

**HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT
 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
 28 JULY 2017**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR M BROOKES (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors C J T H Brewis (Vice-Chairman), Mrs W Bowkett, Mrs J Brockway, Mrs K Cook, M A Griggs, R Grocock, R A Renshaw, S P Roe and E W Strengiel

Councillors: R G Davies and Mrs C L Perraton-Williams attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Andy Gutherson (County Commissioner for Economy and Place), Paul Rusted (Infrastructure Commissioner), Satish Shah (Network Manager South), Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer) and Rachel Wilson (Democratic Services Officer)

9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A N Stokes.

10 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest at this point in the meeting.

11 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 16 JUNE 2017

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2017 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

12 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

The Chairman announced that at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held the previous day, it had been agreed that a scrutiny review on the impact of the new Street Lighting Policy would be undertaken. The review would start in September 2017 and consider the impact on the environment and wildlife, crime rates, fears about safety and crime, social life, emergency services and health and public health services. Further information on the review would be sent out to all councillors in the coming weeks.

The Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT advised that he was exploring ways of communicating more effectively with members regarding forward

plans for major schemes, particularly those that were 4-5 years away from commencing. Members agreed it would be useful to have more long term information about schemes.

It was commented that there seemed to be a big improvement with the new reporting system as members were kept updated of progress.

13 HIGHWAYS 2020 UPDATE REPORT (JULY 2017)

Consideration was given to a report which provided the Committee with an update on the work being carried out to replace the Lincolnshire Highways Alliance. The three contract relationships which formed the Alliance were due to reach their full term on 31 March 2020.

Members were updated on the work undertaken to date in relation to market engagement; local authority visits; highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme Toolkit; and councillor options workshop. The work planned for the next period was also summarised and included further market engagement; visits to other highway authorities and further option appraisal work.

The Committee was 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:

- It was commented that this work was still in the relatively early stages from this committee's point of view.
- It was clarified that the member engagement visits would be carried out by the same members who made up the options workshop as part of the work of that group.
- It was queried whether it would be possible for members to have some training to help in the understanding of contracts. It was thought it would be positive if councillors could show that they had developed their understanding of the process which would enable councillors to carry out better scrutiny. This suggestion was supported by the Committee and officers agreed to look into this request in more detail.
- It was suggested that there were two levels in relation to the request for training, the first being a need for a general understanding of what contract negotiation was about, which could be of benefit to all councillors and the second being about the specifics of what would help this committee understand the work going on in relation to the Highways Alliance.
- It was felt that this Committee needed to understand the intricacies of this process.

RESOLVED

1. That the work done to date, and the work proposed for the following period be noted.
2. That a training session be arranged for members of the Committee in relation to the contract negotiation process.

14 PERFORMANCE REPORT, QUARTER 4 (1 JANUARY TO 31 MARCH 2017)

Consideration was given to a report which set out the performance of the highways service including the Lincolnshire Highways Alliance, Major Highways Schemes Update and the Customer Satisfaction Information (including service specific complaints and compliments).

It was reported that the National Highways and Transport Survey and Highways Condition Information was measured and reported annually and would be included in a future report.

There were currently five major schemes which were reported through the Council Business Plan which were as follows – Lincoln Eastern Bypass; Grantham Southern Relief Road; Lincoln East West Link (now completed); Spalding Western Relief Road; and Progress with North Hykeham Relief Road.

The Committee was guided through the progress update on the major highways schemes, the customer satisfaction information and the Lincolnshire Highways Alliance Performance Report for Year 7, Quarter 4. 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:

- Concerns were raised regarding the proposed A17 carriageway widening following similar works which had been carried out in previous years. However, members were advised that the design manual which was used had changed substantially, and there was also a three stage safety audit process. The authority would be doing everything possible to ensure that the old problems of a 2 +1 carriageway were not revisited.
- One member commented that they were very encouraged by the North Hykeham Relief Road, but raised concerns about congestion between Skellingthorpe Road roundabout and Doddington Road roundabout and queried whether there was a need for this to be dual carriageway rather than single.
- Members were reminded that this was an update on those projects which had already been through the formal planning process and work was underway.
- It was commented that the major schemes update was a very useful report as one member had been asked about various schemes at parish council meetings.
- In relation to conflicting works which had been scheduled by Highways England, it was queried whether this was a regular occurrence and what could be done to mitigate it. Members were advised that highways England was currently going through some major changes and were trying to bring everything back in house.
- One councillor expressed an interest in speaking to Dynniq (Traffic Signals Term Contract) as they had met their carbon footprint per employee target, with an improvement of almost 30% on the 2015 figure. The Executive

Councillor indicated that he could put the councillor in touch with a contact at the company.

- There was a growing worry about weeds coming up and breaking up the sides of roads as this would cost more to repair in the future than regular weed spraying. Members were advised that the authority was trying to use better products, but there was a limit on which products it was able to use.
- Members were pleased to see that projects in Skegness were included in the report and it was positive that £4m was being invested on the east coast.
- Officers informed members that they would find out more detail regarding the A52 for the Beacon medical practice bus stops.
- Members were informed that South Holland District Council had recently voted to accept £224,000 from government with £100,000 match funding which would be used to support the development of technical and detailed design for the Spalding Western Relief Road.
- In relation to the Highways Alliance, performance was still good. It was noted that the Alliance was maintaining a good performance level for the final quarter of year 7.
- It was noted that the Alliance had been assessed at band 3 for 21 of the 22 areas for this year's Department for Transport Self-Assessment, and it was queried which was the area where the Alliance was not Band 3. Members were advised that this related to standard which had been achieved for asset management, it was noted that all the work required for it was being done, but there was a lot of process work involved in applying for the standard which took up a lot of officers time. Members were reassured that the Alliance was already performing well in this area.
- It was acknowledged that overall the Alliance was performing well, but concerns were raised regarding the increase in customer complaints for this quarter, and it was queried whether the authority was communicating enough with the public.
- It was queried whether officers could include a guide to the acronyms used in the performance reports as some of the new councillors were finding them difficult to understand. Officers agreed to take this on board and try to resolve it in the future.
- It was queried whether the authority should be doing more to promote positive things it had done in relation to highways. Members were advised that usually highways organisations received complaints regarding things they weren't doing. However, it was suggested that part of a members' role was to promote things such as highways schemes to parish councils. It was felt there was a need to find the right balance of promoting schemes whilst not appearing to deflect attention from things the public was concerned about (e.g. repairing potholes).

RESOLVED

That the details of performance contained in the report be noted.

The Committee received a report which updated members on the review of measures being undertaken to improve the highways and transport service users' experience.

It was reported that following the latest County Council Elections, all councillors were briefed on the highways service on 24 and 25 May 2017. Following these sessions, all presentation slides, staffing structures and a record of the discussion were sent to all councillors. Members were advised that the current communications strategy had been in place since summer 2015. It was continually reviewed to ensure that all stakeholders were being provided with accurate, up-to-date information in a timely fashion using the most effective and efficient methods. Additionally, it was noted that each of the major projects had its own individual communication plan.

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

- It was commented that the one to ones for councillors with highways officers were definitely worth taking up. Members reported that when they attended parish council meetings and had issues raised with them, they were then able to meet with the highways officer and discuss all the issues at the same time. It was noted that sometimes, only a phone call would be required. It was reported that there had been a definite improvement since the last council.
- Member input was very important, as it was their role in the community to raise these issues.
- It was commented that it might be useful if the automatic response received when reporting a fault online could include some text on what the issue was. Members were advised that more work was being carried out on this system and a revised version of LAGAN would be launched in a couple of months. Members should see a huge improvement in this.
- It was noted that there had been some issues uploading images to the online reporting system as they had been too big for the system to accept, and so the issue had to be reported to the highways CSC instead.
- It was reported that some problems had been experienced trying to reschedule meetings with highways officers.
- Officers reported that they routinely met with the Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT and the Communications Team. It was also reported that there would be a member engagement session in November for each of the 4 local highway areas. It was suggested that these sessions should be arranged for the end of October before the November meeting of the Committee.
- It was commented that of the 70 councillors, there were around 30 who had not made it to a Highways induction session, which it was felt was disappointing, and highways was a very important area for members as a lot of queries would relate to this service.
- Members commented that they had found the sessions to be very useful, and the system needed to be given a chance to settle down.

- It was also commented that the authority often 'got the blame' for the way the statutory undertakers repaired the road or carried out works. Members had a role to publicise how the system worked.
- It was reported that parishes were prepared to get involved with taking on some services that the Council was no longer able to provide, but they needed to be able to set a contract and needed a map to know where they needed to cover.
- It was acknowledged that some parish councils were more pro-active than others, and this would be looked at as part of the commissioning strategy.
- One member commented that they had taken up the opportunity to meet their local highways officer and it had been an excellent meeting, and had mapped out everything that he had wanted the officer to investigate. It was suggested whether it would be possible for officers to provide a rating of 1- 10 on how progress was moving with each query. Officers commented that this was a good suggestion and would be looked into.
- It was confirmed that councillors who covered unparished areas worked with local community groups. It was suggested that as there was a good way of working with parishes, there was a need to find a way to roll this out to local community groups/residents groups etc. in non-parished areas.
- One member commented that they had found the meetings with highways officers very good, and also found it particularly useful to e-mail all the queries to the officer beforehand. It was also commented that this meeting had provided an opportunity to understand the way the highways department worked.
- In relation to the online reporting system, it was felt that some members had been reluctant to use it, as the authority moved from a familiar system to a new system. One member was encouraging residents to use either the website or CSC to report issues and if they did not get a response to contact her then.
- It was commented that residents reporting through the CSC made both the officers and the member of the public accountable as queries could be tracked once they had been reported.
- Members were advised that the Confirm reports would be available again from 1 September 2017 as work was being undertaken to compile the new boundaries and new councillor details.
- It was commented that new members could benefit from having a link to the Police for highways issues, and members were advised that in the first instance, it was always best to go through the highways manager. It was also suggested it could be helpful for members to find out who their community beat manager was.
- It was queried whether there would be an opportunity for this committee to learn more about the Road Safety Partnership, however, members were advised that the work of the Road Safety Partnership was reported to the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee, but it may be possible to do something jointly. It was agreed that the end of October member engagement sessions would include a presentation from the Road Safety Partnership.

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- It was commented that with issues like grass cutting there needed to be a way of engaging with parishes and the public.
- It was important for councillors to be involved with highways works and communications, as well as ensuring that they had up to date contact details.
- It was requested that the Committee received six monthly updates on Highways Communications.
- Officers were thanked for their work as members agreed that this area had improved dramatically in recent months.

RESOLVED

1. That the comments made by the committee in relation to the review be noted.
2. That the Committee receive updates on updates on highways communication every six months.

16 HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report which provided members with an opportunity to consider and comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year to ensure that scrutiny activity was focused where it could be of greatest benefit.

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

- That an update on the Highways Communication Strategy come back to the Committee in six months' time.
- A report on Well Managed Highways Code of Practice would be brought to the meeting in September.
- Members were reminded that following the next meeting in September, a visit to Lincs Lab had been arranged for members, and that following the meeting in December, there would be a visit to the Traffic Signals Team.
- In relation to the member liaison meeting with local highways managers which was planned to take place in November, it was queried whether it would be better for this to be held before the November meeting of this Committee. Officers agreed to look into finding a date at the end of October instead.
- It was noted that there would be some potential decisions coming forward for some schemes which would be scheduled in to a future work programme.

RESOLVED

1. That the work programme as set out in Appendix A of the report be noted.
2. That the additional scrutiny activity noted above be included in the work programme for future meetings.

The meeting closed at 12.05 pm