



# Minutes

Name of meeting	<b>POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND REGENERATION</b>
Date and Time	<b>THURSDAY 6 JULY 2023 COMMENCING AT 5.00 PM</b>
Venue	<b>COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT</b>
Present	Cllrs N Stuart (Chairman), M Beston, R Downer, K Love and C Quirk
Also Present (Non voting)	Cllr I Stephens, Cllr Jones-Evans, Cllr Jordan and John Irvine
Officers Present	Christopher Ashman, Sarah Philipsborn and Melanie White
Apologies	Cllrs J Lever and I Ward

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1. **Apologies and Changes in Membership (if any)**

Cllr Lever and Cllr Ward sent their apologies.

2. **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 4 May 2023 be approved with the following amendment;

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Discussions took place around funding and sustainability and the importance of developing young person's skills and keeping hold of skilled young people...

3. **Declarations of Interest**

None were declared at this time.

4. **Public Question Time - 15 Minutes Maximum**

None were received

5. **Progress on outcomes and recommendations from previous meetings**

None known to be commented on at this meeting

6. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny - Acquisition Strategy**

The Committee set to discuss immediately on the issues included in the Acquisition Strategy Report.

Questions were asked about homelessness and it being a priority for the Cabinet. Debate surrounding this topic ensued regarding the funding available for the strategy and how best the funding could be utilized.

Cllrs wanted clarification over the target of how many homes were to be provided. The strategy was stated as a starting point, and the main difficulty was around funding and that the acquisition strategy referred to delivering 50 homes within a three-year period.

Cllrs asked for figures to be provided to the committee about how much money was available now for such homes.

The amount available was stated as being £500,000 but this was to be supplemented with £800,000 in external grants. It was also hoped that the Council would obtain Homes England funding. The discussion led to the site in East Cowes which was explained as being more complex than initially anticipated.

The debate returned to the question of funding and whether it was not more economical to fund the homes rather than the amount of money spent in temporary accommodation for homeless families.

Opinions felt the strategy needed time scales and details on how the strategy was going to be delivered with clear process definitions and firm targets.

Questions were also raised by the Chair regarding what effects homelessness had on people and discussion followed regarding mental and physical health and children's education.

The idea of creating a new task and finish group was mooted to the committee by the Chair but Cllrs questioned the need for such a group as the findings would not differ very much to what was established by the 2017 task and finish group when dealing with this subject, apart from the situation being worse. Cllrs were also mindful of officer time, as well as any further delay to the implementation of the acquisition strategy and delivering homes to those people who desperately needed them.

A suggestion was put forward to pull the report and do more work on it with the intention of bringing it back to the Cabinet meeting in September, but this was seen as causing further delay by some committee members.

The committee looked to make some recommendation regarding the report.

There was the opinion that recommendations should be made now so that they could be taken to the Cabinet meeting on 11 July 2023. Concern was raised over voting for recommendations that the committee had not seen as there would be no written record.

Other committee members put forward the option to go away and come up with a list of recommendations to be considered and circulated by email. This option was voted through by the committee.

RESOLVED:

THAT the Chairman would circulate a list of recommendations for the members to consider ahead of the cabinet meeting on 11 July 2023.

## 7. **Pre- Decision Scrutiny - Electric Vehicle Charge-Point Infrastructure Strategy**

The Committee set about discussing the report regarding the Electric Vehicle Charge Point Infrastructure. Questions were raised about the strategy and how it was part of the IW Council's Net Zero Strategy.

It was stated as being a draft strategy with £325,000 of funding so far, but there was the focus to partner up with other organisations to deliver the necessary infrastructure.

Cllrs raised questions on reliability, cost and ways of payment when accessing the charge points. It was stated that the target for the strategy to be implemented was 2030 but that there was talk in government of a delay to 2035 so it was very up in the air. It was advised that currently on the Island only three percent of vehicle ownership was electric.

Concerns on the impact on the tourist industry and the ability for rapid charging to make sure individuals were not discouraged to come to the Island. Discussion took place on the ability of the charging network to provide enough charging points for tourist and visitors to the Island and whether the ferry companies could be involved in further discussion about providing charging points at the ports or on their vessels.

Further points were raised about the effectiveness of electric vehicles over a certain tonnage, and it was stated that hydrogen was the preferred option for vehicles over 26 tonnes, but the use of hydrogen was dependent on government policy.

The Chairman raised the issue of solar panels being installed above car parks.

Grid capacity was also discussed and if the grid could cope with the expansion of electric vehicles ownership and the supply and flow of power.

Cllrs debated the need to put requirements regarding electric vehicle charging points into local plans and all future developments.

The following recommendations were voted on and approved by the committee:

THAT there is a requirement placed on all future development on the Island to include electric charging points.

THAT the Council consider the ability of the charging network in dealing with electric vehicles coming on to the island and have discussions with ferry operators about the potential of having charging points at the ports or on their vessels.

THAT the committee is provided with regular updates regarding the progress of the electric vehicle charging point strategy

THAT the issue of grid capacity and grid flow is further investigated.

RESOLVED

THAT the above recommendations be forwarded onto the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure, Highways PFI and Transport Strategy for consideration in the draft strategy.

## 8. **Island wide Digital Connectivity**

The CEO of Wight Fibre presented a video to the committee which showed the work of Wight Fibre on the Island. The presentation gave an update on how far the company was in providing world class optic fibre broadband availability to all areas of the Island. The cost of the various packages were explained to the committee along with maps showing the areas of the Island and what stage of service availability they were at.

Questions were asked about streets in Ventnor not being on the recent list of availability. The CEO of WightFibre explained that that had encountered tremendous issues in Ventnor which has slowed down the works in that area considerably.

Comments were made that there was high satisfaction with the service but dissatisfaction with the installation works.

The CEO responded by saying that mistakes can happen and that WightFibre endeavour to respond quickly to any issues. The CEO also stated that blocks of flats were more difficult to connect as were certain unadopted roads. Where it was financially unviable to connect outlying properties, there was the hope that there would be a grant forthcoming to enable these properties (estimated to be 1000-1500 properties) to be connected.

Concerns were raised by the Chair of the number of properties especially in rural areas that were not being connected and that Wightfibre had informed him previously they were unwilling to disclose which properties were not being connected at this moment. After discussion the WightFibre CEO offered to provide a map of the areas that were currently not going to receive Fibre, specifically in rural areas.

RESOLVED:

THAT the presentation from the CEO of WightFibre be noted

9. **Island Roads Annual Survey**

Not discussed due to the meeting becoming inquorate.

10. **Isle of Wight Skills Plan**

Not discussed due to the meeting becoming inquorate

11. **Committee's Work Plan**

Not discussed due to the meeting becoming inquorate.

12. **Members' Question Time**

None, due to the meeting becoming inquorate.

CHAIRMAN