

**HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT
 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
 22 JANUARY 2018**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR M BROOKES (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors C J T H Brewis (Vice-Chairman), Mrs J Brockway, R Grocock, Mrs W Bowkett, S P Roe, A N Stokes, E W Strengiel and Mrs P Cooper

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

Officers in attendance:-

Michelle Grady (Head of Finance (Communities)), Andy Gutherson (County Commissioner for Economy and Place), David Hickman (Growth & Environment Commissioner), Paul Little (Network Manager North), Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer) and Rachel Wilson (Democratic Services Officer)

46 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M A Griggs.

The Chief Executive reported that having received a notice under Regulation 13 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, he had appointed Councillor Mrs P Cooper as a replacement member of the Committee in place of Councillor M A Griggs for this meeting only.

47 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

In relation to agenda item 8 – Grantham Southern Relief Road – Land Acquisition, Orders and Contracts, Councillors B Adams and A N Stokes wished it be noted that they were also members of South Kesteven District Council.

48 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2017

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2017 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

49 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR AND LEAD OFFICERS

The Chairman reminded members that there was a Well Managed Highways Infrastructure Code of Practice – Councillor Sounding Board taking place that

afternoon at 2.00pm. It was noted that the final proposals would be coming to this Committee for scrutiny at the appropriate time.

50 COUNCIL BUDGET 2018/19

Consideration was given to a report which described the budget proposals for the next two financial years based on the four year funding deal announced by Government as part of the 2018/19 Local Government Finance Settlement. This report specifically focused the budget implications for the Highways and Transport activities within the commissioning strategy 'Sustaining and Developing Prosperity through Infrastructure'.

The report was introduced by Michelle Grady, Head of Finance (Communities), who, in guiding members through the report, highlighted the following points:

- Lincolnshire had been successful in its bid to be part of the Business Rates pilot for 2018/19. This would mean that Lincolnshire would keep 100% of any growth in business rates, as part of the move towards localisation.
- There had been an increase in the council tax limit before a referendum was required. It was noted that was currently a proposal to increase by 1.95% alongside the adult social care precept of 2%. The Government had increased the referendum limit by 1%. This would give the authority the option to increase council tax by 2.95% (not including the Adult Social Care precept).
- In terms of service changes, it was noted that 1% pay inflation increase had been built in to all budgets. Members were advised that there had been a recent offer of 2% made to staff but this had not yet been accepted. If it is, the service budgets would need to be updated to reflect this change.
- In terms of the bus subsidy, there were no further savings being proposed for this year by the Executive.
- One of the main changes would be the savings from the winter maintenance vehicles, as the lease on the gritters was coming to an end, and the cheaper option was to purchase new ones. This would be funded through the capital budget, and would therefore create savings in the revenue budget.
- In relation to the revenue programme, it was noted that proposals which had put forward by this Committee around weed control had been discussed with the leader, and had been recognised as a pressure and would be funded through the contingency budget. It would be picked up as an ongoing cost pressure in the next round of budget setting.
- In the capital programme the majority of funding was allocated to major road schemes. Grants which had been received from DfT had also been included.

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:

- In relation to the award of £2.000m for the A46 Lincoln Road, Welton Scheme, it was clarified that the total cost of the scheme was £4.000m, but the grant was £2.000m.
- It was reported that the government had recently launched a campaign on fairer funding.

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- In relation, to the recent collapse of Carillion, who had been awarded the contract for the Lincoln Eastern Bypass, it was queried whether if the remainder of the contract had to be re-tendered, was it expected that the government would make up any shortfall in terms of additional costs. Members were advised that it was too early to comment on that level of detail in a public meeting. There were processes in place which the Council needed to follow.
- It was clarified that PTE referred to the Passenger Transport Executive. The report referred to strong growth in passenger numbers and it was queried whether the committee could have sight of that evidence.
- Members were advised that the need to look at the public transport agenda at a future meeting of the committee had previously been discussed.
- There would be new franchises for East Midlands Trains going forward. the County Council had been asked to pump prime the improved Lincoln to Nottingham train service, but from 2018 onwards the additional trains were part of the time tabled service.
- In relation to the option to raise council tax by a further 1%, it was commented that this was something the Council should consider, particularly as there were a number of additional cost pressures.
- In relation to the pay increase for staff, all budgets had made an allocation to cover this 1%. There may be a need to use the volatility reserves, if the 2% is accepted.
- The budget as presented, would need to be balanced by the volatility reserves for the next two financial years.
- One member commented that they had always opposed council tax freezes, as it often meant a big rise when the freeze ended.
- In relation to the Fairer Funding campaign, the authority had managed to provide a lot of evidence and statistics showing that Lincolnshire was not funded as well as it could be.
- In terms of Adult Social Care, there was a separate levy of 2% for three years. It was also expected that there would be changes around the better care fund and that a paper would be released by government.
- There was further support for an increase in council tax by an extra 1%. It was not considered to be a large amount of money and was likely to mean an increase of between £12 and £28 per year per household. This additional funding could then be built into the budgets.

RESOLVED

That the comments made in relation to the budget proposals be noted and reported to the Executive.

51 ROUNABOUT SPONSORSHIP

Consideration was given to a report which updated members on the current policy arrangements in relation to the sponsorship of roundabouts within the public highway in Lincolnshire.

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

- The current policy had been in place for 20 years, but was reviewed in 2016.
- It was highlighted that one issue which needed to be taken into consideration was the public liability insurance of £5 million as it was thought it needed to be higher. Officers agreed to look into this and whether the figure needed to be increased.
- It was thought that this could be very beautiful and improve the perception of the area that someone was travelling into.
- There was a concern that when these things were vandalised there was an expectation that the Council would repair it.
- It was commented that it was not thought that increasing the value of public liability insurance required would add much to the insurance premium.
- One member commented that they were in favour of planting and advertising on roundabouts, as those with no sponsorship which were just block or brick paved tended to accumulate a lot of weeds, which was one of the issues that generated the most complaints from residents.
- It was commented that sponsorship was becoming more and more difficult to find for roundabouts in North Hykeham.
- It was discussed whether a review panel should be set up to look at this subject in more detail, as there were a number of issues to consider.
- It was queried whether the Policy actually encouraged businesses to sponsor roundabouts and how many enquiries had been received. Members were advised that the number of enquiries was quite small. Work was on going with district councils, and it was noted that East Lindsey had tried to take the lead for a county wide scheme. however, the trial had been terminated as its own planning committee did not give planning permission, as planning permission was required for the placement of signs on roundabouts.
- It was highlighted that this was a very complex, particularly in relation to planning, as there would be a need for agreement between planning committees of all seven districts of how this would be managed.
- It was queried whether members of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee should be involved as there was an economic and commercial aspect.
- Benefits of holding a working group could be seen due to the cross cutting themes of the subject matter. But it was queried what the current appetite amongst district councils was and whether the county council wanted to stimulate activity.
- It was queried whether sponsoring verges could also be an option, as they would be easier to access and safer to maintain. It was suggested that verges on the lead up to villages could be sponsored.
- It was suggested that the Leader should speak with the leaders of the district councils to come up with an approach to sponsorship on roundabouts as each district would have different views about it. However, members were advised that this would be work which would be done as part of a scrutiny review.

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- It also needed to be examined whether this was something the council wanted to encourage and the policy would need to reflect that. However, it was argued that this would only be determined from examining the evidence base.

RESOLVED

That the Scrutiny Committee unanimously recommended support should be sought from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board for a Scrutiny Review Panel to be established to examine this topic in more detail.

52 PRIORITIES FOR NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE - RESPONSE TO NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE ASSESSMENT

It was reported that the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) was a body independent of Government, responsible for carrying out an overall assessment of the UK's policy on economic infrastructure of national importance once per parliament. This took the form of a National Infrastructure Assessment, which would underpin national policy towards economic infrastructure investment for the next thirty years.

It was noted that LCC members had contributed throughout the drafting of LCC's response to the draft National Infrastructure Assessment, although it was highlighted that the deadline for responses had not fitted in particularly well with the committee cycle. Members were advised that the response was submitted to the NIC by the 12 January 2018 deadline.

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:

- It was commented that this was an extremely important document.
- The Committee would be developing some of themes highlighted in the document going forward.
- It was highlighted that the timing of the release of the consultation had not fitted in with the Committee dates, but the electronic link to the consultation document had been circulated.
- Members were urged to highlight any areas that they would like the council to continue pushing on a national level
- It was commented that this was a very clever document as it had been answered in such a way that the recipients would have to think about the responses. It would give the opportunity to open a lot of discussions at this Committee and it was suggested it could be used as an agenda planning tool for the Committee.
- In paragraph 28 of the response, reference was made to the establishment of a formal commission, and it was queried what the role of this commission would be, and whether it would be a decision making body or somewhere for an exchange of information. Officers advised they would get a more detailed to the answer after this meeting, as there was not necessarily a formal proposal of what this should look like at the moment.

- It was queried whether the movement of goods by rail had been included as part of the review. It was acknowledged that there was very little about rail in the document, the focus was very much about city regions and not about moving between them and the structure of the questions asked did not allow for the introduction of this topic.
- It was noted that it was not too late to introduce the subject of rail and that additional information could be submitted. It was suggested that this should be included more from the commercial aspect as it was thought it must be one of the most cost effective and environmentally friendly ways to move goods around the country.
- It was suggested that there was a need for members to have more knowledge of economics, such as what was the cost of a mile of motorway, dual carriageway etc. as this would give more understanding of the value and worth of each project.
- The importance of the electrification of the joint line was emphasised
- It was commented that the last thing which was needed was more rail freight through Lincoln.
- It was commented that one area where Lincolnshire could get left behind was infrastructure for electric vehicles, and it was queried whether this was one area which the Committee should monitor.
- It was queried whether there would be regular feedback from the issues raised in the document and it was confirmed that officers would be keeping on top of this. It was considered important that the Council was able to make interventions at the appropriate time ensure that comments were taken account of.
- It was suggested whether there was a need for charging points to be included as a necessity in new developments. It was queried whether there would be funding from central government to help with these initiatives. It was highlighted that the Planning Committee at the City fo Lincoln Council did take into consideration developments with charging points, and it was noted that the new car park did have that capability.
- The most important point to highlight was for the government to not forget about rural areas.
- In relation to electric cars, concerns were raised regarding the impact on the national grid and there would need to be a balance of energy use if there were going to be increasing numbers of electric vehicles around.

RESOLVED

That the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee retain a watching brief on the following areas in advance of the publication of the National Infrastructure Assessment:

- Use of the railways
- Electric vehicles
- Planning policy in Lincolnshire
- Cost benefit analysis taking rurality into consideration.

ORDERS AND CONTRACTS

The Committee received a report and update on the Grantham Southern Relief Road (GSSR) – Land Acquisition, Order and Contracts which was presented to the Executive on 3 January 2018. The recommendations contained in this report were approved at this meeting by the Executive.

Members were guided through the report with focus on the scheme objectives, key milestones in the scheme and the need and justification for the side road orders and the A1 Trunk Road Slip Roads Order.

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 was a very good report and gave a good explanation of how the GSSR scheme was made up.
- It was disappointing that the report had not been able to come to scrutiny prior to the decision being made, but it was understood that this was due to timing issues for when the Orders needed to be posted.
- The Portfolio Holder and the County Commissioner for Economy and Place were congratulated for all their work as it was understood there had been a lot of issues, but this scheme was vitally important for Grantham and South Kesteven.
- It was clarified that phase three was being completed ahead of phase two as there had been a need to reapply for planning permission for phase two.
- Frustration was expressed at how outside agencies could delay progress of a scheme, but the County Council always seemed to be blamed.
- One member commented that this was a good scheme and they supported it, but it was queried whether a public inquiry was expected. Members were advised that there was no reason to expect one as there had been a lot of engagement locally in order to prevent that, however the possibility of an inquiry always remained.

RESOLVED

That the comments made in relation to the report be noted.

54 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 to ensure that scrutiny activity was focused where it could be of greatest benefit.

The following changes were highlighted:

- Re-consideration of the Speed Management in Lincolnshire Scrutiny Review would be moved from the meeting on 12 March to 23 April 2018.

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- East Midlands Rail Line Route Study to be added to the 12 March 2018 meeting
- It was highlighted that the item on Lincolnshire Connected would be going to the 23 April 2018 meeting.
- Items on NIC feedback to be added as appropriate.

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme, subject to the above changes, be agreed.

The meeting closed at 11.42 am