



**HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
29 JANUARY 2024**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR M BROOKES (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors A M Hall (Vice-Chairman), P Ashleigh-Morris, T R Ashton, K J Clarke, A N Stokes and R A Wright

Councillor C Perraton-Williams attended the meeting remotely as an observer

Officers in attendance:-

Clair Dixon (Policy and Strategic Asset Manager), Darrell Redford (Network Resilience Manager), Helen Reek (Support Services Manager), Jonathan Evans (Head of Highways Client and Contractual Management Services), Karan Cassar (Assistant Director Highways), Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Michelle Grady (Assistant Director - Finance), Mick Phoenix (Traffic Manager), Nicole Hilton (Assistant Director - Communities), Richard Fenwick (Head of Highways Asset and Local Management Services) and Thomas Crofts (Democratic Services Officer)

Others in attendance:-

Adam Lakin (Bentley Project Management)

24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Davies, E Strengiel, R Gibson and C Vernon.

25 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest made at this point in proceedings.

26 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2023

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2023 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

27 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

There were no announcements.

28 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PROPOSALS 2024/25

Consideration was given to a report from Michelle Grady, Assistant Director – Finance, which provided the Committee with the opportunity to comment on the budget proposals for the next financial year 2024/25, regarding Highways and Transport. The following matters were highlighted:

- The budget had been set in line with previous indications and had been calculated based on the provisional settlement made by the Government in December 2023.
- The funding positional had largely been expected, however, it was not anticipated that the increase to the national living wage would be as high as it had been.
- Additional funding to local authorities had been announced by the Government, however, these figures had not been fully calculated and did not inform the Council's current budget proposal.
- The Council was currently looking to increase council tax by 4.99%.
- Highways expenses from the previous year were at £6.2million, with £2.5million in savings, which were largely a result of reduced electricity prices and the rollout of LED technology in relation to street lighting.

During consultation of the report, the following comments were raised:

- Members referenced the £12 million cut in the government budget for highways in 2021-22. Officers explained that the Council had decided to reinstate the £12 million through local taxation, but the Department for Transport (DfT) had only announced a partial restoration of around £5 million in the autumn budget.
- Members inquired about the £4 million allocated for flooding issues, questioning its sufficiency. Officers clarified that the £4 million came from underspends in the current year's budget and was moved to the reserve and capital programme by the Executive. They acknowledged that the services were still determining the impact and emphasised that further discussions and reviews would likely take place in subsequent meetings.
- Concerns were raised about the impact of inflation, particularly in contracting and staffing costs, on the proposed budget for Highways and Transport services. Officers explained that the government funding, including the revenue support grant, was designed to cover inflation, and the budget-setting process involved a detailed analysis of individual contracts, taking into account anticipated inflation. Contingency measures, such as a £9 million reserve, to address any unforeseen inflationary pressures during the year were mentioned by Officers, whilst acknowledging the challenge posed by a higher-than-anticipated national living wage increase for the next year's budget. Assurance was given that government grants and a recommendation for a full Council tax amount were intended to cover these additional costs.
- Finally, the escalating costs in the educational transport budget, particularly due to inflation, and inquired about future considerations and contingencies for addressing

this issue were discussed. Officers clarified that there was not a specific contingency designated solely for transport in the future, as the current year had a contingency to ensure accurate budget levels. Budget increases were attributed not only to inflation but also to growing demand and the complexity of requirements. Reassurance was given that ongoing efforts within the service area were focused on understanding and managing these budgetary challenges and Officers expressed confidence that the £6 million contingency set aside for the future should be sufficient to cover potential challenges in the transport area and other general issues.

RESOLVED

1. That that the Committee support the proposals.
2. That comments raised by the Committee be shared with the Executive for consideration ahead of a decision being made on 6 February 2024.

29 NORTH HYKEHAM RELIEF ROAD - LAND ASSEMBLY PREPARATION AND HIGHWAYS MATTERS

Consideration was given to a report from Adam Lakin, Bentley Project Management, which provided the Committee with the opportunity to comment on the North Hykeham Relief Road land assembly preparation and highways matters prior to a decision by the Executive. The following matters were highlighted:

- The report covered preparations for necessary compulsory purchase orders for the construction of the scheme.
- New changes to the proposal included:
 - A left turning facility on the A45 roundabout.
 - Ecological mitigation initiatives following feedback from the consultation.
- It was anticipated that further funding would be available for the project by way of the Network North grant.
- Section 16 notices were to be served to all interested parties and a Section 6 agreement was to be signed with National Highways to enable the Council to make Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) and Side Roads Orders (SROs).
- Further assessment regarding land assembly and rights to land were to be conducted to establish if any other private access requirements needed to be incorporated.

During consultation of the report, the following comments were raised:

- Members queried about the potential additional funding for the Network North project and sought information on its amount. It was clarified that detailed information from the government was yet to be communicated.
- Members raised concerns about the compulsory land purchase process and asked how property prices were determined. It was explained that negotiations were the initial approach, but compulsory purchase orders were being used where necessary, emphasising that residential properties were mostly acquired, and valuations were based on a "no scheme world" principle.

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- Members inquired about the parallel process with planning applications and public awareness. Assurance was given that major landowners were engaged, and extensive public consultation had taken place. It was explained that the planning was a separate and distinct process from the compulsory purchase process and that this report dealt with preparatory matters. A further key decision was required to make a compulsory purchase order and that this decision would not be taken until planning consent had been granted.
- The Section 6 agreement was standard, and the relationship with National Highways was in a positive position.
- A commuted sum was likely payable as part of the agreement for future maintenance of the asset created by the project.

RESOLVED

1. That that the Committee support the report and agree the recommendations to the Executive.
2. That comments raised by the Committee be shared with the Executive for consideration ahead of a decision being made on 6 February 2024.

30 CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT - 2024 CONTRACT AND NOTICE PROCESSING SOLUTION

Consideration was given to a report from Jonathan Evans, Head of Highways Client and Contractual Management Services, which provided the Committee with the opportunity to comment on the Civil Parking Enforcement 2024 contract and notice processing solution prior to a decision by the Executive for Highways, Transport and IT. The following matters were highlighted:

- Approximately 44,000 penalty charges were issued per annum by the service, at a cost of £1.8million.
- Soft market testing had been undertaken to evaluate service capabilities and the use of IT and intelligence systems to improve service efficiency. It was also determined that no one contract type was standard or preferred by the sector.
- The proposals of the new contract were to consider a fully outsourced service, a hybrid service or a fully inhouse service. The recommendation ruled out a fully inhouse service due to associated increased levels of risk.
- In order to improve the service, it was recommended to weight the scoring of the procurement exercise on the following basis: 30% for cost, and 70% for quality assessment.
- The contract was for five years with the option for two two-year extensions.

During consultation of the report, the following comments were raised:

- Regarding Enforcement Flexibility – Members sought assurance that the chosen model for enforcement would allow flexibility for occasional enforcement, especially in

offline locations like schools where regular patrols might not be feasible; mentioned potential use of fixed-point cameras and concerns about the effectiveness of mobile cameras in certain situations; and inquired if schools or communities could purchase or contribute to the cost of cameras to address specific issues. Officers acknowledged the need for flexibility and mentioned the hope for improved coverage using IT and a more mobile workforce. They highlighted the potential use of fixed-point cameras, anticipating future growth in their number and considering them a cost-effective solution compared to running mobile camera cars. Officers were in ongoing discussions with districts and town councils about their potential inclusion in the contract, emphasising flexibility. Finally, concerns about school-related enforcement were addressed and it was noted that cameras could be considered as part of the new contract, providing flexibility on sighting and costs.

- Regarding School Enforcement – Members agreed on the effectiveness of fixed cameras as a deterrent, particularly outside schools and inquired about the possibility of applying for a camera for a specific school and whether it could be implemented now or in the future. Officers explained that implementing cameras presently required renegotiating with the current supplier, likely extending into the new contract, emphasising in the flexibility of the new contract, allowing for addressing priorities of enforcement.
- Regarding Electronic Vehicles and Bikes – Members inquired about the contribution of electronic vehicles and bikes to the efficiency of the service and whether there was any cost to the County Council for introducing their use. Officers clarified that the cost of electronic vehicles and bikes would likely be built into the contract as a provision cost, that would be monitored throughout the contract, and subject to re-evaluation if it became onerous. They also explained the benefits of using electronic vehicles, contributing to a cleaner environment and enabling quicker deployment of staff to address non-compliant parking issues swiftly.

RESOLVED

1. That that the Committee support the report and agree the recommendations to the Executive Councillor for Highways Transportation and IT.
2. That comments raised by the Committee be shared with the Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT for consideration ahead of the decision being made between 8 - 9 February 2024.

31 WINTER SERVICE - INTERIM REPORT

Consideration was given to a report from Clair Dixon, Policy and Strategic Asset Manager, which provided the Committee with an interim report on the Winter Service. The following matters were highlighted:

- 9,650 tons of salt had been used so far.
- 2,000 tons of salt was needed to top up stocks across local depots.
- Restocking was scheduled to take place over the summer months to take salt stocks back above 25,000 tons.

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- 38 gritting runs had been completed so far.
- One redundant gritting run took place due to inaccurate weather forecasting.
- Five new grit bins had been procured.
- Salt bags had been issued to parish councils upon request, as it was assumed that restocking was not necessarily due to mild conditions last winter.
- Thirteen new gritter vehicles had been purchased out right, which would ensure savings over the long term.
- The Council owned company, Transportconnect, had taken over the vehicle maintenance of gritters.
- A route review and consultation were underway, which looked to optimise the service and determine which roads required greater focus.

During consultation of the report, the following comments were raised:

- The service was a full capacity and it was not feasible to add more routes to the network. However, route optimisation was looking into how existing resources could be used more efficiently.
- The usage and physicality of roads were evaluated in determining the need for gritting.
- Optimisation modelling was also looking at how the placement of depot locations could be more effective.
- Members felt that greater communication with parish councils was necessary to ensure that they were properly stocked with salt, and requests did not flood in at busy times.
- Members were keen to engage with the route optimisation process and felt that they should be consulted if modelling suggested that certain routes be removed from the network.

RESOLVED

1. That that the Committee note the report.
2. That comments raised by the Committee be shared with the Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT.

32 HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme, which was presented by Kiara Chatziioannou, Scrutiny Officer. It was reported that a pre-decision scrutiny report on the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Network North Funding was to be added to the April agenda.

RESOLVED

That the work programme presented be agreed

The meeting closed at 11.15 am

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