

**HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT
 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
 18 JANUARY 2016**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR M BROOKES (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors A G Hagues (Vice-Chairman), M G Allan, D Brailsford, K J Clarke, R L Foulkes, N M Murray, Mrs A M Newton, A H Turner MBE JP, R G Fairman and A Bridges

Councillors: R G Davies and S F Kinch attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Mike Coates (Highways Assessment and Laboratory Manager), David Davies (Principal Maintenance Engineer), Lee Rowley (Senior Project Leader - Major Schemes), Paul Rusted (Infrastructure Commissioner), Steve Willis (Chief Operating Officer, Development Services), Steve Blagg (Democratic Services Officer), Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer) and Rachel Wilson (Democratic Services Officer)

61 APOLOGIES/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

The Chief Executive reported that under the Local Government (Committee and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, he had appointed Councillors A Bridges and R G Fairman to the Committee, in place of Councillors J R Marriott and R J Hunter-Clarke, for this meeting only

62 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were made by Members at this stage of the meeting.

63 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 14 DECEMBER 2015

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee held on 14 December 2015, be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

64 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR FOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND IT AND THE CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

There were no announcements.

65 MAJOR SCHEMES UPDATE

The Committee received a verbal update on the progress of Major Schemes as follows:-

1. Lincoln Eastern Bypass –outcome of Public Inquiry expected at the end of February 2016. Network Rail had appointed BAM Nuttall on a design and build contract to deliver Spalding Line overbridge (road under railway) on the Council's behalf. The draft design had been prepared and costed and authority was being sought from Executive Councillor on 20 January 2016 to enter into contract with Network Rail to allow them to award a construction contract. Pre-qualification questionnaire for the main scheme tender had been issued in October 2015, and a selection of tender list of four contractors had been completed in December 2015. Tenders would not be issued until the Orders had been confirmed.
2. Lincoln East West Link – scheme was currently on programme for completion in August 2016 although delays had been incurred on the Tentercroft Street Bridge due to the supply of poor quality concrete, some of which had been replaced. The bridge beams had now been craned into place. Work had started on the Heritage Building and the foundations had been completed.
3. High Street Footbridge – on schedule and due for completion in May 2016.
4. Brayford Wharf East Footbridge – Network Rail was continuing to seek an alternative solution at this location that would match the funding envelope available. A revised, value engineered, scheme was presented to their Funding Board in December 2015 for consideration. To date, the outcome of this meeting was not known.
5. Grantham Southern Relief Road – on schedule and due for completion in June 2016. Phase 2 near the A1 had to be redesigned but good progress was being made. The Southern Quadrant Relief Road was on schedule and a lot of work had taken place with Network Rail.
6. A17/A151 – Peppermint Junction, Holbeach - currently consulting on planning permission for Phase 1 consisting of a roundabout at A17/A151 junction and a roundabout on the A151. An autumn 2016 start was expected but was dependent on the completion of the Side Road Orders.

Following comments made by the Committee, officers stated the issue of pedestrians spilling onto the road in the vicinity of the High Street level crossing was a safety consideration for Network Rail but in the long term the East West Link would alleviate this problem; discussions involving the Council and City Councils and Network were still on-going in connection with the Brayford Wharf East Footbridge in particular the importance Network Rail attached to the footbridge in its overall investment strategy and the Council did not have any input into road closures by Network Rail and it was noted that the Council was working with Network Rail to put a solution in place in this area.

66 WINTER MAINTENANCE UPDATE

The Committee was provided with an update in relation to winter maintenance activity. It was reported that the medium and long term forecasts had progressed as expected, and previous records had been broken as up until the end of 2015, the gritters had only been out three times in December. It had been an extremely mild start to the winter, and so far in 2016, gritters had been out 9 times, and a prolonged colder winter for February and March was expected.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information provided in the update, and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

1. Credit was due to David Davies and his team as what they had predicted had happened almost exactly as predicted;
2. Some work had been carried out into the benefits of using the intelligent forecasting, and it was thought that savings of approximately 20% could be made on marginal nights. However, it was noted that this could be slightly skewed due to the mild start to the winter;
3. Targeted treatments were taking place, as there could be significant differences between the weather conditions in different parts of the county;
4. It was noted that the authority had had some success in recruiting drivers. Members were advised that these drivers had been recruited by the contractors, and it was hoped that they would be retained for future years. It was expected that the same system would be used again in the future to recruit more drivers if required;

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

67 LINCOLN EASTERN BY-PASS - AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO
CONTRACT WITH NETWORK RAIL

Consideration was given to a report which outlined a proposal, in relation to the Lincoln Eastern Bypass, to enter into a contract with Network Rail for the construction of a railway bridge to allow the road to pass under the Lincoln to Spalding Railway Line. This bridge would be delivered by Network Rail on behalf of the County Council and as such as closure of the railway had been booked for February 2017.

To allow Network Rail to proceed, a legal document known as an Implementation Agreement was required to be signed by both the County Council and Network Rail. This would allow Network Rail to seek authority through their funding processes to proceed with awarding a construction contract to their preferred bidder.

It was noted that this report was also due to be considered by the Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT on 20 January 2016.

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Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

1. A three day closure of the railway line would be required, and it was noted that both freight and passenger trains used this route. It was also the diversion route for the East Coast Mainline;
2. The County Council had been in discussion with Network Rail over a number of months, and there was a 'not to be exceeded' cost of £12m for the scheme;
3. An advantage to this aspect of the scheme being delivered by Network Rail was that it could be delivered quicker as they would be able to start work sooner;
4. The Implementation Agreement would give Network Rail the authority to spend the Council's money. It was hoped that before any construction contract was awarded that the Council would have received confirmation of the orders;
5. The authority would lose around £500,000 if this scheme did not proceed;
6. Members were assured that Network Rail had procurement processes in place to ensure that value for money was obtained. It was noted that four separate contractors had been through the procurement process for the design and build contract;
7. It was confirmed that the Sustrans route would be maintained;
8. Discussions were ongoing in relation to the amount of compensation which would need to be paid;
9. It was clarified that the payment to the Network Rail Fee Fund was a payment that was required for every scheme, and all payments went into a central pot. The County Council would be able to claim from this pot in the event of any delays to the scheme, and any costs incurred by these delays;
10. It was noted that Network Rail had different powers to the Highway Authority, and that whilst the County Council would need to pay if the railway was disrupted for highway work, the same did not apply to disruptions to the highways for railway work.

RESOLVED

That the Committee support the recommendations to the Executive Councillor set out in the report.

68 BUDGET PROPOSALS 2016/17

Consideration was given to a report which described the budget proposals arising from the Local Government Finance Settlement issued on 17 December 2015 and its implications for the Highways and Transport services. The budget proposals were now open to consultation and members of the Committee had the opportunity to scrutinise them and make comments prior to the Executive making its final budget proposals on 2 February 2016.

Members received a presentation which provided further information in relation to the following areas:

- Proposed Revenue Budget for 2016/17
- Budget Proposals 2016/17

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- Public Transport (Current Budget = £4.43m)
- Budget proposals for 2016/17 for Sustaining and developing Prosperity through Infrastructure – Highways and Transport
- Public Transport
- Community Transport (Current Budget = £65k)
- BSOG (Bus Services Operators Grant) (Current Grant = £467k)
- Concessionary Fares (Current Budget = £7.21m)
- Accessibility and Smarter Choices (Current Budget = £912k Net inc . staffing)
- Concessionary fares
- Accessibility & Smarter Choices (savings = share of £1.28m)
- Transport Policy and Planning (Current Budget £598k inc. staffing)
- PTU Other expenditure (savings = share of £1.28m)
- Transport Policy & Planning (savings = share of £1.28m)
- Alternatives and Options
- PTU Other Expenditure
- Total gross Capital & Revenue Roads Maintenance Expenditure for 2007 to 2019
- Highways Revenue Budget
- Structural Maintenance (Savings = £1.7m)
- Highways Maintenance and Network Management
- Environmental Maintenance (Budget = £3.32m)
- Structural Maintenance (Current Budget = £6.32m)
- Environmental Maintenance (Savings = £1.6m)
- Safety Maintenance (Budget = £9.34m)
- Winter Maintenance (Savings = £0.76m)
- Safety Maintenance (Savings = £2.4m)
- Other Maintenance (Current Budget = £8.95m)
- Winter Maintenance (Budget = £4.87m)
- Other Maintenance (Savings = £1.3m)
- Options
- Assumptions, Prerequisites & Enablers
- Lincolnshire Future Highways 2020
- Lincolnshire 2020: Future Structure
- Future Operating Model benefits
- Conclusions
- Next Steps

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the presentation and report, and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

Transport

1. Concerns were raised regarding the potential loss of school transport, and members were advised that the authority was working with the operators on the school time journeys;

2. In relation to those children attending a school of choice (i.e. not the nearest school), it was the parents responsibility to get them to school;
3. It was reported that staff numbers could be reduced by up to 50% over the coming years. Members were advised that as staff had left they had not been replaced, but also that these reductions had been profiled to take place over the next two years, with an equal number leaving each year;
4. It was the people that used the buses that would feel the effects of these reductions;
5. There were a lot of small bus companies in the county and it was unlikely that they made a lot of profit;
6. It was noted that the fuel rebate which bus companies received was at a set level and did not go up or down with fuel prices;
7. Concerns were raised regarding the proposed stopping of bus stop maintenance, and future access to public transport by people with disabilities. It was noted that some buses in Stamford had fold out ramps, however, there was a need for caution as these ramps were made for use with kerbs and not directly onto the road, otherwise the gradient would be too steep;
8. It was also noted that 'kneeling buses' took additional time to go down and come back up again, and the bus companies had embraced the raised kerbs for bus stops;
9. Concerns were raised regarding the additional burden of £750k which was being placed on Children's Services for school transport provision. It was noted that a significant piece of work was being carried out around SEN transport, and it was hoped that this would bring some savings;
10. Concerns were raised regarding the proposed reduction of safety maintenance;
11. In relation to community transport, it was planned to introduce a 'one stop shop' for schemes such as the hospital car scheme, as there were some drivers who were willing to do more, and combine some of the client groups in the same transport. However, at the moment, these schemes were constrained by law;
12. There were concerns that this could be beginning of the end for voluntary car schemes if some parishes would pay towards this through their precept and others did not. Officers would be working to rectify this issue;
13. It was noted that 'Sustaining and Developing Prosperity through Infrastructure' related to capital spend, and that impacts in Lincolnshire could be substantial. There was a job creation and growth agenda, and the Total Transport project could help with that. LCC was starting to make an impact nationally with schemes such as this;
14. In relation to sustainable development, it was a commented that a few more houses in a village could create a 'tipping point' so it could get those additional services, such as more shops, increased school capacity, bus routes etc.;
15. Services such as public transport were demand responsive;
16. It was queried what influence the county council had on the planning authority to ensure that sustainable development took place;
17. The concessionary fares scheme was a national scheme that gave bus pass holders free off peak travel anywhere in the country. Local authorities had discretionary powers to add to this;
18. Members were advised that the scheme providing concessionary fares before 9.30am for the buses cost the council approximately £400,000. It was clarified that this scheme allowed those people with a bus pass to use the bus network within Lincolnshire for free prior to 9.30am. It was noted that this scheme was unique to

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Lincolnshire, and could only be used by Lincolnshire residents within Lincolnshire. It was funded by the County Council;

19. Members commented that they would not like to see the concessionary fares disappear;

20. The potential reduction of the BSOG was a concern to members;

21. It was queried whether there were any legal implications in relation to DDA requirements for bus stops. It was acknowledged that the county would not have been able to achieve full DDA compliance, but it had been able to argue that it had a programme of works in place and was taking reasonable measures. It was possible that there could be legal challenge that particular bus stops were not accessible;

22. It was commented that the pre-9.30am element of concessionary fares was quite convenient, but there was a need to make choices based on what money was available, and there was a need to produce a balanced budget;

23. It was commented that all the services highlighted in the presentation gave value to the people that used them, and the need for them to be reduced was challenged;

24. It was confirmed that even if the council had not taken the council tax freeze grant the same level of cuts would still have been necessary;

Highways

1. It was accepted that money needed to be saved, but it was requested that the Executive reconsidered the proposal to reduce the gritting route from 33% to 25%, as there were plans in place which could save that money. If the smart forecasting could save 20% then this could make the savings that the area needed;

2. It was queried whether the adverse weather fund could be used to keep the gritted network at 33%;

3. It was a concern that the gritting routes had been maintained for 10 years and that the public had got used to particular roads being gritted, and members were worried about what would happen in the future if some roads stopped being gritted. It was commented that members would like to see what could be done to preserve the current gritting routes;

4. It was acknowledged that more work needed to be done around the winter maintenance network, and maintenance of the gritting fleet. This would need to be looked at in terms of leases and route modelling. This was the next piece of work to be carried out;

4. It was noted that the adverse weather reserve was about £1m, but it could only be used once;

5. It was felt that gritting was a key area to retain;

6. It was queried whether LCC would be liable if someone had an accident on a road which had not been gritted, but had previously been gritted. Members were advised that if the winter maintenance network was reduced, there would need to be a review of the policy, which would lay down criteria for which routes were gritted. If the Council implemented a new policy and went through the due process for implementation, then the Council would not be liable;

7. The Council had a duty to keep the highway clear of ice and snow;

8. In terms of savings money by reducing grass cutting, it was queried whether it would be possible to remove the grass entirely and replace it with gravel instead. It was noted that this would involve a capital cost, but there would also be a

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maintenance cost as well. Officers were not aware of any other authorities that had done this;

9. The main reason that the grass was cut was for safety reasons, and the biggest issue was visibility at junctions and bends;

10. There were concerns regarding reductions to the AMT teams;

11. It was suggested whether things such as grass cutting could be taken over by parish councils, as this had been very successful in some parishes;

12. It was very important that members knew what was going on in their area and that there should be consultation with local members;

13. A report on the Future Operating Model would be brought to a future meeting of this Committee;

14. It was still expected that there would be engagement with the public and members, but there would be less one to one contact, and more quality information available on the website;

15. Contact with members by highways officers would be maintained;

16. It was reported that some highways officers were spending up to 30% of their time dealing with queries from members of the public, which means that they were spending less time maintaining the roads;

17. It was commented that the information on the website needed to be more comprehensive and accessible;

18. There was a need for people to have confidence that they would be able to find the information they needed online for this to be successful;

19. There were 20 AMT teams which were funded through the revenue budget, some were also funded through the capital budget;

20. It was noted that the AMT teams had been very good at responding, however, this was not the most efficient way of managing a service, and there it was planned to move towards a more preventative approach to maintenance;

21. Work would still get done, but maybe not as timely as previously;

(Note: the meeting was adjourned at 12.30pm due to a fire alarm. The meeting resumed at 12.45pm)

22. It was hoped that efficiency savings of £1.2m could be achieved through the reduction of street lighting. Members were advised that it would be a combination approach including switching some lights off completely, dimming, and part night lighting. Officers would also be looking into a LED programme, as this would require a capital investment, but would pay back over 3 – 4 years. Savings in the order of £1.7m per year were expected.

RESOLVED

1. That the report and presentation regarding the Revenue and capital Budget Proposals for 2016/17 be noted.

2. That the comments made be noted, in particular that the Executive note the Committee's concerns regarding the proposal to reduce the gritting network from 33% to 25% and re-examine if there was a way to maintain this level of service going forward.

69 HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK
PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report which enabled the Committee to consider and comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year.

During discussion of the work programme, the following was noted:

1. The reports on the Grantham Transport Strategy and 'Enhancing our Users' experience' would be moved to the meeting on 7 March 2016;
2. That reports on Total Transport Update and CCTV Pilot Scheme – Parking enforcement outside schools be added to the agenda for the meeting on 18 April 2016;
3. The next meeting was scheduled to take place on Monday, 7 March 2016.

RESOLVED

That the changes highlighted be noted.

The meeting closed at 12.50 pm