

**HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT
 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
 16 JUNE 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, A N Stokes and E W Strengiel

Councillors: Mrs C L Perraton-Williams attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Justin Brown (Commissioner for Economic Growth), Paul Rusted (Infrastructure Commissioner), Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer), Steve Willis (Chief Operating Officer, Development Services) and Rachel Wilson (Democratic Services Officer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

There were no apologies for absence.

2 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 27 FEBRUARY 2017

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2017 be received and signed by the Chairman.

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICERS

There were no announcements by the Chairman, Executive Councillors or Chief Operating Officers.

5 HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT 'WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO'

The Committee received a presentation from the Chief Operating officer and the Infrastructure Commissioner which provided an introduction to the commissioning strategies for Highways and Transport. Detailed information was provided on the following areas:

- Organisational Structure
- Commissioning Strategies
- Scrutiny Input
- GLLEP
- The Midlands Engine/Midlands Connect
- Grantham Southern Relief Road
- King 31 Link Road
- Lincoln East West Link
- Lincoln Integrated Transport Strategy
- Lincoln Eastern Bypass
- Peppermint Junction: Holbeach
- Western Growth Corridor Sustainable Urban Extensions
- Highways Future Operating Model Objectives, Milestones and Outcomes,
- Street Lighting
- LCC integrated service approach to Flood Risk & Highways Development Management
- Statutory Consultees in the Planning Process
- Statutory Role
- What we consider as a consultee – as Highway Authority
- What we consider as a consultee – as lead local flood authority
- Transport Services – Issues
- Speed Management Policy – Work of Scrutiny Committee - A Case Study
- Performance Reporting

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

- In relation to the Western Growth Corridor it was queried when work would start as the contractor had pulled out, however, members were advised that these types of schemes were heavily dependent on the market as they were driven by private development.
- Concerns were raised regarding access and egress for the 3200 houses which were planned as part of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan as there was already a lot of traffic. It was confirmed that measures to address this were still in the plan. However, Mark Welsh, Flood Risk and Development Manager, would be the most appropriate person to give an update on this.
- Clarification regarding roles of officers in relation to highways and transport and growth was provided.
- Concerns about safety were expressed regarding swales, particularly one on Tritton Road, as they could become attractive natural areas with wildlife, and it was queried how much consideration was given to these safety issues. It was reported that there were currently complication with maintenance of SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) and the debate was ongoing regarding those which were outside of the highway and who was responsible for them. Any maintenance plan put in place would have to take safety into consideration. There was a need for a delicate balance, as there were a lot of amenity areas which could have risk attached. It was noted that one option

could be to fence the swales, however, members were advised that further information in relation to SUDS would come to this Committee in the future.

- In relation to the Lincoln Eastern Bypass, it was noted that the previous Environmental Scrutiny Committee had received a very interesting presentation regarding the archaeology of the site, and it was queried whether this committee would be able to receive a similar update. Members were advised that the presentation that was given at the previous committee could be circulated to this Committee for information.
- It was queried whether updates would be received in relation to street lighting, and members were advised that officers were already committed to bringing the review of the project back to the Committee in April 2018.
- It was confirmed that currently the Council did subsidise the pre-9.30am concessionary fares scheme for bus passes, but like all services, this would be for review under the next round of budget discussions.
- It was noted that there had so far been 17,000 conversions of streetlights to LED, and it was queried whether this had been a targeted approach or whether they would all be converted. Members were advised that initially, all the old sodium type of bulbs had been changed as there was a cost benefit. Newer street lighting was fairly efficient, but would be converted as there was a need.
- It was queried what progress had been made in ensuring that statutory undertakers were working in conjunction with the authority. Members were advised that a permit scheme had been introduced in October 2016 which gave the authority more powers. The income received also meant that more inspectors could be employed. It was noted that it was still early days, but an improvement was being seen.
- In terms of connectivity with the Yorkshire and Anglian regions, it was noted that there were no formal systems in place, but the authority did have good relationships with its neighbouring highways authorities. It was also commented that areas were starting to group together for transport schemes, and Lincolnshire was currently part of the Midlands Connect and Midlands Engine.
- It was commented that at some point, possibly soon, the 'austerity brakes' would come off, and it was queried to what extent did the authority have plans for schemes 'on the shelf' and ready to go if there was an opportunity for funding for these schemes. Members were advised that there were schemes ready for funding, but it was noted that there was actually a lot of capital around at the moment. However, it was commented that maybe it was time to design some more. Discussions had taken place with the portfolio holder and it was hoped to increase the advance design block. It was noted that there was a need for revenue money to prepare these schemes.
- Members were advised that the authority did bring in a lot of money through bids. There was a need to think about where the authority wanted to be in 3 – 5 years. There was a long list of schemes which highways would like to put in place, and some of those with the highest cost – benefit rating had been brought forward. Officers would now be looking at medium term schemes.
- In terms of street lighting, one member commented that in rural areas, very few people mentioned the switch off, but in was in towns, such as Sleaford,

where people seemed to be most upset by it. It was queried whether a different approach such as switching off every third light, rather than whole areas/streets could have been taken, as this has been a big issue for people. Members were advised that if there was going to be lighting, then this needed to be at the right levels, and alternate approaches were considered. It was noted that there were exemption to the policy, such as those areas with traffic calming measures. Strategic roads were also lit all night, as well as those areas with a night time economy. New housing developments were also now being switched off at midnight.

- It was noted that there were still financial pressures on the Council, and a review of the Street Lighting project would be coming back to this Committee.
- In relation to alternate lights being switched off instead of whole streets, one member commented that they had been told that if people's eyes were constantly adjusting from light to dark too often it could be dangerous.

In relation to points raised, it was commented that the archaeology presentation relating to the Lincoln eastern Bypass would be circulated, and it was also noted that the permit scheme annual report was also on the work programme as an item to be scheduled.

It was confirmed that members were able to share information received at this meeting with district colleagues if they wished as the Committee was open to the public.

RESOLVED

That the presentation and comments raised be received.

6 LINCOLNSHIRE HIGHWAYS ALLIANCE (LHA) REPLACEMENT - (HIGHWAYS 2020)

It was reported that the three contracts which formed the Lincolnshire Highways Alliance (LHA) began on 1 April 2010 and were due to reach full term on 31 March 2020 following the award of the final extension. The three contracts were the Highways Works Term Contract, the Traffic Signals Term Contract and the Professional Services Contract.

Members were guided through the content of the report, and 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 included the following:

- It was queried why these arrangements had suited Lincolnshire better as other authorities who had entered into these arrangements had not been as successful. Members were advised that the LHA had regularly been a part of the scrutiny process which had brought issues out into the open and had also brought senior officers from each of the contractors into the Committee. It was also reported that the authority had been very active at making sure that standards were maintained. It was also noted that the authority had been very lucky to be able to retain its Highways Laboratory. Members were informed

that trips would be offered to the lab as part of the process of determining a replacement for the Highways alliance contract.

- In order for contracts such as the Highways Alliance to be a success, there was a need to constantly strive to improve.
- It was commented that there would be a need for members to have knowledge of the contracting process, as it would be important to show that there was an understanding of what was being scrutinised. Members were advised that there was an expectation that this would be a regular paper to the scrutiny committee which would help members to increase their knowledge of the issues.
- The importance of in-house knowledge was emphasised, as if design work was outsourced, whilst a design would be technically correct, when looked at with local knowledge there could be an opportunity to do things slightly differently and save money.
- It was queried whether there was any succession planning taking place to ensure that in house knowledge was retained. Members were advised that there were a number of highly skilled people who would be retiring in a couple of years. However, apprenticeship schemes with career grades had been introduced to try and mitigate this.
- Members were advised that there was a plan in place, but it was acknowledged that there was a difficulty in attracting experienced professionals to Lincolnshire. There was support from the university and HND programmes. It was commented that sometimes it was better to 'grow your own' in terms of skilled staff.
- It was clarified that the working group which it was proposed to set up would be separate to the scrutiny panels and only 3-4 members would be involved and the working group would bring regular reported back to this Committee to ensure that it was kept up to date on the direction and the options being considered.
- It was reported that by Christmas, there would be a need to have made a decision regarding the direction of travel.
- It was suggested that the working group should be made up of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee and the portfolio holder for highways, transport and IT. It was further suggested that an additional member should be included who may not have as much experience in terms of highways matters in order to provide a different viewpoint.
- In terms of an options appraisal and a cost benefit point of view, with a single provider it was queried whether there would be a danger of a lack of competition, and how long it would be before performance could be reviewed. It was reported that a desirable length of contract was about 7 years, mainly due to the value and lifespan of assets (e.g. vehicles) which would be purchased.
- In relation to the potential impact of Brexit on short, medium and long term schemes, it was noted that the movements of the pound had impacted on steel prices. It was also noted that the authority had employed a number of skilled staff from the EU.
- In relation to suppliers and the procurement process the aim was the cheapest price at the right quality. It was noted that a lot of companies were national

rather than local, and it was queried whether there was a way to encourage Lincolnshire firms to bid for these contracts. Members were advised that the authority did have some existing framework agreements with medium sized local companies. It was also noted that many of the staff who work for the national companies, such as Kier, actually lived locally.

- It was commented that using local companies should always be competitive, as there would be fewer travelling costs.
- It was suggested whether it should be included in the options appraisal that local businesses should be used.
- Officers and members would be visiting some authorities which still had DLO's. However, they would need to be set up very differently to how they were in the past if they were to be competitive.
- Current contracts had open book accounting, so officers were able to see how contractors were spending their money. It was noted that some staff were paid more than the county council equivalent.
- Members were informed that it could be difficult to get some companies to tender for work, and it was important to create the right contract in order to invite the right competition. It was noted that some authorities were finding it very difficult to get the right bidders.
- It was confirmed that the authority was open to invitations to tender and that select list tenders disappeared from this authority a long time ago.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee support the suggested next steps as outlined in the report, including the setting up of a Steering Group to include the following – Councillors M Brookes, C J T H Brewis, R G Davies and S P Roe.
2. That additional priorities for officers to consider as part of the contract development process include
 - Encouraging the use of local businesses
 - The impact of Brexit to be kept in mind as discussions progress

7 ENGAGING WITH MIDLANDS ENGINE AND MIDLANDS CONNECT

It was reported that the Midlands Engine was a partnership which was seeking to promote growth across the whole of the East and West Midlands. It was supported by government and was likely that significant resources for growth would be routed through the partnership. The report presented to the Committee described the work of the Midlands Engine Partnership and considered how Lincolnshire County Council should engage with the partnership.

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

- A lot of work had been done in relation to transport priorities which were contained in a document called 'Midlands Connect'

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- There was a challenge to ensure that the people who made decisions knew that Lincolnshire was an important area and that there were schemes which were ready to be implemented when funding became available.
- It was highlighted that the improvements to the Newark bypass would not be a scheme in Lincolnshire, but it would be of benefit to the county as it was one of the main gateways to Lincolnshire.
- A lot of work had been done to make sure that the rail connections which ran east to west were improved. It was reported that the increase in fast trains on the East Coast Mainline was welcome because it would improve connections with London, but that the increase would make it more difficult for East/West trains to cross the East Coast Mainline.
- The challenge was not just about showing why Lincolnshire needed funding for certain schemes, but also to demonstrate why what would be proposed would also be important for the Midlands area.
- The Midlands engine needed to understand the importance of Lincolnshire as well as trusting the authorities to deliver the projects if funding was awarded.
- It was queried whether there were any plans to improve the A17 as the condition of the road could be a barrier to people travelling through Lincolnshire, and it was suggested whether this could be included as a priority.
- Caution was advised to stop this from becoming a 'shopping list' of improvements that councillors would like to see. However, it was noted that the A17 was one of those roads which was important to freight transport. It was queried whether this would be more of a national project in terms of moving freight from Lowestoft to the North West.
- It was also noted that some roads to Skegness were in a poor condition and it was queried if there were plans to improve them up to the M180. Members were advised that making a case for Skegness to the Midlands Engine should be fairly easy because of the traditional relationship between the east coast resorts and the industrial midlands cities, but Midlands Engine funding would only be available if a clear case could be made for how investment would have an impact on the growth of the Midlands. It was noted that officers would be working with the Greater Lincolnshire LEP to help it refresh the transport strategy to include some of these points.
- It was commented that the report referred to consideration being given to the Government Art Collection being showcased in Birmingham, however, it was felt that there was already a lot of cultural exhibits in Birmingham and this was something that would be of more benefit to Lincolnshire.
- It was important to ensure that when the authority presented itself it did so with a narrative of what benefit Lincolnshire brought to the midlands. Areas which were properly engaging with this partnership were Nottingham City, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire.
- The government had asked the Midlands Engine to look at skills, however, officers believed this was more of a national issue, such as the design of apprenticeships.
- It was commented that a task and finish group had taken place a number of years earlier which had looked at the Impact of Transportation on Maximising Economic Growth (ITMEG). It was noted that this work had produced some very clear action plan activity and had influenced the development of other

schemes. Members were advised that the final report produced as part of the Task and Finish group would be circulated to the Committee for information.

- One member commented that that they strongly supported this Partnership, as nationally they had been very successful at getting additional funding, and it was felt that if this authority was not involved in this one, then Lincolnshire would lose out. It was commented that this should be supported and that members and officers do everything they can to help Lincolnshire to be proactive in obtaining additional funding.
- It was important that this did not become an urban verses rural battle.
- The benefits of electrifying the joint avoiding line were discussed and it was highlighted that there was the potential for massive savings to operators if the line was electrified as trains would no longer need to switch back to diesel power.

RESOLVED

1. That the ongoing development of the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership and its use of the Strategic Economic Plan to attract resources into Lincolnshire be supported.
2. That the priorities identified through the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership's analysis be supported, as well as the additional priorities highlighted by the Committee including improvements to the A17, Skegness and a link to the coastal highway and the potential for electrification of the joint line between Peterborough, Lincoln and Doncaster.
3. That officers be tasked with producing a strong overall narrative for engaging with Midlands Engine along with specific project cases which articulated LCC's priorities to the Midlands Engine Partnership.

8 HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

A report was received 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 work programme would be reviewed at each meeting of the Committee to ensure its contents are still relevant and would add value to the work of the Council and partners.

Members were advised that it was proposed to change the dates of the scrutiny committee starting with the meeting in September 2017, and it was also reported that the day of the meeting would be changing from a Friday to a Monday. It was reported that new electronic appointments would be circulated to members.

Members were reminded that there was a Network Rail engagement session planned for November and it was commented that previously this had been a very good session and the previous committee had found it useful for building positive relationships with Network Rail.

RESOLVED

1. That the work programme as set out in Appendix A to the report be noted.
2. That the meeting dates be amended as discussed.

The meeting closed at 12.30 pm