policy requiring licensed taxis to be no older than 10 years old, following the pandemic.

The Board further requested that they be provided with information on developers' requirements to include electric vehicle charging points/units in all developments.

Resolved that the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4):

- 1) Notes the presentation and information on: the on-street electric vehicle charging point programme, including progress to date, future plans and usage; the All-Electric Bus City Project being delivered in partnership with Transport for West Midlands and bus companies; progress with the electrification of the taxi fleet operating within the city; and progress with the delivery of the Council's e-fleet programme.**
- 2) Agrees that a letter be sent from the Board to the Secretaries of State for Transport and for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, requesting that the Government take steps, either through grants or loans, to increase the take up of electric taxis, thereby reducing the numbers of polluting diesel traffic on the city's roads.**

33. Work Programme and Outstanding Issues 2021-2022

The Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) received a report of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator that detailed issues on the Board's Work Programme for 2021/2022 and the suggested items for the Board for 2022/2023.

RESOLVED that the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) notes the completion of the Board's Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2021/2022 and the suggested items for meetings of the Board for 2022/2023.

34. Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.45 am)