

At a meeting of the ECONOMIC PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CITY HALL on TUESDAY 5TH APRIL 2022 at 4.30 p.m.

Present: -

Councillor D. Snowdon in the Chair

Councillors Ali, M. Dixon, Edgeworth, Fagan, Greener, Laws, Price, Taylor, Thornton and Warne.

Also in attendance: -

Mr James Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Sunderland City Council

Mr Paul Wood, Principal Governance Services Officer, Sunderland City Council

Mr Mark Jackson – Assistant Director of Infrastructure, Planning and Transportation

Ms Vicky Tubman – Sustainable Travel Officer, Sunderland City Council

Mr Paul Muir, Group engineer (Transport and Development) Sunderland City Council

Mr Oliver Irons – Neuron Mobility

Mr Teddy Howard – Neuron Mobility

Members of the Press and Public

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Foster.

Minutes of the Last Ordinary Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 8th March 2022

A copy of the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 8th March, 2022 was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 8th March 2022 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Councillor Stephen O'Brien's attendance

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest

Public Transport - Update

The Assistant Director of Infrastructure, Planning and Transportation Housing Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide the Committee with an update on public transport in Sunderland.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Mark Jackson, Assistant Director of Infrastructure, Planning and Transportation was in attendance and proposed to the Committee that this item be deferred as they had been waiting to understand the positive impacts of the additional bus funding that had been announced and also awaiting a response from DfT on the Enhanced Partnership proposals submitted by the region.

Mr Jackson advised that they had since received news that there would be £163 million funding for the North East and negotiations would be taking place over the next few weeks on where that money should be focussed.

Therefore it was felt that Officers would be able to give Members a more thorough briefing and be able to provide more in depth responses to any queries that may be raised if the item was rescheduled to the June agenda.

Having discussed the proposal to defer the report, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report be deferred to the June meeting of the Committee.

Sunderland E-Scooter - Progress

The Assistant Director of Infrastructure, Planning and Transportation submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide the Committee with an update on the Sunderland E-Scooter trial.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Mr Jackson presented the report, introducing representatives of Neuron, Mr Oliver Irons and Mr Teddy Howard and Ms Vicky Tubman, Sustainable Travel Officer, Sunderland City Council, who provided a PowerPoint presentation and were on hand to answer Members queries.

In response to Councillor Laws query over plans to attract older demographics to use the scooters, Mr Howard confirmed that the plans to service the Nissan user base would result in the demographics changing and they wanted to be able to service everyone within the community.

Councillor Laws queried how reliable they would be to access, for those commuting to work and if anyone could access the scooters, they may not be outside of your home when needed. Mr Howard advised that they work with other companies to determine trip data, working out start and end data and optimal numbers for stations. Mr Howard gave an example of two residents that regularly used the scooters, based on the data, therefore they ensured there were always 4 scooters at those station

locations. Whilst they couldn't always guarantee them, they did work to ensure all stations were sufficiently stocked.

In relation to Councillor Laws query, Mr Howard advised that if the scooters were driven into a no ride/parking zone, the scooters gave a mobile signal that once passed through a particular geozone, would slow down to a gradual stop. The scooters tell the rider when this happens and the app would also give detailed info on the zones not permitted.

With regards to the potential of the scooters coming to Washington, Mr Irons commented that it was fair to say they had tried to get a larger service area from the DfT but these were trials at present and they would love to be able to service more areas. Mr Jackson advised that they did try during discussions with the DfT and got the best deal they could possibly get.

Councillor Ali thanked those in attendance for an excellent presentation and enquired as to the 65% figure stated in relation to money spent locally by users of the scooters and enquired how this was broken down. Mr Irons advised that they did not have that level of granular detail and that the figures were based on the questions asked within the last quarterly survey but he was happy to work with Members and businesses on the next set of questions for the next survey to be carried out so that they could obtain which specific businesses had benefitted.

With regards to profits, Mr Irons advise that he could not disclose the commercial details at present as this was a trial, they had competitors in the field and ultimately the contract could go out to Tender in the future.

Councillor Ali also enquired if there were plans for a route from Ryhope to Seaham. Mr Howard informed the Committee that they were restricted in terms of where they could go at present but with "spider leg mapping" routes did end up leading to other areas that were not consistent with public transport so it was possible to reach pretty much anywhere if there was a need.

Councillor Taylor thanked the representatives for their presentation but cautioned the figures were purely related to their company and their specific trial. Councillor Taylor suggested that the Committee contact Northumbria Police about Anti Social Behaviour and illegal E-Scooters for consideration as these had been a nuisance plaguing Washington.

Councillor Taylor commented that people were getting these scooters for Christmas and riding them illegally and the Committee needed to get a picture of the E-Scooters in general.

Mr Howard commented that illegal use of private scooters was very frustrating for them as a company and it was very important to note that Neuron had geofences that restrict people from going into certain areas, around schools/parks etc and a lot of people share the frustrations of users of private e-scooters.

Mr Jackson wished to stress that this was separate from Neuron and that they were running a real responsible offer, every mode of transport had users which engaged in anti social behaviour or drove irresponsibly and that needed education/enforcement of but it was felt that the outcome of this trial showed that e-

scooters had a place to play as they were clean tech and that had to be seen as a positive.

Ms Tubman commented that they were working in partnership with the Police on campaigns circulated to schools and on social media to warn of the risks of buying illegal e-scooters and how they are to be driven on public highways.

Councillor Taylor agreed that education was key and that the Police did need to take more action.

Councillor Greener commented that she loved the idea of the e-scooters and it appeared that all the users of them seemed to love and enjoy them too but she did worry about them being on the roads and enquired if they had caused many accidents.

Mr Irons advised that all users had to have a valid driving license and the hire of the scooters came with full insurance. Neuron Also worked with ROSPA, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents and that this work continued still.

Mr Howard advised that there had also been a change to the Highways Code over prioritisation and he had noticed the extra space drivers were now giving to cyclists and scooter users which was nice to see. The licence and insurance was a requirement in the UK as the scooter was a motorised vehicle and they had to be driven on the roads and not footways.

Councillor Edgeworth informed that he was a regular user of the E-Scooters and he loved them. He also commented that the customer service he had received had always been very good so requested this be passed on to the Team. Councillor Edgeworth also commented that he would love to see the service in Grindon and Thorney Close areas but there were quite a few pinch points.

Mr Howard advised that he was amazed by the Cycling infrastructure in place within the City and that they had been able to adjust the geofences within the City Centre to accommodate pinch points. Mr Irons commented that if Members had any suggestions they were happy to meet for walkarounds etc, if they would like to contact them and if suggestions were safe to do so, they would look at them.

In response to Councillor Edgeworth's query over the reliability/availability of the e-scooters Mr Howard advised that this was constantly monitored so they could determine which stations were used regularly and they could make sure scooters were available or increase the capacity of those well used stations if need be. Mr Irons advised that in March, 98 scooters were deployed and for April they wanted that number to be 200. The cap was currently 300 e-scooters and they would supply to this limit if the demand was there.

In response to Councillor Price's queries, Mr Irons advised that there were around 100 of their scooters available in Sunderland, give or take and with the expansion there were another 100 ready to go. With regards to data usage, they did not store particular details due to GDPR but they could determine by trips, same journeys at the same time each day etc that there were regular users.

Councillor Price also enquired if they were in discussion with the University sites within Sunderland. Mr Irons informed that they had a Regional Office Manager who was working with Sunderland Student Unions on digital advertising and safe routes around the City.

Councillor M. Dixon referred to the 34 sites originally chosen and the 10 in 1 particular Ward, querying what the logic had been in deciding the original sites as 10 in 1 was a very concentrated area. Mr Irons advised that they try to meet demand on an ongoing basis. Safety was always first and consideration was given to the infrastructure around proposed parking stations as they could not impede upon pedestrians and such like.

Mr Howard informed that at the beginning, It had been rather a guessing game, they had looked at data, transport hubs, Universities and trading estates, worked with the Council and received feedback from users on the ground. Mr Howard commented that the experts were the people who lived and frequented the streets.

Councillor M. Dixon commented that it was odd to have 3 stations in adjoining streets and suggested that maybe the consultation with Hendon Ward Councillors had went better than other areas.

Councillor Laws queried if there was anything stopping the E-scooter service from expanding and crossing into other Local Authorities. Mr Irons advised that there was as they had to sign a contract with the Local Authority therefore they had to abide to that. Mr Jackson advised that this was the situation at this moment in time but that could change in the future if there was the possibility of taking the scooters on the Metro for example. There would also be possible different suppliers in other authorities as well.

In response to Councillor Laws enquiry over any ASB/damage caused to the scooters, Mr Irons advised that they had been pleasantly surprised on this, there had been a small spike of damage in August during the school holidays but hotspot data was used and the scooters were not supplied during those times/locations. Once the messaging got through these incidents tailed off.

Councillor Laws commented that it all seemed really positive and encouraging and was adding something valuable to the City with Neuron reacting to any issues when needed.

Councillor Taylor referred to comments on the IAMP site and that this was a joint project with South Tyneside therefore consultation would be needed with that Authority to service the site also.

Councillor Ali enquired if there had been any incidents of drink driving of the scooters. Mr Irons advised that it was illegal to be under the influence of drink/drugs on the scooters and if this was reported to Neuron, each scooter had identification which they could report and work with the Police on. There had been incidents at the start of the trial but there have been no incidents at all since then.

Mr Irons also informed of work with the Police around key dates such as Christmas, "Black eye Friday" and New Years Eve where the scooters were removed from certain locations and geofences established around pubs etc.

Mr Jackson commented that the E-Scooters were a motor vehicle and users had to have a driving licence so they came with the same penalties if driven under the influence.

Mr Howard also advised that riding a scooter was more challenging than sitting behind a wheel. Mr Howard informed that they can offer a lot of support to the Police as they can give people's exact journeys, licence details etc, all through the correct channels of course so they can help relieve the pressure upon the Police.

Councillor M. Dixon informed that he was on the East Sunderland LMAP's and this issue did not get mentioned so it did not seem to be a problem and it all looked reasonably positive.

In response to Councillor Fagan's query if they could determine when Scooters had been in a collision or hit stationary cars etc Mr Howard advised that should one of their scooters suddenly stop they could determine the location and how many minutes it had stopped there but they couldn't definitively say it was that scooter which was involved in an accident. In such incidents where damage was caused they do take the scooter back to be stripped down for investigation.

In response to the Chairman, Mr Irons advised that they operated schemes in Slough and Newcastle as well as Sunderland but it was very difficult to provide direct comparisons due to different topography and different demographics within each location.

Mr Howard commented that he loved to see how far Sunderland has come and thanked everyone for their feedback which had been really positive.

Having fully considered the report, the Chairman thanked Mr Irons, Mr Howard and Ms Tubman for their attendance and the Committee would look forward to seeing future updates later in the year.

3. RESOLVED that the progress report be received and noted.

Road Safety Annual Report 2020/2021

The Transportation Development Group Engineer submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide an update on road safety issues in the City and for Members to give consideration to the Road Safety Annual Report 2020/21

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Paul Muir, Group engineer (Transport and Development) presented the report and was on hand to answer Members queries.

Councillor Taylor wished to thank Mr Muir and his colleagues for the recent site visits carried out to look at issues around St Roberts School and he realised this was not an easy fix as there was a lot of traffic there. Councillor Taylor wished to highlight a scheme provided by the Fire Service who were collaborating with Gateshead Council where they used Fire Engines to travel past schools during pick up/drop off times to highlight to parents the difficulty emergency vehicles had in getting past parked cars.

Councillor Taylor also advised that he had attended a Road Sense presentation recently which he found very worthwhile to do and would recommend.

Mr Muir commented that Biddick Lane had been a real eye opener and there were things that could be done with measures being looked at so once these were introduced they could see how it worked. They were also looking to work with the Ambulance Service on Emergency Vehicle Projects around Schools and the Road Sense/Common Sense presentations would hopefully be provided in the Colleges in the future.

Councillor Ali enquired if Officers worked alongside the Police, if they had any areas of concern and if they reported to the Police and Crime Commissioner. Mr Muir advised that in relation to the Ryhope area, they were looking at Stockton Road as it met the requirements to progress with the Police as part of a Operation Modero site. Mr Jackson advised that Officers attend the Northumbria Safer Roads meetings which had high ranking officers there that would report to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Councillor Price commented that we had suffered in the past from chronic recruitment problems of School Crossing Patrols and enquired if this was still the case. Mr Muir advised that it was a challenging situation and they had around 40 school crossing patrol officers at present, which was the second highest in the North East . There were still vacancies and they were actively promoting these as well as looking at resourcing and suitability of locations.

Councillor Price referred to the Vehicle Activated Speed signs and that the rotation of these within the Houghton Ward had been very successful and wished to thank the team for their work on this.

Councillor M. Dixon referred to speed surveys and the contradiction between residents experience and the results, therefore enquired what time of day the surveys were carried out. Mr Muir advised that traditionally it was tubes put down across the road that covered a 24 hour period rather than certain hours.

Councillor M. Dixon commented that Operation Modero had been very good and thanked Officers for their work on that, there had been a lot of positives but queried as to why the Police were slightly inflexible in moving the locations of the mobile vans.

Mr Muir advised that certain criteria had to be adhered to for where the vans could be used and had to be in a suitable location but more flexibility was used now in the management of this.

Councillor M. Dixon referred to the Schools Streets closures and commented that it would be wonderful to see Thornhill Park in St Michaels Ward included and if there were any plans to move into other areas of the City after the Washington Pilot.

Mr Muir advised that they needed to see how the pilot worked first as they didn't wish to promise anything until they could examine the results of how successful the pilot was and that the Washington pilot was due to start this month and ideally they would like programmes to start for the next school year.

Councillor Fagan referred to the 20mph zones and queried how the criteria was chosen for this as there didn't appear to be consultation. Mr Muir advised that they developed programmes around schools and Stephen Dixon was working on expanding this but the main criteria was dependent on the road layout but he could check with Mr Dixon on this. Councillor Fagan commented that she would like more consultation to occur with the Members.

Mr Jackson commented that if there were places that Members thought required a zone implementing, then to put in the request and Officers could look at that. It was a science based on lots of different criteria and they were limited by budget and competing demand however.

Councillor Taylor wished to make the Committee aware that the Police could not enforce the 20mph zones.

In response to Councillor Thornton's query, Mr Muir advised that Safety Works had reopened and if Members knew of any schools interested to let him know and the programme was historically well used and he could get the figures for Councillor Thornton if she so wished.

Councillor M. Dixon commented that he was a big supporter of the VAS signs and that liaison from Officers with Members of the rotation had been first class. Councillor Dixon referred to the School Travel Plans commenting that some schools had taken these more seriously than others and enquired as to where we were at the moment on those.

Mr Muir advised that the Plans were a requirement to develop and agreed that some were proactive and others weren't but they were trying to promote these to schools and it was included as a planning condition on any new applications for new schools to develop a plan.

Councillor Taylor commented that it was worth bearing in mind that government guidance changed during COVID in relation to Travel Plans and it was preferred that parents drop their children off rather than spread the disease on crowded buses.

The Chairman queried why there was no data for 2021 with regards to reported road user casualties. Mr Muir advised that they had plucked the key figures to show accident trends which were fairly static with no trends or change. They did get monthly data and it was difficult to capture a moment in time.

In response to Mr Muir's request for comments and suggestions for focus on future reports, Members requested an update on Schools Street closures pilot, updates on fixed cameras, School parking, and pavement parking.

Councillor Price commented that the report was very helpful and suggested that it be emailed to all schools as the more people could see it the better. Mr Muir advised that he had no problem with the report being sent to schools.

Having fully considered the report, the Chairman thanked Mr Muir for his attendance and wished to place on record his thanks to Mr Jackson, who informed the Committee that he was leaving the Authority in the near future.

4. RESOLVED that the progress report be received and noted.

Annual Report 2021/2022

The Scrutiny and Members Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated), for Members to consider and approve the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee report as part of the overall scrutiny annual report 2021/22 that was to be presented to Council.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr James Diamond, Scrutiny Officer presented the report and enquired if there were any comments or amendments that Members wished to see.

Councillor M. Dixon commented that it was a great report and suggested that the only change he would make was to highlight the great depth spent considering Housing issues.

5. RESOLVED that Members approved the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee report for inclusion in the Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22

Annual Work Programme 2021-22

The Scrutiny and Members Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated), to provide options, provide support and advise Members on the development of the scrutiny work programmes for 2021/2022

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr James Diamond, Scrutiny Officer presented the report for Members information advising that the Public Transport Update would be included on the programme for next years consideration.

6. RESOLVED that the information contained in the work programme for 2021-2022 be noted.

Notice of Key Decisions

The Scrutiny and Members Support Co-ordinator submitted a report providing Members with an opportunity to consider the items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28-day period from 21st February, 2022 (copies circulated).

(For copy report and notice – see original minutes).

Mr Diamond, reminded Members to get in touch if they required further information on any of the items included in the notice.

Councillor M. Dixon requested further information in relation to 220128/687 – To agree the proposed implementation and funding arrangements in relation to the North East Screen Industries Partnership and associated regional Memorandum of Understanding with the BBC

7. RESOLVED that the Notice of Key Decisions be received and noted.

The Chairman thanked Members for their input over the year and Officers for their work during this period. The Chairman also wished to thank Councillor Taylor for his contributions as he was standing down in his role as Councillor at the next election and wished him all the best in the future.

(Signed) D. SNOWDON,
Chairman.