

Thursday, 23 March 2023

**Report of the Leader of the Council and the
Portfolio Holder for Skills, Planning, Economy & Waste**

Staffordshire Sustainability Board Update

Exempt Information

Not exempt.

Purpose

To adopt the joint Staffordshire Sustainability Board Communications Plan 2023 which has been developed with the Staffordshire Sustainability Board in conjunction with all district and borough councils to help residents to reduce their carbon emissions.

To adopt the Staffordshire County Council Public Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy which has been developed in conjunction with all district and borough councils to help residents to transition to electric vehicles.

Recommendations

It is recommended:

1. That the Staffordshire Sustainability Board joint communications plan (attached as Appendix 1 to the report), which sets out the 12-month programme of climate change awareness-raising and behaviour change activity, be adopted.
2. That the Staffordshire County Council Public Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy (as attached in Appendix 2 to the report), be adopted.
3. That the Borough Council commissions a borough-wide bespoke strategy to provide a framework for making decisions around EV charging in Tamworth, is endorsed.
4. That the EV Charging update on the installation of 4 fast charging points is endorsed.

Executive Summary

The Staffordshire Sustainability Board was established in January 2022 with the aim of encouraging and supporting partnership working between Staffordshire District/Borough and County Council's in their efforts to tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions towards a net zero target. In March 2022 the Board adopted a vision together with ten commitments for action during 2022/23..

Communications Plan

On 10 October 2022 the Staffordshire Sustainability Board (SSB) provisionally agreed a Joint Climate Change Communication Plan for 2023. Whilst Partner Authorities are responsible for communicating their climate change responsibilities and actions, it was recognised that by working together, they could have a greater reach and impact. Therefore, the Plan set out a co-ordinated calendar of unified and consistent communications activity to be delivered

throughout the year to raise awareness, deepen understanding and inspire action on climate change.

During 2023, several joint activities have been planned across the county to promote national awareness days, increase residents carbon literacy, run local events and launch a consultation to hear residents' thoughts on climate change and the barriers they face to be greener.

Of particular note is the Carbon Bubble roadshow, the aim of which is to engage with residents on the ground, seeking their feedback and views. A pilot took place in April 2022 in Stafford Town Centre where a balloon was present representing one tonne of carbon. The events are very low-carbon to run, recycled materials are used for the bubble, an electric van is used to transport and there will be a generator running on hydrogenated vegetables.

The intention is to run the bubble events in each location across the County, during the summer. Suggested dates for the events are shown in Appendix 1, which start in May and continue running until the end of August 2023. The AD G&R has confirmed that *Wednesday 9th August* is suitable for the roadshow attending the Castle Grounds and has been in discussion with the events team over arrangements. Formal consultation is proposed with residents, running at the same time as the carbon bubble events which will then help plan ongoing communications activity.

Each Partner Authority has been asked to make arrangements to formally adopt the Plan which is set out in Appendix 1.

Staffordshire EV Charging Strategy

In 2020 the government announced its intention to end the sale of new cars powered by petrol and diesel combustion engines by 2030 and plug in cars by 2036. The biggest annual increase in the number of electric vehicle (EV) registrations was witnessed in 2021, with more than 740,000 plug-in hybrid and battery-electric cars registered, showing a growth of 70% on 2020. Charging infrastructure will need to grow accordingly to ensure an unhindered transition to EVs.

Early adopters of EVs have generally had provision to charge whilst parked off-street at home. Additionally, the private sector are delivering many charge points which provide mainly top up charging at destinations such as supermarkets and a number of rapid charging hubs for in-journey charging, for example at service stations.

Research conducted by Ordnance Survey, Zap-Map and Field Dynamics has identified that across Staffordshire, on average 75% of households have access to off-street parking and of those households that do not have off-street parking, on average only 3% of households are within a 5-minute walk from a public charge point. The figures on page 9 of the strategy demonstrate that Tamworth is below the Staffordshire average with 71% of households that have access to off-street parking and only 0.1% of those households who do not have access, are within a 5-minute walk from a public charge point.

A public charging network is therefore essential to provide practical alternatives to home charging to ensure that those without access to off-street parking are not disadvantaged. Failure to provide alternatives could delay the transition to EVs for many residents.

The Staffordshire County Council Public Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy has been developed in conjunction with all district and borough councils. In addition the strategy has been discussed by the Staffordshire Sustainability Board and its supporting senior officer group. As a result of those discussions, districts and boroughs have been asked to adopt the strategy through their own individual governance procedures.

The Strategy outlines how Staffordshire authorities should support and coordinate the installation of charge points at workplaces or retail parks, improving EV facilities at off-street

parking locations and especially installing charge points in local authority owned and managed car parks.

The Strategy sets out the priorities for the installation of EV charge points across the county through analysing various areas including policy, funding and technology that will impact the charging infrastructure network. The Strategy also delves into the current and forecasted demand for each of the districts and boroughs and for the whole of Staffordshire, to inform strategic decision making. This document recommends broad locations across the county that should be considered for charging infrastructure and the optimal solutions that are most appropriate to match current and anticipated demand. Analysis of Tamworth Borough begins on page 35 of the Strategy.

The Department for Transport has set a key date of 2030 to have 300,000 public charge points in the UK. As of October 2022, there were some three hundred public charge points in Staffordshire, and therefore the task is to grow this number by approximately three thousand charge points in Staffordshire over the next seven years. It is anticipated that a central government funding opportunity will arise in early 2023 and therefore the adoption of the Strategy will ensure that Staffordshire is in the best possible position to submit a suitable bid.

The Strategy is a useful document that starts to support EV charging decision making with data that identifies priorities across the County. Whilst this is good starting point and will allow for funding bids to be made, it does not set out in enough detail a decision making framework for the Borough Council. Where do we want to deliver EV infrastructure? Do we focus on the town centre or do we want to prioritise our residential areas and if so which ones? Which business model do we want to adopt? Do we rely on an EV charging supplier to fund the infrastructure or do we deliver it ourselves and generate a revenue? What type of chargers are suitable for the various options that we have available?

Recommendation 3 seeks to utilise climate change reserves money to commission a document that focuses on the decision making for the Borough Council. This will not be a large or extensive report but will focus on what's important to the Borough Council, particularly if funding became available which allowed to deliver at pace.

Tamworth EV Charging Update

On the 17th of December 2020 a paper was taken to Cabinet with the following recommendations, which were approved.

1. That EV Charging Operating Model 2 is chosen as the primary delivery route subject to the results of a detailed options appraisal.
2. That a further marketing exercise using the ESPO Procurement Framework to secure a supplier / operator is carried out,
3. Produce a detailed options appraisal following further market feedback including costs/income/risks.
4. That a private sector location for EV charging on the wider Ventura retail park is investigated and promoted with relevant landowners
5. That an EV Action Plan is developed for adoption by the Council.
6. That, in principle, subject to the results of a detailed options appraisal, EV vehicle fast-charging infrastructure is installed in at least one of the Borough-owned car parks.

Since then Officers have procured and appointed BP Pulse through a direct call-off contract on the ESPO Framework to provide the council with a multi-disciplinary solution that encompasses the design, manufacture, installation and operation of charging units. A hosting

Agreement with BP Pulse was signed on the 23rd of December 2021. The costs and commercial risks are borne by BP Pulse. The term of the Agreement is 7 Years at zero cost to the Council (including survey, installation, unit cost, operation, maintenance etc). It is hoped that the market for providing locations for EV charging will have matured in seven years and future tendering of EV charging locations will result in an income stream to the Council.

After research, appraisal of options and discussions at the Regeneration Board, it was initially agreed to pilot the installation of 4 EV Chargers by BP Pulse. The proposed public car park station locations were Riverside Car Park and Bolebridge Car Park.

BP Pulse carried out desk top studies at the beginning of 2022 to review, infrastructure costs, deliverability, and their return on investment. Further investment surveys were required on site prior to their internal investment sign off. Officers requested updates on these surveys and a timeframe for project delivery but unfortunately the project lead had left their organisation and all communication had stopped between June and October 2022. It is understood that BP Pulse have undergone large organisational changes which impacted on staffing resource, and they were unable to provide the team with updates on these surveys.

BP Pulse now has a Commercial Development Manager committed to working with the Council to deliver EV Charging in Tamworth. Due to the time that had passed since the surveys were first undertaken the surveys needed to be revaluated to ensure that current costs were accurate. BP Pulse have now come forward with a new proposal as outlined below.

Riverdrive Car Park

It was initially intended for Riverdrive Car Park to have two “F7” models of Fast charge floor mounted charging units installed. This is no longer BP pulses model and have now proposed an Ultra-Fast Charging Hub for this site. This would consist of either x6 150 kW Ultrafast units (= 12 charging bays) or possibly even x6 300 kW Ultrafast units (= 12 charging bays). The model would be dependant entirely on the new power connection which needs to be secured by Western Power for the site (now National Grid).

If the new connection is achievable, Ultra-Fast Charging like the above mentioned could deliver speeds of 20-80% charge in 15 minutes (subject to vehicle specification and battery state). This car park has the vital requirements and criteria needed for a Hub location to meet the investment from BP Pulse, as it is adjacent to leisure facilities, retail and is just half a mile away from the A5 bypass. The Council still has 9 years on the Host contract term remaining (7 year initial + 3 year renewal) and the site licence is already agreed . Therefore, they are more favourable in securing a great investment for Tamworth which would be deemed as a superior offer.



Bolebridge Car Park

Again, the intention was to install two “F7” models of fast charging at this site. Following the additional surveys Bolebridge Car Park no longer meets their investment criteria due to the substantial proposed investment on the Riverdrive Car Park site.

Next Steps

BP Pulse need to get this investment proposal approved. The Commercial Development Manager is confident that Riverdrive is a good location for the Ultra-Fast Hub installation. An updated turnkey quote is required from their sub-contractor and financial approval.

Options Considered

Communications Plan –

No other options were considered.

Staffordshire EV Strategy -

In developing this Strategy, the option of allowing the emerging EV charging industry to take the lead was considered. However, this is likely to lead to an ineffective EV charge point network across the county focussed on commercially viable locations only. This would likely result in a reduction in people choosing to switch to EV and the diminished opportunity to benefit from reduced air and noise pollution. The Strategy provides the foundation to co-ordinate delivery of EV infrastructure across the county.

The UK government has made it clear that local authorities have a significant role to play in delivering EV charge points due to their understanding of the transport needs of their local population, their responsibility for planning policy, ownership of car parks, and management of the public highway.

Resource Implications

Most of the EV funding opportunities are aligned with transport authorities which will reside with the upper tier authority. SCC with their new Strategy, and the subject of this report, will bid on behalf of the entire County. They are now keen to see all districts/boroughs to have their own strategies in place so that when the money becomes available, we have a strategy that we can confidently deliver.

Communications Plan – no financial resource required. The cost of delivering the Plan has been supported by underspend relating to the SSB officer post for the current financial year.

Minimal resource will be required for the roadshow event to be held in the castle grounds. An event management company will be blowing up and deflating the balloon. Borough Council staff will need to be available to talk to residents about ‘small things they can do to be greener’ and answer questions from the general public about climate change and our net zero ambitions.

Staffordshire EV Strategy -

The County Council will utilise the Strategy to bid for funding for example from the Department for Transport (DfT), the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) and explore

commercial partnership opportunities. This funding will support the strategy which identifies the need for EV charges points in Tamworth.

To commission consultants to deliver a Tamworth Borough Council EV Strategy it is proposed that the climate change reserve budget (PM1579) is used. It is anticipated that a bespoke Tamworth strategy should cost in the region of £10K.

Legal/Risk Implications Background

The Staffordshire Sustainability Board is not a formal decision-making body. As such, any significant decisions (determined by financial or service impact) need to be referred back to the Partner Authorities. Where a decision requires approval through the Partner Authorities governance processes, the decision is referred to another Board meeting to allow each Partner Authority to seek said approval.

Equalities Implications

None.

Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

Through failing to adopt the recommendations of this report, the Council will not be able to support residents in reducing their carbon emissions or the transition to electric vehicles.

Background Information

The Staffordshire Leaders Board has committed to work collaboratively across Staffordshire to successfully achieve net carbon zero in line with each local authority's climate change declarations. The purpose of working collaboratively is in recognition that across Staffordshire the influence of individual local authorities will be limited, however jointly, with other Councils and organisations across the public and private sectors, notable impacts will be achievable. A Staffordshire Sustainability Board (SSB) takes the lead on coordinating activity that will enable, influence and facilitate economic sectors across Staffordshire to start the journey to Net Zero. An officers group comprising senior officers from each Staffordshire authority support the Board.

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List of Background Papers

Appendices

1: Communications Plan

2: Staffordshire County Council Public Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy