

At a meeting of the ECONOMIC PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CITY HALL on TUESDAY 11 MARCH 2025 at 4.30pm

Present: -

Councillor Burrell in the Chair

Councillors Dixon, Donkin, Fagan, Guy, Reed, Scanlan, G Smith and Watson

Also in attendance: -

Marion Dixon, Assistant Director of Regulatory Services, Sunderland City Council
Marian Chapman, City Events and Projects Manager, Sunderland City Council
Paul Muir, Future Transport Group Engineer, Sunderland City Council
James Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Sunderland City Council
Gillian Kelly, Democratic Services Team Leader, Sunderland City Council

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

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Foster and Newey.

Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 February 2025

A copy of the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2025 were submitted.

(For copy reports – see original minutes).

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2025 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest.

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

The Assistant Director of Transport and Infrastructure submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide the Committee with an update on the development of the electric vehicle infrastructure in the city.

Paul Muir, Future Transport Group Engineer, was in attendance to present the report, along with a PowerPoint Presentation and to answer any Member queries.

The presentation covered the following issues: -

- Distribution of electric vehicle public charging points across the city
- Plans for future expansion
- Improvements to existing technology
- Residential Charging Schemes
- Future of the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Network

Councillor Fagan queried if the new channel charging product would be able to cross a grass verge. Paul stated this would be considered if it was an adopted verge and it was intended to try different scenarios as part of the trial.

Councillor Donkin asked about the cost impact for residents taking part in the charging channel trial and Paul explained that a fixed contribution was being requested. The channels would cost between £1,100 and £1,250 to install and the resident contribution was £300; these monies would go into the general pot for schemes.

Councillor Donkin went on to ask about the number of public charging points, noting that these had increased by 100% in the last year, and queried whether this level of growth was needed each year.

Paul said that there was no specific number set for charging points, and some were installed by private companies and others by the Council. It was highlighted that the Council would install charging points in areas which were not thought to be commercially viable. In response to a further query about the percentage of charging points installed by the Council and private sector, Paul said that he would endeavour to get those figures and noted that the data was provided by the Government.

Councillor G Smith commented that there were some residential areas where it would require a large amount of cable to reach a car parked on the road outside a property. Paul acknowledged that it would not be possible to instal charging channels at every location; up to 30m of cable was felt to be optimum and it would not be intended to go beyond that distance.

Councillor Dixon asked if there had been any feedback from Nissan and whether they were encouraging the Council to do more in relation to electric vehicle charging. Paul stated that there was no particular feedback from Nissan but they were happy for the Council to deliver as much as possible.

Councillor Dixon also queried what happened if residents objected to the installation of a charging point. Paul advised that the team would always try to engage with residents and look for a compromise solution, however if there were objections then the location would be taken off the list. When considering the location for Residential Charging Hubs, the availability of power connections and on street parking would be a key factor.

It was noted that the use of electric buses and cars was increasing and Councillor Dixon asked if there was anything in the pipeline for e-scooters. Paul referred to the trial e-scooter scheme which had operated a few years ago and that he was not aware of any plan to repeat this trial. He confirmed that e-scooters used for food deliveries in the city were all managed by private companies.

Councillor Fagan queried if there would be any enforcement action taken if a vehicle was constantly parked in a charging spot. Paul advised that there was no plan to introduce Traffic Regulation Orders or bay parking; any issues would be dealt with on a case by case basis.

There being no further questions, the Chair thanked Paul for his attendance and it was then: -

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Events - Update

The Assistant Director of Regulatory Services submitted a report (copy circulated) providing an update on the events held in the city during the year and plans for the future.

Marion Dixon, Assistant Director of Regulatory Services and Marian Chapman, City Events and Projects Manager, were in attendance to present the report, along with a PowerPoint presentation, and to answer any queries from Members.

The presentation highlighted that Events and City Projects aimed to create a dynamic, thriving and sustainable events programme, by, with and for Sunderland that:

- Attracted innovative and vibrant events to Sunderland
- Enabled communities to develop and deliver events in their City
- Ensured that event organisers at all levels were supported throughout the event planning process
- Created a funded programme of cultural events
- Promoted sustainability and greener practices
- Maximised opportunities to utilise 5G capability in the city centre
- Monitored, evaluated and reported on the impact of events

Councillor Reed welcomed the place making activity at the railway station and asked how long this could continue, particularly if there were layout changes to the space. Marion said that the intention was to breathe life into the space while it was empty as a 'meanwhile' use.

Councillor Dixon highlighted that the Scrutiny Committee had previously heard from Sharon Appleby of Sunderland BID about the Tourism Strategy for the region and asked if the City Events team was linked in to this. Marion commented that the NECA portfolio for Culture, Creative, Tourism and Sport was very wide ranging but she was sure that they would be involved as the strategy progressed.

In terms of future regeneration, Councillor Dixon said that he had attended a meeting at Mackie's Corner and it would be good for committee members to be invited to such events. Marion stated that they were examining ways to get the message out to the public as well as elected Members and any suggestions were welcome.

Councillor Dixon felt that the general mood in the city was of positivity and asked if that was the feelings of the officers involved. Marion commented that, on a personal level, she had worked for the Council for many years and had never been more excited about her work than she was now. People from around the country had been to visit Sunderland and had been hugely impressed by what was happening.

Councillor Scanlan congratulated Marion and her team for the work they were doing, noting that the city was so much better and the atmosphere was great for all ages.

Councillor Donkin highlighted that there were existing voluntary sector organisations looking at cohesion and Marion noted that the work done by the Cultural Spring was connected to the Belong Network.

Marian Chapman added that Cultural Spring had links with a number of the communities and they had also reached out to Canon Clare so that all of the initiatives could be tied together. Councillor Donkin stressed the importance of the Council supporting these organisations and pointed to the success of the Unity in the Community event on 1 March.

There being no further questions the Chair thanked Marion and Marian for their attendance and it was: -

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted

Annual Work Programme 2024/2025

The Scrutiny and Members Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated), which set out the current work programme for the Committee for the municipal year 2024/2025.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

James Diamond, Scrutiny Officer presented the report for Members' information and possible discussion. Members were advised that the Business Centres report would not now be presented in April and would come to a future meeting.

It was noted that the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Regeneration and Business would be in attendance at the next meeting for the Siglion/Housing Update and future agenda items included Planning Obligations and the Tourism Strategy.

4. RESOLVED that the Committee received and noted the report

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 26 February 2025 (copies circulated).

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

The Scrutiny Officer reminded Members to get in touch if they required further information on any of the items included in the notice.

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

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

(Signed) M BURRELL
Chair

