

**Minutes of Movement & Net Zero Working Group meeting held at the Council Chambers on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2024, 6pm.**

**In attendance:**

Cllr Dr Marilyn Canet	<b>Present</b>	Cllr Lionel O'Hara – Vice Chair	<b>Present</b>
Cllr Tony Clayton	<b>Present</b>	Cllr Claire Shea	<b>Present</b>
Cllr Dr Peter Dixon	<b>Present</b>	Cllr David Skinner OBE – <b>Chair</b>	<b>Present</b>
Cllr Libby Ancrum (Mayor)	<b>Present</b>		

**Also in attendance:**

Cllr Nigel Wightman

Town Clerk

Responsible Finance Officer / Deputy Town Clerk

Planning Committee Clerk (Virtual attendance)

**183. Apologies for absence**

As above.

**184. Minutes**

The Minutes of the previous Movement & Net Zero Working Group meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2024 were received.

**It was RESOLVED** that the minutes be approved.

**185. Potential initiatives of the Movement & Net Zero Working Group**

a) The Working Group received reminder that, on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024, it had been agreed that Councillors would conduct initial research into their respective Green Community Investment Plan subject areas (summarised below) and report back to the Working Group on potential initiatives:

Buildings and Planning	Cllr Dr Dixon
Transport and Movement	Cllr Shea
Making Sevenoaks Greener	Cllr Dr Canet
Consumption	Cllr Clayton
Information and Communications / Campaigning	Cllr O'Hara
Implementation	Cllr Skinner

b) Councillors considered Cllr O'Hara's suggestion under his allocated Theme, that Sevenoaks Town Councillors each supply "one small thing" that they have started doing to reduce their carbon footprint. It was **agreed** that this could be part of a wider marketing campaign and that Cllr O'Hara would further investigate this.

c) Members also noted the following resources, which provide updates on what the Town Council is currently doing to reduce its carbon emissions:

- Climate Change Initiatives
- Powerpoint Presentation on Town Council Initiatives
- Green Community Investment Plan for reducing carbon emissions
- STC Carbon Reduction Plan

d) It was RESOLVED that some initial research be undertaken to establish if possible data relating to properties in the town that have been adapted for renewable energy and/ or passive houses. It was also noted that SCAN had suggested they produce a survey relating to residents actions in relation to climate change.

**186. Kent County Council Local Transport Plan Public Consultation**

a) Members received notice that Kent County Council (KCC) was consulting on its draft Local Transport Plan, which sets out proposals for improving roads and public transport in Kent. It was noted that this would remain open to comment until 8<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

b) It was noted that full details were available via the following webpage:

<https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/local-transport-plan-5-2024>

c) Copy of the Town Council's previous response to the earlier consultation held in 2023 on the Emerging Draft Local Transport Plan was received and noted.

d) The Working Group received and discussed an initial draft as prepared by Cllr Clayton and Cllr Shea, further overall comments were submitted by Cllr Clayton:

Sevenoaks Town Council does not support the basic priorities in Kent's Local Transport Plan 5, which continues to adopt a 'predict and provide' approach to road building for growing levels of road transport. It takes a much less ambitious approach to non-motorised transport, and to public transport. As a result it fails to give a convincing answer on the key challenge - and legal commitment - facing Kent, to achieve net zero by 2050. The summary presented in Figure 16, page 56, shows that progress on carbon reduction by 2036 / 7 will only be about half that required to decarbonise transport in Kent by the legal target date. This is unacceptable.

The Sevenoaks Town Neighborhood Plan recognises the Net Zero objectives of Central and Local Government, and we expect Kent's Transport Plan to do the same.

We are disappointed that priority is given in the Plan to securing funding for highway maintenance, and for increasing capacity in the strategic road network without a clear plan to encourage modal shift for freight from road to rail, and for people from road vehicles to rail, bus, and active travel. Positive policies to encourage these changes must be part of a credible path to net zero; they can and should be developed in ways which encourage economic growth rather than hinder it.

We support the policy objectives of:

- bearing down on road casualties on a risk-based approach, with the objective of zero deaths; however, we urge KCC to include all crash injuries in their assessments, recognising that even minor crash injuries act as a major disincentive to walking and cycling
- pressing for the reopening of international rail services from Ebbsfleet and Ashford, with the connecting rail services needed to make these stations into genuine hubs
- connecting Kent for the first time to at least one international airport by rail; at present we are the only county in Southeast England without such a sustainable link.

Policy Outcomes 8 (increased use of public transport - bus and rail) and 9 (increased active travel) need to be given much higher priority, and to be linked into the Plan's other objectives of CO2 reduction, crash injury reduction and reducing congestion. These links can easily be made through urban speed reduction schemes (20mph), HGV controls, walking zones and routes, better transport interchange facilities and provision for cycle parking and routes. All these are supported by the Sevenoaks Town Neighborhood Plan, supported by overwhelming majority at referendum, and we expect the Kent Plan to articulate clearly how these and other measures will be encouraged.

We urge KCC to bring its approach for urban road measures to reduce speeds into the 21st century to encourage walking and cycling. The bizarre approach to 20 mph speed indicator devices - used across London and much of Europe but not permitted in Kent - should change as soon as possible. Kent's reliance on expensive hard road engineering (built out kerbs and chicanes) should be superseded where possible by planters and 'soft' traffic calming which are a fraction of the cost and much more flexible. Experience shows that KCC's capacity to design and implement hard traffic measures to support active travel projects does not match the rate needed to change travel behavior. The authority is encouraged to develop a more devolved model to respond to local needs.

Rail travel is vital for Sevenoaks, and we urge KCC to be more ambitious. Getting travelers back onto trains is essential to contain congestion and CO2 emissions. This should be done by delivering the promises made since 2015 to integrate West Kent into transport networks for London:

- regular fast trains from Maidstone East via Otford and Swanley to join CrossRail at Farringdon and beyond as promised in 2016/7/8; this was the only gain for Kent from the Thameslink project, and not yet delivered
- integrating the metro services which start from Sevenoaks into Transport for London as promised in 2015, giving benefits on station staffing and quality of service management
- integration into the London ticketing system in a more seamless way, rather than the piecemeal (and error prone) approach of 'Project Oval' which if continued will distort fares across Kent.

KCC should press the Department for Transport to speed replacement of its ageing and unreliable trains, especially Networkers, and to address undelivered promises and exceptionally high fares per mile.

We are particularly concerned by the fragmented and fragile state of the bus network, especially the services for schools. The use of private cars for school drop offs is the main contributor to gridlock in Sevenoaks, and the requirement for many parents to make the school run is a significant drag on productivity. KCC should tackle this issue to reduce carbon emissions, reduce congestion, and to improve Kent's economy.

e) RESOLVED: that the draft response be amended as above and submitted for approval of the Planning & Environment Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

187.           **Proposed amendment to the Avenue Verte (or Allée Verte) London to Paris cycling route**

Members considered Cllr Clayton's proposal that STC lobby any appropriate bodies to deliver an amended Avenue Verte route, as proposed by John Grimshaw, cited in STC's draft response to KCC's draft Local Transport Plan consultation and detailed in the article below. It was noted that the current route avoids Kent and goes via Gatwick airport, as opposed to the new route which would allow cyclists to travel through Dartford, Darent Valley, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells.

[https://www.theguardian.com/travel/article/2024/jul/31/cycle-from-london-to-paris-avenue-verte?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/travel/article/2024/jul/31/cycle-from-london-to-paris-avenue-verte?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)

RESOLVED: that STC is in favour of the amended route. It was further **RESOLVED** that John Grimshaw be invited to present his proposals to a future Movement & Net Zero Working Group.

188. **Highway Improvement Plan**

a) The Working Group received and noted a report on the recent meeting between STC and KCC Officers on the Town Council's updated Highway Improvement Plan (HIP). KCC's initial comments on the priority actions were considered, and it was noted that the majority of priority actions are still under investigation and pending update.

RESOLVED: the Movement & Net Zero Working Group recommend the following to the Planning & Environment Committee due to meet later at 7pm on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2024:  
**To note KCC's comments and to** await further update from Kent County Council so as to allow Councillors to prioritise actions that it could potentially afford to deliver. It was also mentioned that the outcome of the Masterplan could have an impact on the prioritisation.

189. **Any other business**

No further business was proposed.

**Meeting concluded at 6.50 pm.**