

**HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT
 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
 14 DECEMBER 2020**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR B ADAMS (CHAIRMAN)

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

Councillors: attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Steve Blagg (Democratic Services Officer), Shaun Butcher (County Programme Manager), Karen Cassar (Assistant Director Highways), Jason Copper (Transport and Growth Manager), Simon Evans (Health Scrutiny Officer), Richard Fenwick (County Highways Manager), Nicole Hilton (Assistant Director - Communities), Anita Ruffle (Head of Transport Services) and Paul Rusted (Head of Highways Services)

27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs J Brockway.

28 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were made at this stage of the meeting.

29 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 OCTOBER 2020

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 October 2020, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF OFFICERS

Executive Support Councillor C L Perraton-Williams stated that she was pleased to announce the Government's contribution of £110m towards the construction of the North Hykeham Relief Road.

31 THE FIFTH LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN (LTP V)

The Committee received a report in connection with the emerging concepts for the Council's Fifth Local Transport Plan (LTP V), together with an overview of the work

being undertaken and the themes being considered. Members' comments were welcomed as part of the shaping of the work.

Officers stated that the current Transport Plan was shortly ending and there was a requirement for the Council to produce a new Plan. The timeframe for producing a new one would run in combination with the production of the Local Plans, with an emphasis on supporting economic growth, reducing carbon emissions, examining the effects of Covid-19 and improving connectivity between and within communities.

Comments by Members, included:-

- The need for more rail infrastructure especially to and from the east coast ports which would help to relieve congestion and reduce carbon emissions.
- A railway line had previously been suggested between the ports of Felixstowe and Immingham, and any such schemes would help to remove freight traffic from the road to rail and reduce the maintenance costs of highways.
- The need for a more integrated approach to transport, to encourage people to use public transport, walk and cycle which would provide health benefits and reduce carbon emissions.
- The opening up of old railway lines closed by the Beeching cuts in the 1960s, where possible, and the need to improve the joint-line between Doncaster and Spalding.
- There was a need for developers and local authorities to improve connectivity for cyclists and walkers between settlements before new housing development started. Officers referred to the cycling and walking groups established to develop and encourage links between communities, the additional funding from the Government to support cycling and walking routes and the benefits of the integration of the Local Transport Plan with the Local Plans.
- There was a need to protect Public Rights of Way (PROW) as it was noted that the Viking Way had been damaged in certain places by motor vehicles.
- Construction of one mile sections of dual carriageway on the A17 would help to reduce congestion.
- The PROW from Sutton Bridge to Kings Lynn had been extended to Hunstanton.
- While desirable to reduce the use of the car it was more sensible to reduce journeys due to Lincolnshire's geography.
- Improved joint thinking was needed between British Rail and Highways England to improve transport infrastructure.

Members supported the balance of proposed themes detailed in the report including the integration of the Transport Plan and Local Plans; supported improved connectivity between and within communities for public transport, cycling and walking; the need to improve rail infrastructure to encourage the transfer of freight from road to rail and to address the effects of Covid-19 on transport.

RESOLVED

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- (a) That the comments by Members be noted and considered in the production of the Fifth Local Transport Plan (LTP V).
- (b) That the work being undertaken on the various themes in the Plan be supported.
- (c) That a progress report be submitted to the Committee in early 2021.

32 APPROVAL TO AWARD A CONTRACT FOR THE SUPPLY OF WINTER MAINTENANCE VEHICLES

The Committee received a report in connection with the approval to award a contract for the supply of winter maintenance vehicles. The decision was due to be considered by the Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT between 14 and 18 December 2020. The views of the Committee would be reported to the Executive Councillor as part of his consideration of the item.

Comments by Members included:-

- The purchase of the vehicles instead of the current leasing arrangements, would provide the Council with more flexibility.
- The Council's Commercial Board had examined the Business Case and considered that the proposed arrangements would save the Council £13m over the period and one supplier would help to improve maintenance of the vehicles.

RESOLVED (unanimous)

- (a) That the comments by Members be noted.
- (b) That the recommendation to the Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT, detailed in the report, be supported.

33 HIGHWAYS - GULLY CLEANSING, REPAIR AND SURFACE WATER FLOODING

The Committee received a report in connection with the reactive, cyclic and planned aspects of highways drainage maintenance, including the low-level flooding response. Officers stated that the Council was responsible for 185,000 gulleys in the county, explained the budget situation, the effects of the new maintenance contract with Balfour Beatty, the introduction of new technology to record inspections and a more targeted approach to address those gulleys causing constant problems.

Comments by Members included:-

- Accessing gulleys to clean them was a problem due to vehicles being parked over the gulleys. Officers were aware of this problem and added that the new contract with Balfour Beatty made reference to ensuring that these hard to clear gulleys would receive more visits and targeted in the future.
- Tree roots were a particular problem in urban areas.
- The provision of additional gulleys in areas with regular drainage problems was welcomed.

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- Riparian drains needed to be maintained. Officers stated that riparian water courses had caused issues in the past and that the Council had a legal responsibility to identify who was responsible for carrying out the necessary work in response to a flooding event under its Section 19 investigations. Communication with partners, including the Internal Drainage Boards and Water Companies, had improved and Balfour Beatty had also improved communication with Network Rail to examine drainage matters.
- Officers stated that they would ensure that the leaflet they were producing for the public about drainage issues would be shared with Members.
- Officers stated that water disposal was an issue in some areas and gave details of a de-watering facility being constructed to deal with the problems and that other sites were being investigated.
- Officers stated that with regard to the drainage issues reported at Sedgebrook, they would send a copy of correspondence between the Council and Network Rail on this matter to the local Councillor.
- Officers agreed to communicate information to Members about when gully cleansing was due to take place in their areas.

Members welcomed the report including the increase in collaborative working, the provision of information to residents and Parish Councils and agreed to receive a quarterly report on this matter.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the report and comments by Members be noted.
- (b) That the Committee receive a quarterly report on this matter and more often, if necessary, should there be anything more significant to report.

34 PERFORMANCE REPORT, QUARTER 2 - (1 JULY 2020 TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2020)

The Committee received a report in connection with the performance of the highways service, including the major highway schemes update, Lincolnshire highways performance and the Highways and Transport complaints report.

Officers highlighted, amongst others, the progress of a number of highway schemes including the good news of the allocation by the Government of £110m funding towards the North Hykeham Relief Road, the impending opening of the Lincoln Eastern Bypass and the challenging performance targets in the new highways contract.

Members welcomed progress of the various highway schemes.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

35 TRANSPORTCONNECT LTD - TECKAL COMPANY UPDATE

The Committee received a report in connection with an update on the Council's Teckal Company, TransportConnect Ltd (TCL), which was established in 2016 as an intervention into the passenger transport market.

The Chairman enquired if Members had any questions in connection with Appendix B of the report as this contained exempt information and would require the press and public to be excluded from the meeting if Members asked any questions. Members indicated that they wished not to ask any questions.

The Committee welcomed Howard Rowbotham, Managing Director of TCL and Richard Wills, Non-Executive Director of the TCL Board, to the meeting.

The Committee received a presentation about the company, including its history, a financial summary covering the period 2016-20, the effects of Covid-19 and the responses of customers to the service provided by the company.

Comments by Members included:-

- The fact that the company was starting to pay back its loan, increase its turnover and increase its profitability was welcomed.
- It was noted that some residents were still not aware of the CallConnect Demand Responsive bus services, a number of which TCL operated on behalf of the Council. Officers stated that two members of staff worked on publicising CallConnect through a variety of methods including social media, county and local newsletters, attendance at parish and community meetings, road shows and even using pitches at local markets.
- An enquiry was made about the effects of state aid rules after Brexit and whether the Council would still be required to follow them. Officers stated that this was a matter for the Council's legal department to provide guidance.
- An enquiry was made if TCL would be able to bid in the future for contracts for Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) and non-emergency patient transport (NEPT), currently provided by the Thames Ambulance Service Ltd. Officers stated that potentially they could. However, the delivery of SEND provision within the county was undergoing transformation and this would require a review of existing transport arrangements. Officers also advised that a dialogue was being maintained with the Clinical Commissioning Group in relation to arrangements for when the current NEPTS contract expired. An enquiry was made in connection with the voluntary car scheme and whether due to the effects of Covid-19, many of the drivers, due to their age might not be returning to the service. Officers agreed that drivers had been lost to the service and the Council was working to garner support from the many community groups established during lockdown to help recruit new volunteer drivers.

Members thanked officers for the report and presentation and suggested that Parish Council newsletters should be used more to publicise information about the CallConnect services and they agreed to receive a quarterly report on progress of the Teckal Company and feedback from Members.

RESOLVED

That the report and the feedback from Members on the service be noted and that the Committee receive a quarterly report on the progress of the TransportConnect service.

36 HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received its Work Programme.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Work Programme be noted and updated accordingly.
- (b) That the following items be programmed for future meetings:-
 - A quarterly update on gully cleaning and maintenance – 8 March 2021
 - An update on the progress of the Local Transport Plan – to be programmed for a meeting in 2021
 - A quarterly update on progress of the service provided by TransportConnect Ltd – 8 March 2021.

The meeting closed at 12.50 pm