



**HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
13 DECEMBER 2021**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR

Councillors A M Hall (Vice-Chairman), Mrs A M Austin, M Brookes, K J Clarke, T J G Dyer, R A Gibson, Mrs S Rawlins, S P Roe, E W Strengiel and R A Wright

Councillors: attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Robert Close (Democratic Services Officer), Shaun Butcher (County Programme Manager), Tony Carter (Communications) (Strategic Communications Lead), Karen Cassar (Assistant Director Highways), Jason Copper (Transport and Growth Manager), Richard Fenwick (County Highways Manager), Anita Ruffle (Head of Transport Services) and Jayne Wingad (Rail Policy Officer)

36 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

No apologies for absence were received.

37 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were made with respect to any items on the agenda.

**38 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 OCTOBER 2021**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**39 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF
OFFICERS**

The Assistant Director Highways advised that Paul Little, Head of Asset Management – Highways, would be retiring soon after a total of 40 years in Local Government, 19 of those with Lincolnshire County Council.

**40 RAIL RECOVERY AND STRATEGIC ROLE IN PROVIDING CONNECTIVITY, SUPPORTING
LINCOLNSHIRE COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMY**

Consideration was given to a report from the Rail Policy Officer which provided an update on the changes to the rail industry, forward strategy and the Department for Transport and Transport for East Midlands rail collaborative agreement. The Chairman invited Andy Thexton, Senior Strategic Planner – Network Rail, to present to the Committee.

The Committee were given an overview of Network Rail's strategic advice process, advised of the geographical scope for the existing rail transport study and Restoring Your Railways proposals in Lincolnshire. The study aimed to understand the current rail offerings in Lincolnshire through an evidence-based process, use of SPEED principles, understand opportunities for improved connectivity, understand the impact of level crossings and, finally, make evidence-based recommendations to funders, including the Department for Transport (DfT) and third parties. The methodology used would undertake both a medium-term assessment, looking at rail usage in 2030s, and long-term assessment, looking at rail use in 2050s. As a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic, predictions for usage in the medium term would be generally more conservative than the longer-term predictions. Assessment would be taken through a five-stage process beginning with an evidence review, indicative train service specifications, capacity analysis, over analysis and finally, development of options. Further activity included basic economy analysis, capacity analysis, station capacity analysis, level crossing analysis and, if appropriate, development of infrastructure intervention with an order of magnitude cost. The study current sat within its early phase, seeking to identify a question lead before stakeholder engagement commenced in 2022. Following stakeholder engagement, the programme was expected to take approximately five months to complete.

The Chairman invited Craig Leaper, Head of Train Planning and Access – East Midlands Railway (EMR) to present to the Committee.

The Committee were given an overview of EMR's recovery from the Covid-19 Pandemic, which was beginning to progress with the leisure market generally recovering quicker than the commuter market. Consideration was being given to filling to revenue deficient seen from reduced fares. Although it was stressed, leisure loading, on occasion, had exceeded comparable pre Covid-19 periods. EMR was currently in dispute with the Rail Maritime and Transport Union (RMT Union) resulting in industrial action coinciding with the Lincoln Christmas Market. This resulted in significantly reduced operation in order to allocation sufficient capacity to Lincoln. The RMT Union ultimately decided to call off any intended action, however, this was too short notice to resume standard service. Significant changes were made to EMR's timetable in May 2021, unfortunately, these changes did not represent an improvement with several short notice delays and cancellations. As a result, a Regional Resilience timetable was adopted in June 2021 running alongside an Operational Delivery Improvement Plan considering fleet, customer service operations, performance, Nottingham operations and regional resilience. The plan was making good progress to date; however, it was recognised that the service offered may have been too ambitious in practice. A summary of timetable changes made in December 2021 was given, with detail of four cancelled routes between Nottingham and Skegness. An overview of the updates to the Barton Line was offered, detailing the in-house operation aiming to provide a more accessible and reliable service. The Committee were given an overview of future timetable plans, specifically the TSR2, Doncaster – Peterborough, line and the Skegness summer scheduled for 2022.

The Chairman invited Kyle Butterworth, Head of Rail Improvement – East Midlands Councils to present to the Committee.

The Committee were provided with an introduction to the Transport for the East Midlands (TfEM) Board and its Strategic Statement for Rail. Previously TfEM worked closely with the DfT during the East Midlands Rail Franchise Competition, this engagement was extended through a multiyear collaboration agreement. Further underlined by the co-funding of a new officer resource, supporting both parties while being protected by a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA). A summary of the wider collaborative network was offered, including detail on the benefit of Midlands Connect. Members were advised that the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline, was going to shape choreography planning. An overview of the core proposals for the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) were shared and Members were advised that previously planned regional enhancement were now under review to enable HS2 integration. TfEM were in early discussions with Midlands Connect to scope early technical work to understand some of the results from the IRP. It was stressed that a piece of work was to be commissioned to identify why rail in the East Midlands was important in order to contextualise improvement works. TfEM had established contacts that the Great British Railways (GBR) Transition Team to explore the wider 30-year plan and reforms led by the DfT.

With the permission of the Chairman, Councillor T Ashton was invited to ask questions with the Committee to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- While appreciating the infrastructure proposals for the coastal area, Members noted that some areas, further in land, would also benefit from rail investments included new platforms. Washingborough Village being used as an example. The Senior Strategic Planner – Network Rail explained that a Generalised Journey Times activity would be undertaken to identify areas that weren't properly connected to the network. Members were asked to raise areas they felt may be wanting of connectivity.
- Noting the use of analysis in the Network Rail process, Members asked if previous analysis and data was taken into account. An example was a level crossing bridge in Sleaford, which was previously considered a priority for Network Rail, however no progression had been apparent. The Senior Strategic Planner – Network Rail advised that level crossing risks were assessed on a short-term basis by Network Rail's Level Crossing Team, however, a county wide analysis of level crossings was within the scope of the process. Where appropriate, recommendations would be made.
- Members asked what value Network Rail identified in network centers which benefitted from plentiful parking spaces. The Senior Strategic Planner – Network Rail started that multimodal transport formed part of the scope of this review.
- Valuing the importance of connectivity to towns and cities outside of the County, Members asked what work was being done to improve those journeys, particularly towards Nottingham. The Senior Strategic Planner – Network Rail advised explained that the current connectivity opportunities would form part of the review and once completed, recommendations would be made. The Lincolnshire to Nottingham journey suffered from a flat crossing in Newark but too directly address was without of the scope of this review.
- Members felt that, while the county benefitted from good east to west rail connectivity, north to south connectivity was more challenging. They asked if this review would offer opportunities to assess areas of improvement for north to south rail travel. A suggestion was made that the first and last London North Eastern Railway (LNER) was run through the joint line in Sleaford and Spalding. The Senior Strategic Planner – Network Rail explained that, through the stakeholder process, LNER would be consulted to assess viable improvements to their service

- Reference was made to a number of stations which had minimal passenger interest, Members asked how these would be addressed in future. Furthermore, suggestions of locations which would benefit from the introduction of stations to serve new or growing population centers. The Senior Strategic Planner – Network Rail appreciated the local detail offered by Members, adding that local comments would be best directed to *Jason Copper*, who would feed it into the *working groups*.
- Members queried if the ultimate recommendations resulting from this review would be supported by any resources to encourage development. The Senior Strategic Planner – Network Rail explained that studies weren't typically commenced if there was a reasonably probable chance of funding to be offered. Upon the review's completion, priorities were made for nearer term improvements before a submission to the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline.
- Members were advised that the final report resulting from the review would likely be available for public examination upon completion.
- As part of the review, Members asked if local groups would be consulted such as forums or community groups. Furthermore, Members suggested that the wider membership of Lincolnshire County Council should be asked to identify in community groups within their division that may be able to contribute to this review. The Senior Strategic Planner – Network Rail noted that community groups may be missing from stakeholder lists currently, but if Members wanted to contact him, they could be included.
- Members relayed concerns that passengers in Boston and Skegness struggled to get it Lincoln without a long wait in Sleaford, they asked if this could be taken into consideration. The Senior Strategic Planner – Network Rail reiterated that improving connectivity was a key outcome for this review.
- Referencing some of the scheduled improvements identified by EMR, some Members noted that, in their experience, the current rolling stock needed these improvements to bring them up to acceptable standard. Members added their approval at class 170 rolling stock being used in Lincolnshire. The Head of Train Planning and Access (EMR) explained that EMR had limited controls to maintain the standard of carriages with available resources. However, EMR did have a small quantity of cascaded carriages deployed and would endeavor wherever possible to achieve enhanced service.
- While understanding that 153 units were not access compatible, Members sought detail on the efficiencies gained when moving from 153 to 156 units. The Head of Train Planning and Access (EMR) explained that 153 units suffered from accessibility limitations in addition to flushing effluent on rail tracks. As a result, 153 units couldn't be including in rolling circulation any longer.
- Members registered their disquiet at the lack of a passenger line between Lincoln and Peterborough on Sundays, particularly as Spalding would be without a passenger line. The Head of Train Planning and Access (EMR) explained that discussions were underway to compile a business case in order to facilitate the journey.
- Referencing the industrial action which EMR was subject to, Members asked for further detail on the root cause of the dissatisfaction. The Head of Train Planning and Access (EMR) noted a number of issues were raised by the RMT Union including remuneration, work hours and methods of operation. Industrial action had taken place in the form of strikes on Sundays. A further offer had been submitted to the RMT Union.

Members noted that the electrification of the joint line between Peterborough and Doncaster should be explored when considering decarbonisation.

RESOLVED

That the report and comments be noted.

41 PERFORMANCE REPORT, QUARTER 2 – (1 JULY 2021 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2021)

Consideration was given to a report from Tom Gifford, Client and Contract Manager, updating the Committee on the performance of the Highways Service including the Major Highway Schemes Update, Lincolnshire Highways Performance Report and Transport Complaints Report. Members were advised that the Council had three major highways schemes Grantham Southern Relief Road, Spalding Western Relief Road and North Hykeham Relief Road. An overview of contract performance for Balfour Beatty, WSP, and Colas was offered, with an overall improvement highlighted. During quarter two, 12,078 faults were fixed, including potholes, gully grates, slabs, and gully pots. Community Maintenance Gang were awarded additional funding of £3.9 million to make improvements throughout communities and the roads linking them. WSP continued to support council officers from the Technical Services Partnership (TSP). 95.9 per cent of traffic signal emergency faults were addressed within a two-hour window and 100 per cent of standard faults were addressed within the appropriate time scale. A number of traffic signal capital works were completed in quarter two. The number of complaints received saw a decrease of four per cent from the previous quarter. Throughout the three main partners, five apprentices were currently in place with a further two graduates employed.

Councillor Brookes departed the meeting at this point.

The Committee considered the report, and during the discussion the following comments were noted:-

- Noting that kerbing jobs were not subject to a performance measure, Members asked what the average wait time was. The Client and Contract Manager noted that the overall effectiveness of deadline satisfaction was assessed through performance measures, the data on kerbing jobs specifically wasn't immediately available. He offered to provide this data outside of the meeting.
- Referencing the delay seen in the North Hykeham Relief Road, Members asked if any changes in process would be implemented in the future to increase efficiency. Furthermore, Members felt that more frequent and detailed updates would have been of benefit to Local Members. The Client and Contract Manager stated that a significant exercise was undertaken with Anglian Water to identify why they were delayed in attending to leaks. Further detail would be provided to the Committee.
- Members asked if a traffic flow improvement had been apparent as a result of the North Hykeham Relief Road. Moreover, some Members shared experiences of improved flow on North Hykeham. The Client and Contract Manager explained that the data to identify a change in traffic activity wasn't yet available.
- While stressing their appreciation of the functionality offered by the Highways App, Members noted that it suffered from a number of bugs and glitches. Furthermore, Members, noting that the pins weren't removed after a completed job, asked if this was to be updated in the future. The Client and Contract Manager explained that bugs and glitches resulting

from the Highways App had been noted relayed to the app developers. IOS devices appeared to be most affected by any difficulties. The app offered a filter option to remove completed works from its display.

- In encounters with gangs present to fill in potholes, Members noted that they were only brief to fill in a pre-reported set of potholes and were unable to fill in ones identified by the Member. The Client and Contract Manager agreed that it was a more pragmatic approach to fill in all potholes on arrival at a location, however the nature of the potholes on networks made it difficult to effectively fill them in. Furthermore, the Council had to prioritise by its statutory obligations.
- Some Members felt that it was reasonable to suggest the number of apprentices employed by partners could be higher. Furthermore, Members sought clarity on the qualification the apprenticeships would ultimately offer. The Client and Contract Manager didn't have details on the specific qualifications worked towards through the apprenticeships, however offered to circulate it subsequently. The number of apprentices reduced to five this year as a previous apprenticeship ended resulting in an employment opportunity in Belfour Beatty.
- Members stressed their appreciation that a line of communication was in place been to support apprenticeships for looked after children.
- Referencing the volunteering days scheme mentioned in the report, Members asked if a timeline was available to identify when they would be able to take part. Furthermore, Members, understanding that some schemes would result in a cost to affected parish councils, asked if some detailed feedback identifying costs to local groups could be made available. The Client and Contract Manager explained that site visits were currently underway for all the sites that had been suggested, subsequently, a programme would be compiled and costed before being open to Members.
- Members stressed their appreciation of the completed A17/A15 Holdingham Roundabout works, adding that the overall process was carried out effectively, timely and to an effective standard. In a subsequent comment, Members noted that there was a view from the local community to introduce planting onto Holdingham Roundabout and asked if any formal planting arrangements were expected by the Council. The Client and Contract Manager offered to seek further detail and advise the Committee.
- Some Members were disappointed in the dedicated lane allocation on the approach to the Holdingham Roundabout, adding that the Peterborough Lane was particularly underused when compared to the Newark Lane. The Client and Contract Manager offered to respond to Members after investigation into this issue.
- Referencing the single carriageway design of the North Hykeham relief road, Members felt that the south-west side of Lincoln could be severely adversely affected. They asked if the existing bypass was likely to be changed to dual carriage way. The Client and Contract Manager explained stressed that the section of bypass in question was maintained by Highways England rather than the Council. He noted Members' comments and would come back to them in the future.
- Members sought detail of budgetary arrangements for tree works. The Client and Contract Manager explained that tree works came out of the overall highways budget, but dependant on the works carried out, different streams would be used. For example, emergency tree works would come out of the emergency fund, whereas scheduled non-emergency works were supported through a separate fund.
- Noted the staged complaints process, Members asked what the process was for determining if a complaint progressed to stage two. The Client and Contract Manager that the complaints

process followed the wider corporate complaints procedure administered by business support colleagues who, after liaising with highways officers, endeavoured to resolve directly with the complainant. If the complainant wasn't satisfied with the resolution, they were offered the opportunity to progress the complaint. Upon complaint progression, an external colleague took an assessment to determine, to what, if any, extent the complaint was upheld.

- Members sought further information of the proposed business case for the Heckington land dualling. The Client and Contract Manager advised that officers were awaiting the completion of feasibility studies, due early 2022, before business case progression could be considered.

RESOLVED

That the report and comments be noted.

42 HIGHWAYS - GULLY CLEANSING, DRAINAGE REPAIR SCHEMES AND SURFACE WATER FLOODING

Consideration was given to a report from Richard Fenwick, County Highways Managers, and Shaun Butcher, County Programme Manager, updating the Committee on the reactive, cyclic, and planned aspects of highways drainage maintenance including low-level flooding responses. Members were advised that the Council had 190,000 highway drainage assets including gullies, Catchpits and Offlets across the county, of those, 98,000 had been cleansed in the routine programme and 10,500 had defects requiring follow up work. Defects included jammed lids, broken or missing ironwork, damaged pots or chambers, or blocked connections. Contractors took photos of defects, aiding local teams to access whether it needed immediate attention could be planned at a later date. The Council worked currently with eight tankers but looked to recruit more through ACL. To mitigate limited staffing numbers of critical services were prioritised and in order to ensure work was completed by the end of the financial year. In recent months, officers were advised from both Members of the Council and public that more timely but shorter answers were more satisfactory than detailed delayed answers, therefore, officers endeavored to take this into account when addressing customers in the future. The funding for minor drainage improvements for 2021/22 was increased from £300,000 to £600,000 to enable problematic small schemes that occur during each period of severe weather to be dealt with. A full programme of drainage investigation works continued through 2021/22 by Ajet. Minor Works Gangs used CCTV equipment and tools to carry out minor civils repairs or root cutting, attending 305 sites, with a further 204 designed and scheduled for the rest of the year. A successful Invest To Save bid approved, by Members in 2020/21, of £2.2m was allocated to the Floods and Water Team. £1.4m had been programmed onto various drainage schemes with the remaining budget planned to be spent in 2022 on larger and more complex scheme. Work had been undertaken collaboratively with colleagues from the Flood and Water Management Team to undertake Section 19 Investigations. All flooding and drainage reports were mapped through CSC and Fix My Street.

The Committee considered the report, and during the discussion the following comments were noted:-

- Members welcomed the Development Drainage Funding, asking for an overview of the broad nature of schemes currently under consideration. The County Programme Manager

explained that consideration was currently undertaken by the Technical Team and offered to provide further detail outside of the meeting.

- Acknowledging the limited take up of gully clearing amount residents, Members asked if the Council had a dialogue with district councils to encourage leaf clearing on streets before a flooding problem was caused. The County Programme Manager stated that the Council had always worked closely with district councils to coordinate works, however Lincolnshire's large geographical footprint made created challenges to effectively ensure gullies were cleared particularly in times of high leaf shedding.
- Members shared experienced of significant delays in the availability of CCTV equipment to investigate blocked gullies, going onto ask what was considered reasonably acceptable by officers in delays. The County Highways Managers explained that over 200 sites throughout the county required addressing by Minor Works Gangs. These outstanding sites were prioritised dependant on risk factors.

RESOLVED

That the report and comments be noted.

43 TRANSPORT CONNECT LTD - TECKAL COMPANY UPDATE REPORT (1 MAY - 31 OCTOBER 2021)

Consideration was given to a report from Anita Ruffle, Head of Transport Service, updating the Committee the activities and performance of the Council's Teckal Company, Transport Connect Ltd (TCL), over the period May-October 2021. Members were advised that the initial loan to the Teckal Company had now been repaid in full, but it is still making use of its revolving credit agreement. The latest management information available showed a strong income performance with income for the first half of the year 6.5% better than budgeted. Established in 2016, Teckal had already saw an expansion of both the Company and it's Board Membership. There has been no capital expenditure on replacement vehicles during the period. Although revisited at Board meetings regularly, no changes had been made to the Company's current business plan. Several pupils carried tested positive for Covid-19 and three TCL drivers subsequently contracted the virus, totaling five staff members testing positive since May 2021. The cessation of Government grants for PPE resulted in Teckal bearing the full cost for PPE and cleaning. Like many operators, TCL had also been impacted upon by a shortage of drivers within the market. During July, all workshop technicians underwent first aid training on a course specifically designed for the workshop environment. Training to administer epilepsy medication was undergone by some crews in August and Supervisors received Fire Marshall training in September. TCL's One School One Provider (OSOP) contract into Sandon School was subject to an unannounced check by the council's Inspection Team on the 6 October with no compliancy concerns identified. All, but two, vehicles passed their MOTs first time. TCL continued to operate other CallConnect Services in areas of lack of interest. Three third party liability incidents have resulted in damage to vehicles over recent months. Installation of CCTV on all CallConnect vehicles was implemented to successfully evidence third party culpability. The Company has accepted liability for one incident. One complaint was received regarding lack of advanced notice about a change of personnel on a SEND contract.

The Committee considered the report, and during the discussion the following comments were noted:-

- Members asked that, as TCL's governance and resilience was to be assessed, would that encompass the resilience of both the Board's governance and the resilience of its finances. The Head of Transport Service explained that the assurance review was primarily focused on appropriate Board arrangements rather than financial resilience.
- Appreciating the shortage of drivers, Members asked if there was a view to encourage recent retirees to return. The Head of Transport Service explained that all avenues to increase driver employment had been explored. She hoped the BSIP would enable a training academy to enable long term sustainability.
- Members relayed their experience that fuel prices were decreasing in recent weeks. The Head of Transport Service hoped that fuel spikes had peaked and were likely to decline.
- Members sought further clarity on the revolving credit agreement referenced within the report. The Head of Transport Service explained that, while endeavouring to promote financial independence, state aid rules couldn't have been infringed, therefore a capital loan, to finance assets, and a revolving credit loan, enabling a corporate overdraft facility, were offered. Interest was paid, at a commercial rate, on all credit activity.

RESOLVED

That the report and comments be noted.

44 HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report from the Scrutiny Officer, which enabled the Committee to comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year to ensure that scrutiny activity was focussed where it could be of greatest benefit.

RESOLVED

That the work programme presented be agreed.

The meeting closed at 12.51 pm