

SWT Community Scrutiny Committee - 25 May 2022

Present: Councillor Libby Lisgo (Chair)

Councillors Dave Mansell, Simon Coles, Tom Deakin, Steve Griffiths, Roger Habgood, Dawn Johnson, Richard Lees, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Andy Pritchard, Vivienne Stock-Williams and Ray Tully

Officers: Chris Hall, Sue Tomlinson, Katherine Church, Francisco Parreira, Sam Murrell and Jessica Kemmish.

Also Present: Councillors Dixie Darch, Brenda Weston and Loretta Whetlor.

Will O'Brien, VP Growth and Government Affairs, Zipp Mobility.

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

1. **Appointment of Vice-Chair**

The Community Scrutiny Committee resolved to elect Councillor Dave Mansell as the Vice-Chair of the Community Scrutiny Committee.

2. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from councillor Andrew Milne.

3. **Minutes of the previous meeting of the Community Scrutiny Committee**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 23rd February 2022 were approved.

4. **Declarations of Interest**

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor or Clerk of a County, Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr M Barr	All Items	SCC & Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Booth	All Items	Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Darch	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr T Deakin	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Cllr D Johnson	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Lithgow	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Lloyd	All Items	Wellington & Sampford Arundel	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Mansell	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr B Weston	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke

5. **Public Participation**

There were no requests for public participation.

6. **Community Scrutiny Request/Recommendation Trackers**

It was raised that the fountain in Wellington Park which had previously been highlighted as not working at a meeting of the committee had now been fixed and was working.

The Chair noted the request and recommendation trackers.

7. **Community Scrutiny Forward Plan**

It was asked if an update on funds developers were asked to put towards developing sports pitches could be given to the Committee. Officers responded that there was a live list of such contributions, which were Community Infrastructure Levy or Section 106 payments, published on the council's website. An update could also be brought to a committee meeting as well if the Committee wanted a more detailed update.

It was raised that a report on homelessness would be beneficial given that Cannonsgrove would be closing in March 2023. The Chair responded that they believed that an update report was scheduled.

The Chair noted the Community Scrutiny Forward Plan.

8. **Executive and Full Council Forward Plans**

It was raised that an update on process change in regard to digital would be beneficial. The work of the Council on equalities was also raised as a potential topic for the Committee to consider.

The Chair noted the Executive and Full Council forward plans.

9. **Somerset West and Taunton, Department for Transport Escooter Trial**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and raised the following points:

- E-scooters had become increasingly familiar to everyone over the past few years and were often a topic of discussion.
- The report contained a significant amount of data on the progress of the e-scooter trial in Somerset West and Taunton.

The Programme Manager for Climate Change delivered a presentation:

- There was an incident last week involving a collision between an e-scooter and a female pedestrian in Taunton which resulted in the police being called and the female pedestrian being taken to hospital. The report was submitted prior to that incident.
- The report was for information only to provide an update on the e-scooter trial.
- In July 2020 the Department for Transport brought forward their e-scooter trials as part of initiatives to support a green travel restart during the Covid-19 pandemic. Usage data was being collected during the trials, which 31 local authorities are participating in. The data collected would help to inform decisions around whether e-scooters would be legalised in future.
- Somerset West and Taunton's trial began in October 2020 in Taunton and in Minehead in June 2021. All trials around the country would end on 30 November 2022.
- The trial scheme was managed by Zipp on behalf of the council.
- The e-scooters were tracked by GPS and geo-fenced so that they would not work outside of a certain area. There were also no-go zones where the scooters would not work and slow zones where the speed of scooters were limited to 8mph. Outside of slow zones the e-scooters were limited to 15.5mph.
- The trial to date had been very successful. There were 12,364 users in Taunton and 7506 in Minehead. There had been 92,618 rides in Taunton and 19,550 rides in Minehead.
- People aged between 21 and 30 rode the e-scooters the most, followed by the age bracket of 16-20.
- Although the legal age for riding an e-scooter was 16 there were very few 16-year-olds registered to use the e-scooters.
- Operating hours were from 05:00am to 10:30pm. 74% of rides occurred during daylight hours.
- 14.4 tonnes of carbon savings were estimated to have been achieved in Taunton and 1.4 tonnes of carbon savings in Minehead based on journeys on e-scooters where users had specified that if they had not used an e-scooter they would have driven.
- The trial started in Taunton with 25 e-scooters, now had 100 e-scooters in Taunton and the trial started with 15 in Minehead and now had 50.
- E-scooters had registration numbers on them so they could be identified by the public. Each e-scooter also had a safety sticker and there were safety notices on lampposts.

- There had been a number of reports to the police regarding e-scooters, some about e-scooters which were privately owned and some Zipp owned e-scooters. Most reports to the police are not about misbehaviour or misuse but are incidental or calls relating to people stealing or damaging parts of the e-scooters.
- Some users had been banned from using the e-scooters by Zipp due to misuse. In Taunton 43 final warnings had been issued, in Minehead there had been 25. Eight people had been banned in Taunton and one in Minehead.
- Regarding the incident involving the collision between a Zipp e-scooter and a female pedestrian last week there was only one e-scooter involved. The pedestrian did not lose consciousness. Zipp provided the information needed to the police to identify the rider and the police commended them on their response.
- The Queen's Speech on 10th May 2022 announced the government's intention to bring forth a Transport Bill which would include detail on e-scooters however, no decisions had been made yet on the future of e-scooters.

During the debate the following points were raised:

- Officers were thanked for their presentation.
- It was asked how to make a complaint regarding an incident witnessed involving e-scooter use. Officers responded that if the incident was dangerous the police should be contacted but if it was a less severe complaint then the Council could be contacted.
- It was suggested that it should be made clearer to the public about how to report concerns. Officers responded that there was also information on the website on how to report concerns.
- Thanks were offered to Zipp as they always took complaints seriously and responded quickly and were a good and responsible operator.
- Concerns were raised about issues with individual riders not behaving appropriately, for example by riding on pavements. It was noted that it was good to see that some riders had been banned and others had received warnings and that Zipp were seeking to enforce the rules.
- It was asked if there had been a shift of behaviour on any particular routes in terms of stopping car usage. Officers responded that 15% of people said the journey they had made on an e-scooter would have otherwise been made in a car.
- It was raised that there was a large difference between the carbon savings in Taunton and Minehead. The Zipp representative responded that there was less carbon emissions saved through the Minehead scheme as there was more usage by tourists in Minehead and therefore usage was not replacing a car journey. The trial was also smaller and had been running for less time.
- Support was expressed for the scheme. It was asked what the warnings issued to users tended to be for. Officers responded that it was most commonly riding e-scooters on the pavement and having more than one person on an e-scooter.
- It was asked if there was a record of injuries obtained from e-scooter usage. The Zipp representative responded that there had been six incidents which had gone through Zipp's insurers regarding injuries on e-scooter in Taunton and one in Minehead. None of these had so far resulted in a claim.

- It was asked if e-scooter usage fell within the Road Traffic Act. Officers responded that this was the case.
- It was asked how it was checked if users had a valid driving licence. Officers responded users had to take an image of their driving license and their license was verified. The Zipp representative added that a photo of the user's face was also used to verify their driving licence belonged to them.
- Concerns were raised about users riding e-scooters on the road and safety, particularly if e-scooter use was made legal following the schemes ending in November. Officers responded that the government would hold a public consultation before changing the law.
- It was asked what happened if someone was part way through a journey at 10:30pm. Officers responded that users would be allowed to complete their journey if they had already started it.
- It was raised that some issues being discussed were less about e-scooters and more about people thinking about safe behaviour on highways and roads.
- It was raised that better infrastructure was needed for cyclists and e-scooter users.
- It was suggested that e-scooters were safer than some other forms of transport on Britain's roads and that research from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents supported this.
- It was asked why there were not parking bays at some of the polar points of the geo fencing. It was responded by officers that the Council needed to know who owned the land to allocate a parking bay there and that the parking bay had to meet certain standards. However, members of the public could request new bays.
- It was asked how the number of e-scooters at different places at peak times was managed. The Zipp representative responded that e-scooters could be collected and moved around to a new location by the Zipp team when needed.
- It was asked what the lifetime of e-scooters was. The Zipp representative responded that e-scooters were retired from the fleet after two or three years.
- It was raised that on behalf of blind, partially sighted, deaf and elderly people something needed to be done to ensure riders did not use the pavement. Officers raised that they did meet with disability groups regularly. In some places scooters which made a noise were being trialled. The Department for Transport was also considering the impact of e-scooters for those with disabilities. The Zipp representative responded that lasers to highlight to anyone who was deaf that an e-scooter was approaching from behind were also being explored.
- It was asked if no go zones could be extended to footpaths. The Zipp representative responded that at present GPS technology was not accurate enough to allow for this however, new technologies would be considered as they emerged.
- It was asked what happened when an e-scooter was ridden into a no-go zone. It was responded by officers that the e-scooter would gradually come to a halt.
- It was asked what happened if an e-scooter ran out of battery on a journey. It was responded by the Zipp representative that e-scooters could not be hired if

their battery was below 30% and most often e-scooters would have their battery changed if it dipped below 50%.

- It was asked if a credit card which did not match the name on the driving license could be used to pay for an e-scooter journey. Zipp responded that the card name and license name was not required to match.
- It was asked how often the Zipp team had to recover e-scooters which had to be recovered after they had been left in locations other than parking bays. The Zipp representative responded that journeys had to be ended at bays. If e-scooters were left elsewhere the users would continue to be charged until the Zipp team identified this had happened. This occurred a few times a week.
- It was suggested that more communication on safety was needed to users of e-scooters. It was raised that having notifications appear on safety in the app when it starts up may help to raise awareness of safety. Officers acknowledged the comments received regarding communications about e-scooters and that they would look into what more could be done around communications. The Zipp representative responded that users had to complete a compulsory induction via the app on safety before they first used the scooters. Messages around safety were also located by parking bays and posted on social media.
- Concerns were raised about the lights on e-scooters not being bright enough in the dark for them to be easily seen. The Zipp representative responded that the e-scooters were tested and met Department for Transport standards including for the brightness of lights. Lights were checked regularly.
- It was asked what feedback was received from customers who used the e-scooters. The Zipp representative responded that users were asked to score their experience after each ride and could contact customer services through the app or email.
- It was asked how many locations Zipp operated in. The Zipp representative responded that they also worked with Buckinghamshire Council. Zipp also had services in Ireland and Poland.
- The Chair thanked the Growth and Governance Affairs Manager from Zipp, the Programme Manager for Climate Change and the Project Officer for Climate Change.

10. **Ecological Emergency Action Plan**

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change introduced the report:

- In September 2020 the Council declared an ecological emergency.
- The previous Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan (CNCR) contained many actions linked to the ecological emergency, but this Ecological Vision and Action Plan expanded upon those actions.
- The Council had been working with Sedgemoor District Council since August 2021 on Climate Change and had worked with Sedgemoor to formulate the vision and action plan.

The Project Manager for Climate Change introduced the report:

- The vision and action plan completed the commitment made by the Council following the declaration of an ecological emergency in 2020.

- The vision and action plan had been formulated with input from members.
- The vision document was a strategic piece setting out the Councils' ambitions for tackling the ecological emergency.
- The action plan set out how targets and ambitions would be achieved. Some actions were specific to only one council, and some applied to both Sedgemoor and Somerset West and Taunton.
- This financial year no additional resource or budget was being requested. However, some statutory requirements could result in additional resource being required.
- There was a joint climate change delivery partnership with Sedgemoor. This had enabled collective work and set a good precedent for the new unitary council.
- Working with partnership organisations such as the Somerset Wildlife Trust would be required to meet the ambitions laid out in the report. Going forward the Council was in discussions to take the emergency vision and action plan into the new unitary council.

During the debate the following points were raised:

- It was asked about the action plan and the action around species on the red threatened species list and whether there should also be an ambition to avoid amber list species from becoming red list species. Officers responded that adding this to the action plan could be looked at, the aim was to protect all wildlife.
- Support for the action plan was given.
- It was asked why there was a joint plan with Sedgemoor and not with other Councils. It was responded by officers that this partnership had been formed before the unitary decision was taken.
- Both the local and global perspectives of the report, vision and action plan were praised.
- It was acknowledged that partnership working would be important.
- The intent to cease using peat in the Council's nurseries was praised as was the intent to restore peatland.
- Some areas where more could be done such as around coastal areas were highlighted.
- It was raised that it would be good to add an explanation of COP26 to the report.
- It was asked if a definition of further afield could be made clearer at the start of the vision document and instead replaced with 'and to lessen our impact on the natural world'. Officers responded that they would review the wording in the decision document.
- The Chair thanked the portfolio holder and Project Manager for Climate Change.

Councillors Richard Lees, Simon Coles and Janet Lloyd left the room during this item so they could not participate in the vote on it.

The Committee resolved to note the recommendations in the report:

2.1 The ecological vision and action plan are approved.

- 2.2 Existing governance arrangements identified in the Somerset West and Taunton /Sedgemoor District Council Joint Climate Change Delivery Partnership are maintained and used as a framework for delivery and monitoring of the action plan.
- 2.3 Somerset West and Taunton with Sedgemoor District Council lead the creation and delivery of ecological recovery.
- 2.4 Annual reporting will be undertaken in conjunction with CNCR reporting.

(The Meeting ended at 8.36 pm)